

EPISODE GUIDE

By Paula Vitaris

"Don't unlock doors you're not prepared to go through, Agent Scully."

—X

HERRENVOLK

★★1/2

10/4/96. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by R.W. Goodwin. Editor, Jim Gross.

Taking up exactly where "Talitha Cumi" left off, Mulder and Jeremiah Smith (Roy Thinnes) escape from the Bounty Hunter (Brian Thompson) and make their way to Alberta, Canada, where, Jeremiah tells Mulder, he will see "the work in progress." What they find is a bee farm run by mute clone boys and girls; to Mulder's alarm, the girls are clones of his sister Samantha. He wants to bring one of the girls back to Washington, but when the Bounty Hunter arrives, the girl is killed and Jeremiah disappears. Meanwhile, Scully has returned to Washington to decode the files found in the computers of the five Jeremiah Smiths who worked at the Social Security Administration. She and Pendrell determine that the Jeremiahs' files have something to do with a "Smallpox Eradication Program," and that a protein she finds in her own and Pendrell's smallpox inoculations could be a marker or tag. Mulder returns, empty-handed, to his mother's bedside, where she remains in a coma from her stroke. In a double-shock finale, X is assassinated, but before he dies, he leaves a clue written in his own blood that leads Mulder to his next informant, while the Cigarette Smoking Man brings in the Bounty Hunter to heal Mrs. Mulder.

The first thing one notices about "Herrenvolk"



The alien, shape-shifting Bounty Hunter (Brian Thompson) from last season's cliff-hanger "Talitha Cumi" returns in "Herrenvolk."

this story by the end of the series, he will have accomplished a miracle. Much of the episode's interest lies with the dogged Scully using her science not to debunk Mulder but to prove his theories to the FBI brass. The episode takes a turn with a wonderful fourth act. Here we have Mulder's despairing entrance into the hospital, a beautifully written conversation between him and Scully by Mrs. Mulder's bedside, the death of X, the introduction of Mulder's new informant, Marita Covarrubias, and the healing of Mrs. Mulder while the Cigarette Smoking Man looks on with an expression that almost seems to be one of love. Now there's a twist! Marita is a problematic character; as played by Laurie Holden, she has none of the intensity of Deep Throat or X, and despite several appearances this season, she never breaks out of her function as a plot device. "Herrenvolk" is her best appearance; Holden conveys sensitivity towards Mulder, who has lost his sister yet again and still believes his mother at death's door. Duchovny's performance throughout the episode is superb, and he creates an emotional arc for Mulder that ultimately, along with the fourth act, makes "Herrenvolk" worth rewatching.

"Mulder, if you had to do without a cell phone for two minutes, you'd lapse into catatonic schizophrenia."

—Scully

HOME

★★★

10/11/96. Written by Glen Morgan & James Wong. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

The discovery of a grossly deformed baby's corpse in a field bring Mulder and Scully to bucolic Home, Pennsylvania, where they are greeted by affable Sheriff Andy Taylor (Tucker Smallwood). Scully's preliminary findings indicate all sorts of genetic anomalies, including the inexplicable indication that the baby had three fathers. Mulder's suspicions focus on the Peacocks, a strange, reclusive family living in a decrepit house next to the field. A search of the house, on the assumption the Peacocks may be holding the baby's mother captive, reveals little. But Mrs. Peacock, a grotesquely deformed woman who literally lives under a dresser, overhears Mulder asking Sheriff Taylor to order an All Points Bulletin on her sons, and that night, the three men kill Sheriff Taylor and his wife. When Mulder, Scully, and Taylor's deputy Barney (what else could he be named?) return to arrest the Peacocks, Barney and two of the Peacock boys are killed, but the last Peacock son escapes with his mother—after mother and son engage in some hanky-panky in the trunk of the family car; we know where that deformed baby came from.

Have Morgan and Wong really been away from THE X-FILES for a year and a half? "Home" is cut from the same cloth as their second season farewell, "Die Hand Die Verletzt" (both directed with skewed flair by Kim Manners), mixing gruesome horror with blackest comedy. Morgan

and Wong revel in stock horror film conventions (raging storms, dead mutant babies, disfigured people lurking in scary old houses) as well as some slightly newer ones. For the Peacocks, a mere Oedipal complex isn't enough; the sons breed with the mother to preserve the family line. Add to this the brutal slaying of the loveable Taylors, and it's no wonder it's the first X-FILES episode to receive a parental warning.

But there's more to "Home" than lots of latex. Both the Peacocks and Sheriff Taylor strive to preserve the status quo. Unwilling to face change, the Taylors are destroyed, and the Peacocks nearly so. Sheriff Taylor especially pays for having spent many years looking the other way, rather than admit something unpleasant is taking place in his beloved town. In a perverse way, the repulsive Peacocks represent human perseverance against all odds.

The tonal balance is awkward at times, moving choppily from genuine horror to sick humor to serious moments. Scully's explanation that it would take a day for law enforcement to arrive is weak; this is rural Pennsylvania, not the Himalayas. But the flaws are lost in the pleasures (if you can call them pleasures) of this episode, particularly the very funny first meeting between Mulder, Scully and Sheriff Taylor; the conversation on the bench between Mulder and Scully about their genetic heritages and desires to have families; and the astonishing sequence in which the Peacocks set off to murder the Taylors—a revolting little masterpiece of cross-cutting, sound effects and source music. You may want to throw up after watching, but you're sure not going to forget it.

"We fear the unknown so we reduce it to the terms that are most familiar to us, whether that's a folktale or a disease or a conspiracy."

—Mulder

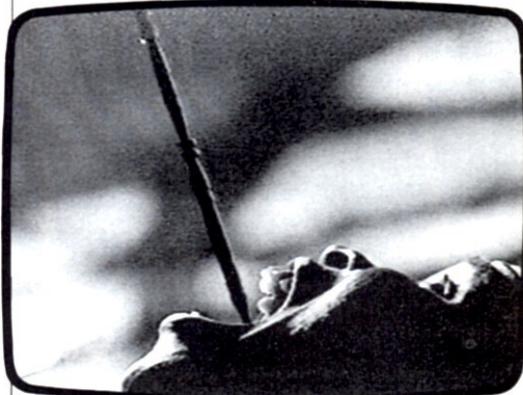
TELIKO

★★★

10/18/96. Written by Howard Gordon. Directed by James Charleston. Editor, Jim Gross.

On a flight to the U.S., an African man is found dead in the bathroom, drained of all pigment. Months later, Scully is asked by the Centers for Disease Control to assist in the investigation into the unexplained deaths of several other black men, who have been drained of all pigment. The CDC, unaware of the death on the plane at this point, suspects the deaths have been mislabeled as murders; they believe they are the result of some unknown disease. When Mulder hears about the case, he declares in a move that's ridiculously kneejerk even for him that there's a cover-up of some larger conspiracy, and no one cares because the victims are black. Scully, of course, thinks he's nuts. A tip leads them to a young African immigrant named Samuel Aboah (Willie Amakye), who lacks a pituitary gland. After a visit with a diplomat from Africa, Mulder conjectures that

In "Teliko," a dull message story focusing on African culture, a monster-of-the-week sustains its life by draining the pigment from its black victims.



In "Home," the three mutated Peacock brothers fall under suspicion when the body of a mutant baby is found buried near their farm.

is the absence of THE X-FILES' former director of photography John Bartley. The light is much brighter, and even in the episode's darker moments, it's flat. The rich colors and the sense of space and depth that Bartley brought to this show's photography have vanished. The story is a letdown, too, beginning a trend of disappointing second halves to this season's two-parters. The pace is off; there are a lot of action scenes in this episode, but they're just pursuits, more of a drag than a propellant. Jeremiah Smith, saintly and self-sacrificing in the former episode, has turned into an annoying noodle, hauling Mulder all the way to Canada without giving him any information whatsoever during the trip. As for the clone children robbed of language and parental guidance, they are the conspiracy's pitiable worker bees, but Samantha loses her mystery and power when we see so much of her, even if she's not the real Samantha. And does the mythology need yet another new element (in this case, bees)? If Chris Carter succeeds in tying together all the threads of

Aboah is a "teliko," a member of a lost tribe that comes out at night to suck the life from other human beings. Aboah escapes, and Mulder and Scully pursue him through a duct—a scene reminiscent of Gordon's first season episode "Ghost in the Machine."

The first of several episodes this season that explore marginalized or non-western cultures, "Teliko" is a dull message story. We haven't seen a monster of the week from Africa before, and it is a nice irony, in a culture that prizes light skin, that Aboah seeks to restore the darkness to his coloring. Amayke's performance as Aboah is nondescript, with none of the suppressed, hungry malice of Doug Hutchison's portrayal as Tooms, the seminal X-FILES monster. In fact, much of this episode is a rehash of "Squeeze," even down to Aboah's ability to fold himself into tight spots (this works wonderfully in one shot, when we see his eyes peeking out from a drawer in which he couldn't possibly fit). "Squeeze" also worked because the episode came down to a moment of great decision for Scully: to ally herself permanently with Mulder or to walk away from him with her old buddy, Tom Colton. There is no such climactic, defining moment here. The episode's principal highlights are the graceful performances of Carl Lumbly, as an immigration counselor, and the distinguished theater actor Zakes Moke as the embassy minister who tells Mulder the legend of the Teliko.

"She's safe from the howlers. She's all right now."

—Gerry Schnauz

UNRUHE

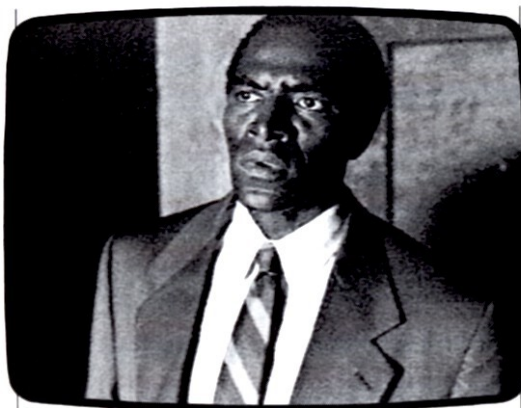
★★★

10/27/96. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

"Unruhe" was filmed second but aired fourth, the first X-FILES episode on a Sunday night, a move that turned out to be a runaway success for the Fox Network. The ratings received a significant boost, bringing in many new viewers. "Unruhe" proved to be a good choice for the move, as it was a solid episode with a memorable killer in Gerry Schnauz (Pruitt Taylor Vince), a mentally ill man who kidnaps and lobotomizes young women in the delusional belief that in doing so, he releases them from "howlers" living inside their heads. Mulder and Scully become involved in the investigation when a polaroid of the first victim, taken moments before her abduction, turns out to be not a reproduction of her smiling face but a surreal vision of the girl screaming in terror.

"Unruhe" is a solid episode. Particularly well handled is the characterization of Gerry Schnauz, a man who believes his impromptu lobotomies will help, not hurt. Pruitt Taylor Vince fully captures Gerry's agony and his madness. "Thoughtography" is a novel idea, and the photographs, looking much like Edvard Munch paintings, are chilling. We're given a fine scare when Mulder calls Scully to tell

Mulder examines a psychic photograph of the kidnapped Scully, from which he hopes to gain a clue as to her whereabouts, in "Unruhe."



Willie Amakye's performance as Samuel Aboah, the "Teliko" of the title, fails to raise the episode to the level of the best X-FILES monster shows.

her that his analysis of a thought-photo reveals a figure with elongated legs, just as Scully is looking at Gerry perched on stilts. Unfortunately, Gilligan uses Mulder's "genius" to move the story along by having him make an interpretative leap that's simply too farfetched. Also, the story devolves into another Scully-gets-kidnapped scenario. Scully musters every bit of pluck to hold off the deranged Gerry by using Mulder's methods of getting into his head, but the scene doesn't click. The intimation that Scully may have "howlers" in her head rings false (despite the upcoming brain cancer storyline). Even with all she's been through, Scully's life is grounded on a solid faith in the reality of the world around her. She cannot identify with a fragmented creature like Gerry, even after getting a peek into his head, although she feels for his pain. It's Mulder who has the howlers, and one wonders what the scene would have been like if he had been in the Gerry's dentist chair. Even so, "Unruhe" has many pleasures. Like all of Gilligan's episodes, it is filled with warmth, humor and well-rounded characters.

"You...you were there, Scully! You saw it, you heard it. Why can't you feel it?"

—Mulder

THE FIELD WHERE I DIED

★★★1/2

11/3/96. Written by Glen Morgan & James Wong. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

Tipped off by an anonymous caller, the FBI raids the Apison, Tennessee compound of a cult group called the Sons of the Seven Stars in search of illegal weapons. They find nothing, but Mulder is strangely drawn to one of the cultists, a hostile young woman named Melissa Riedel-Ephesian, one of the six wives of the cult's charismatic leader, Vernon Ephesian (Michael Massee). He is even more unnerved when Melissa, under intense questioning concerning the location of the alleged weapons, shifts into other personalities. One of them is the anonymous caller; another is a Civil War nurse named Sarah, who claims to recognize in Mulder her husband Sullivan Biddle, who died in a battle in the field outside the compound. Are Melissa's past lives surfacing, as Mulder suspects, or is she afflicted with dissociative personality disorder, as Scully believes? If Melissa is experiencing her past lives, would "Sarah" know the location in the field of hidden Civil War bunkers where weapons might be stashed? The search for the answers is traumatic for Mulder and Melissa, and Scully as well, when Melissa and Mulder undergo a harrowing hypnotic regression, but it also provides a measure of hope for Melissa Vernon, released for lack of evidence, leads his followers into mass suicide.

"The Field Where I Died" is an unabashedly emotional episode, unafraid to plumb the depths of human loss and grief. The actual case takes a back seat to the story of Mulder, Melissa, and Scully.

Each scene has a point, taking these people another inevitable step down the road. At the same time, Melissa's story is full of ambiguity: is she suffering dissociative personality disorder, or has she been invaded by her past lives? Or could it be both, that her multiple personalities are her past lives? This nexus is a fabulously imaginative and wondrous idea, and Morgan and Wong know much better than to try to answer it. Instead, drama and conflict arise from Mulder's search for the truth; he will go to any lengths, whether physical or (as in this episode) emotional, to find the proof he needs to shore up his shaky beliefs. Mulder is echoed in the characters he meets here: Vernon is Mulder without his skepticism; he believes—in himself most of all, unlike Mulder, who is always full of self-doubt—and Vernon's uncritical thinking leads him and fifty others to death. Melissa and her split personalities are Mulder, if he had no hope. Mulder gives Melissa the gift of believing, finally, that there is hope for a better life, if not in this world, then in the next. Melissa gives Mulder the gift of feeling that souls follow each other for eternity and he will never be alone; Samantha, Scully, and Melissa will always be with him. It's not a certain belief; Mulder's own need to believe could have created his past lives. But it's enough to see him through the overwhelming sense of loss and loneliness, and "The Field Where I Died" becomes one of the series' most positive episodes, even though it ends in mass death. Scully, too, has her role—as the objective observer, first to call Mulder on his selfishness, to question what is going on with Melissa, to observe the true depths of Melissa's and Mulder's pain, and to finally realize, for herself,



Michael Massee plays cult religious leader Vernon Ephesian, in "The Field Where I Died," an episode loosely inspired by Waco, Texas.

that no, she would not change a day of her life.

Cloke, so tightly wound in SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND, reveals herself to be a truly gifted actor, slipping faultlessly into the skin of all of Melissa's personalities. In each case, Cloke is that character, and she does not falter in her identification with them when Melissa is under hypnosis. She is completely convincing and deeply moving. Duchovny is less successful; he has been accused over reacting, but that is not the case. The hypnosis scene is shot in close-up, and, stripped of the opportunity to fall back upon his excellent command of body language, he must rely completely upon his face and voice. He comes close, but he doesn't quite make it; although he captures the physicality of a man crying, he lacks the technique to break the emotional barrier and become Mulder at that specific moment, overcome by eternal loss. Still, it is a good effort, and in all other respects Duchovny's performance is right on the mark: he registers beautifully Mulder's confusion, his desperation, his anger, and his tenderness towards Melissa, who also would like to believe.

Jon Joffin's photography, Rob Bowman's direction, and Mark Snow's music all perfectly set the melancholy mood for this episode. Once again

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the earth, as it so often does in THE X-FILES, has a secret to tell, and Mulder is magically drawn towards it. He will not find the guns there, but he will find Melissa and the secrets and truths she brings with her. The one criticism is that the episode would have been even richer if information had been retained from the overly long director's cut that Melissa had been abused as a child; without this knowledge, it is up to the audience to find reasons for her mental condition and her life as a cultist, and those are reasons that should be provided within the episode itself.

"Well, if it's that simple, why don't you put out an APB for someone riding a broom and wearing a tall black hat?"

—Scully

SANGUINARIUM

★1/2

11/10/96. Written by Valerie Mayhew and Vivian Mayhew. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

Plastic surgeons at the Greenwood Memorial Hospital in Chicago are going mad in the operating room and killing the clients. Afterwards, they claim it's as if they were possessed. Scully believes the cause is addiction to sleeping pills; Mulder, who notices strange, identical markings on the operating floor and on patients' abdomens, believes someone has put a spell on the doctors, and someone else is trying to protect the patients by marking them with the points of the Pentagram. They trace the marks to Nurse Rebecca Waite (O-Lan Jones), and catch up with her just as she's attacked Dr. Jack Franklin (Richard Beymer) in his home. She dies after



"Sanguinarium" combines plastic surgery and black magic into an unsatisfying mix that fails to lampoon our obsession with appearance.

evil spells? Mulder's sudden obsession with his looks (he starts gazing in mirrors and using a computer program to reshape his features) is ridiculous; he has never given a thought to his appearance, and a plastic surgery clinic wouldn't change him. Probably this is an in-joke about Duchovny, who in interviews has made self-deprecating remarks about his appearance, but it doesn't serve the story at all.

What keeps "Sanguinarium" watchable is Kim Manners' sharp direction. The blue and red strobe lighting from the police cars in the nighttime scene as Mulder and Scully watch poor Waite hack up the pins, is especially vivid. The bath of blood that Nurse Waite leaps out of is enjoyably repelling.

"I would rather read the worst book ever written than sit through the best movie ever made."

—Young Cigarette Smoking Man (reading *The Manchurian Candidate*)

MUSINGS OF A CIGARETTE SMOKING MAN

★★★★

11/17/96. Written by Glen Morgan. Directed by James Wong. Editor, Jim Gross.

The purported history of the Cigarette Smoking Man, this episode has virtually no Mulder or Scully; they're heard only on voice-over in the teaser, and a clip of Scully from the pilot is seen in the fourth act. Instead, the Cigarette Smoking Man eavesdrops electronically as Frohike frantically tells Mulder, Scully, Langly, and Byers that he has discovered a story in a magazine that he believes reveals the identity of the Cigarette Smoking Man. As the Cigarette Smoking Man listens, he begins to muse on the events of his life, past and present. The first two acts reveal that the young Cigarette Smoking Man (Chris Owens), plucked from military service by a mysterious committee composed of a general, a plainclothes agent, and Cuban refugees, is the assassin of John F. Kennedy. In the second act, now a figure of power in black operations, the Young Cigarette Smoking Man assassinates Martin Luther King. The third and fourth acts skip ahead almost to the present day, where we learn the Smoking Man now oversees just about every dirty trick there is, from suppressing knowledge of aliens to fixing the Super Bowl. And of course he takes a big interest in Mulder, Scully and the X-Files. But the Smoking Man has a secret life too; in his bare apartment, he aspires to be a writer of action-adventure stories. Every story he's ever written has been rejected, until the wonderful day when *Roman-a-Clef* magazine accepts a story and the Smoking Man feels his real life—his life as a writer—has finally begun. But like most writers, he soon learns he has no control over his editor; when the story is published, the editor has changed the ending. As he contemplates this blast of fate, the Smoking Man trains a rifle on Frohike, exiting the Lone Gunmen offices, but ultimately decides not to shoot. The

first thing to be said about this episode is that it is inconsistent with the early story of the Cigarette Smoking Man and Bill Mulder, as told in the teaser to "Apocrypha." Furthermore, the narrator of the episode is not known. Are the events shown the Smoking Man's memories or even his fantasies? Or are they Frohike's interpretation of the magazine story? If so, what about the changes rendered by the Smoking Man's editor?

The narrative may be unreliable, but no matter who is telling it, there is no mistaking the barren emotional landscape in which the Cigarette Smoking Man dwells. The tone of the script reflects his changing self-perception. It is deadly serious in the first two acts, when he sees himself as an "extraordinary man," and it grows more and more paradoxical as he sees his life turning into a morass of administrative details while the writing career he so desperately wants evades him. The parody reaches its apotheosis in the Smoking Man's anti-Forrest Gump rant, a comic high point of verbal venom. Leaving aside the question of who is telling this tale, the Cigarette Smoking Man is, himself, the ultimate unreliable narrator who cannot see that his career has left him morally bankrupt and that his writing is nothing more than cheesy pulp fiction that undoubtedly reflects the fascism of his soul. Alas, the episode rolls over and swoons, just when it should have delivered the biggest punch since the death of Deep Throat. If only Chris Carter had let the Cigarette Smoking Man shoot Frohike, as Morgan and Wong wanted to do. Still, this is a superb peek, simultaneously comic and tragic, into the mind of a hollow man. Wong does a fine job in his debut as a director. Chris Owens, as the young Smoking Man, is a real find (he returns in the flashbacks in "Demons"), and William B. Davis overcame an intense dislike of this script (it didn't jibe with his perception of the Smoking Man) to deliver a wonderful performance, whether he's abashedly passing out identical ties as Christmas gifts to his subordinates or railing against the unfairness of it all.

"I love this country."

—Krycek

TUNGUSKA

★★★

11/24/96. Written by Frank Spotnitz & Chris Carter. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

The first of a mythology two-parter, "Tunguska" opens in the middle of the story, with Scully facing a Senate subcommittee on intelligence and terrorism, which inquires where Agent Mulder is. Flash back to a diplomatic courier arriving in Hawaii from Soviet Georgia, whose precious cargo is dropped by a customs agent, breaking open a container from which little worms flow and burrow under the skin. Cut to Mulder and Scully about to take part in a SWAT action against some right-wing terrorists in Flushing, New York. After this, it's action all the way. Mulder and Scully capture the long-missing Krycek (Nicholas Lea),

In "Tunguska," Mulder seeks out Marita Covarrubias (Laurie Holden), who has replaced the assassinated "X" as Mulder's inside informer.



Deep Throat (Jerry Hardin) makes a return appearance in the flashback-filled episode "Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man."

coughing up hundreds of stray pins, and Mulder realizes Dr. Franklin is a practitioner of black magic, obsessed with youth and beauty who derives his power from the death of the clinic's patients. After performing some plastic surgery on his own face, Franklin escapes and ends up with a new position at a hospital in Los Angeles, undoubtedly the plastic surgery capital of the world.

"Sanguinarium" trades astutely enough on our fears and desires regarding appearance, but most of the characters act so stupidly or so ineffectually it's hard to care about the message. Mulder and Scully are more or less on the sidelines, since they have no effect on events. Neither does poor Nurse Waite, the female character who embodies good magic. Since the good side has no power, we just watch Franklin get away with his evil deeds until Mulder figures out what he's up to, after which Franklin starts all over somewhere else. Much of the set-up is simply unbelievable. Two FBI agents—especially one who is a doctor—would never barge in and out of a sterile facility. Patients in an expensive clinic would never be left unattended, and doctors would never perform procedures without assistance. And why does Nurse Waite carry out her protective rituals on the patients, instead of the doctors who fall under Dr. Franklin's

Krycek (Nicholas Lea), who claims he set up the terrorists to gain Mulder's trust. He wants to work with Mulder to destroy the Cigarette Smoking Man and his cohorts. Krycek leads Mulder and Scully to a second courier, who escapes, but leaves behind a pouch containing a mysterious black rock that originates, they discover, from the Tunguska area of Siberia, site of an enormous blast of unknown origin in 1908. Events begin to flow fast. Scully tries to determine what caused the mysterious "somatic rigor" of a geologist named Dr. Sacks (Malcolm Stewart), who tried to examine the strange rock. Skinner attracts Congressional attention when the Russian courier who ran from Mulder and Scully is thrown over Skinner's apartment balcony by the cuffed Krycek. A summons arrives from a Senator Sorenson (Fritz Weaver) investigating the incident, and Skinner and a concerned Scully do their best to stall. Mulder enlists Marita Covarrubias's aid in New York, then hauls Krycek off to Tunguska, where they observe prisoners at hard labor and are subsequently captured themselves by whip-wielding men on horseback. Mulder finds himself part of a nightmarish experiment, trapped under wire mesh as black sludge is poured on him and the oily worms enter his body. Similar in structure to "Colony," with the story beginning in the middle, "Tunguska" gets off to a slow start. The scene with the customs agent is predictable, and why is Mulder explaining to Scully only moments before the raid its purpose—for the audience's benefit? But then "Tunguska" kicks into high gear. It's a tremendously exciting episode, dark and violent, Krycek's presence bringing out the worst in Mulder, who generally manhandles him throughout the hour. Add to the mix a half-naked Skinner driving a hard right to Krycek's stomach, handcuffs, and men on whips and horses—and you



In one of many actions sequences that drags the story down rather than propels it forward, Mulder flees from a Russian gulag in "Tunguska."

"That's a nasty habit. It's bad for the health."
—the Cigarette Smoking Man to a smoking Well-Mannered Man

TERMA

★1/2

12/1/96. Written by Frank Spotnitz & Chris Carter. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Jim Gross.

What a letdown from "Tunguska"! The two-partter falls apart in "Terma." Mulder wakes up in his Russian cell, after his exposure to what the prisoner next door calls "the black cancer." He escapes by commandeering a truck into whose bed he has knocked the treacherous Krycek, who turns out to really be a high-level Russian spy. Mulder is rescued by the truck's driver and his wife, who explain that only by cutting off one's left arm (the one with the smallpox injection, presumably) can one avoid being captured for the "experiments." Unhappily for Krycek, he meets up with a group of one-armed young men who think to save him and saw off his left arm. Back in Washington, Scully refuses to divulge Mulder's whereabouts to the Senate committee, and when she's held in contempt of Congress, she is locked up, just like Mulder. Meanwhile, an elderly Russian operative, Peskow (Jan Rubes), arrives in the United States to carry out a mission: kill smallpox expert and companion of the Well-Mannered Man, Dr. Bonita Chan-Sayre (Jessica Schreier), in Charlottesville, Va.; kill Dr. Sacks and retrieve the rock sample in Washington, D.C.; kill the residents of a Boca Raton, Fla., nursing home who were unwitting participants in a "black cancer" experiment; and then drive the rock to an oil refinery in Canada where he can blast it deep into the ground. While all this is going on, Mulder, now back in the U.S., reaches Capitol Hill just as the Senators again demand his location from Scully. In an anti-climactic fourth act, Mulder and Scully travel to Boca Raton, to check out the strange death of one of the nursing home residents. Mulder wraps it up with a speech before the Senate committee, while Krycek, we learn, has acquired a prosthetic arm. All this and more in 45 minutes (not counting commercials)—no wonder this episode is rife with gaping holes in logistics and procedure: Mulder is back from Tunguska, Siberia, in what seems like hours; Krycek's stump heals just as quickly; Peskow is everywhere, committing murder and theft with nary a guard in sight, then passing through Canadian border customs with no questions asked. The story collapses under the weight of these unbelievable occurrences. "Terma" is also burdened with the two corniest scenes in all of X-FILES history: Mulder's triumphant entrance into the Senate committee room, complete with French horns in the musical score and a hug from Scully (she should have punched him out for ditching her again) and later his self-righteous speech to the committee about its refusal to see the truth. Best leave moments like these to Frank Capra. And yet, "Terma" has its moments. Rob Bowman directed

this and "Tunguska," and both episodes look great. The dual images of Mulder and Scully in their cells—his filthy, hers antiseptic—makes for a telling parallel between the Russian and American governments. The circumstances are completely different, yet, to paraphrase the prisoner in the cell next to Mulder, they're both places where the guilty rule the innocent. Skinner's meeting with Scully in her cell is wonderful, especially when Scully tells Skinner she wants to believe the committee members are acting in the best interest, but she is inclined not to follow her own judgment in this matter. One can only stand in awe of Scully's objectivity and clarity of thought. William B. Davis and John Neville, as the Cigarette Smoking Man and the Well-Mannered Man, prove once again they are masters of the conspiracy gavotte. If only the telling of the story made sense.

"You want to know everything, right? The big mystery revealed?"

—John Lee Roche to Mulder

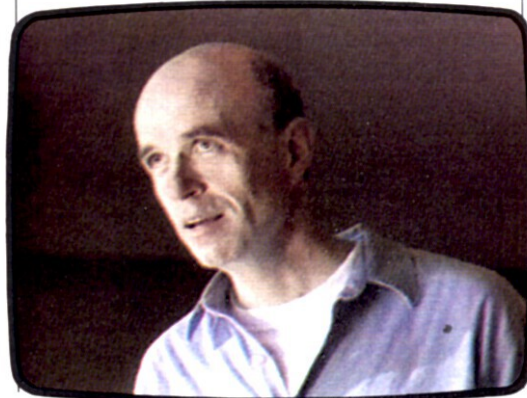
PAPER HEARTS

★★★★

12/15/96. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

The novelist David Foster Wallace once wrote that in dreams, we are our most defenseless, and from that idea springs "Paper Hearts," an episode that dares to suggest that nearly everything Mulder believes about his sister Samantha's abduction is wrong. Mulder experiences a vivid dream that leads him to the buried skeleton of a little girl, who Mulder instantly realizes must be a victim of John Lee Roche (Tom Noonan), a serial killer he helped catch several years ago when he was still in Violent Crimes. Mulder and Scully visit Roche in prison to pry from him the names and locations of any other unknown victims, and to Mulder's horror, Roche intimates he may have been responsible for Samantha's disappearance, giving details that correspond with Mulder's memories of that night. He adds that he will help only if Mulder brings him his trophies, the hearts he cut from the clothing of his victims. Mulder finds them in a volume of *Alice in Wonderland*, hidden in Roche's old car, and brings them to the prison. Unable to resist Roche's siren call, and the dreams of Samantha that haunt him, Mulder continues to play the killer's game, until he springs him from prison and takes him to Martha's Vineyard, where Roche says he will finally reveal to Mulder what happened that night in 1973. The consequences are deadly: Mulder exposes him as a liar and theorizes Roche may have been able to get into his dreams and extract his memories of Sam in order to manipulate him. Later that night Roche uses one more dream of Sam to effect his escape. Mulder, with Scully and Skinner now at his side, must hunt him down once again. The search becomes desperate, when they learn Roche has kidnapped a little girl named Caitlin he spotted on the plane up to Massachusetts. "Paper Hearts" returns to the ur-mystery of THE

Tom Noonan (the "Tooth Fairy" serial killer in *MANHUNTER*) graduates to the Dr. Hannibal Lecter-type role in "Paper Hearts."



Scully testifies before a Senate committee in "Terma," the unsatisfying conclusion of a two-part conspiracy story begun in "Tunguska."

have one semi-kinky, testosterone-laden story. It works, however, because the violence is not gratuitous. Mulder believes Krycek killed his father, and no matter how coolly he delivers his blows, Duchovny makes palpable Mulder's barely suppressed rage. The ending, when he is trapped under the wire, is a real horror. Nicholas Lea couldn't be better, whether he's second season's All-American FBI rookie, last season's rogue agent, or this season's sniveling prisoner-Russian mastermind. If we're lucky, we'll get a Krycek episode next season. Only Laurie Holden, as Marita Covarrubias, is out of place. Although Marita's dialogue with Mulder is pure business, her attitude is oddly seductive, with her low-pitched voice, meaningful pauses and glances and (although it's the middle of the night) perfectly made up face and hair. If Holden is being directed to play Marita this way, the question is why? Of more interest is the way Mulder treats his newest informant. No longer does he wait for her to contact him; he actively pursues Covarrubias' assistance, as if aid and information were now his right. He grows evermore obsessive.

X-FILES—what happened to Samantha?—and makes Mulder's search for the truth an exploration of his character when he sees his own personal mythology self-destructing before his eyes. Mulder has always gotten into killers' heads; here, Roche turns the tables and sends him dreams that speak to him more strongly than all common sense. Like Alice, who was "burning with curiosity," Mulder is compelled to follow Roche down the rabbit hole, into a world where everything is twisted around, until Mulder's innate skepticism—the "want" in "I want to believe"—saves him. Mulder turns the trick back on Roche, using what Roche has learned in Mulder's dreams to defeat him. In "Paper Hearts," Mulder is identified ever more strongly with feminine images; he has always sought one (Samantha), and here he becomes, in a sense, another of Roche's victims. Roche does not hurt Mulder physically, but he tortures him verbally and then victimizes him once last time, by forcing Mulder to do what he wants—i.e., kill him, since Roche prefers death to prison. The episode marks several important steps forward for Mulder: first when he recognizes that, even if the remains of one little girl he and Scully have found are not Samantha's, they belong to "someone;" and second, when he admits his actions are responsible for Roche's escape and his kidnapping of another girl. At the same time, his admission of responsibility means he shoulders an entire new burden of guilt to add to what he has always



"El Mundo Gira"—about mutating Mexican migrant workers—is so overloaded with ideas that it falls over and can't get up.

carried around. And his world view has a permanent crack in it: if Roche can make him believe, if only for an instant, that the aliens didn't take Samantha, then how reliable is what he does remember? For Mulder, whose greatest need is to know, the uncertainty is agonizing.

Once again, Scully's support and objectivity are invaluable, and Gillian Anderson could not be better. Scully's loathing of Roche—whom, unlike Mulder, she cannot fathom—is nearly tangible, and her gasp of dismay (when Roche tells Mulder he wants to describe Sam's kidnapping step by step, just so he can see Mulder's face) is perfect. Tom Noonan (who played Dr. Lecter's disciple, Francis "The Tooth Fairy" Dollarhyde, in *MANHUNTER*) is spectacular as Roche, and wins, hands down, the prize for *X-FILES* villain of the year. Mild, meek, low-voiced, and chillingly matter-of-fact about the horrors he has wrought, Roche is a monster. Bryn Piven deserves a special mention for his one scene as the grieving father of the first victim Mulder uncovers.

Gilligan's script is rich in imagery and references to past episodes. Mark Snow's score is haunting and beautiful, his music for the dream sequences especially helpful in evoking the childlike wonder and terror that suffuse them. Rob Bowman directs with the surest of hands. And Duchovny gives a sublime performance, traversing a rainbow of emotions with nary a misstep. His acting in the morgue scene, when he fears the



Mulder and Scully examine the remains of the victim of a serial killer, who claims they belong to Mulder's supposedly alien-abducted sister.

skeleton may be Samantha's, is heartbreaking. This is the best episode of the year.

"Scully, I've been thinking. I know that's dangerous, but just bear with me."

—Mulder

EL MUNDO GIRA

1/12/97. Written by John Shiban. Directed by Tucker Gates. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

Mulder and Scully arrive at a migrant worker camp in Fresno, California, where a young woman named Maria has died. A strange yellow rain and a flash of light melted the flesh off her bones. Mulder suspects organisms from outer space; Scully is dubious. A woman claims Maria was killed by the chupacabras, or goatsucker, a legendary creature that supposedly kills and mutilates animals. Soledad Buente (Jos Yenque) claims the murderer was his brother, Eladio (Raymond Cruz), whose attentions to Maria have incurred Soledad's wrath. Eladio, also struck by the flash, is on the run, his body slowly being taken over by a mysterious fungus that kills instantly anyone who comes in contact with it but to which Eladio has some resistance. Soon everyone is in pursuit of Eladio—Mulder and Scully, Eladio's vengeful brother, and an immigration agent named Lozano (Ruben Blades). But they keep missing him; he's one of the invisible poor Mexicans who melt into the crowd. Finally Eladio returns to the migrant camp to confront Soledad, but it's Lozano, who despises his own people, who ends up dead.

"El Mundo Gira" is so overloaded with ideas that it falls over and can't get up: an unnecessary reference to the chupacabras; ham-handed social commentary about "invisible" migrant workers (we're asked to believe no one notices the two Buente brothers, both transformed into deadly walking mushrooms by the end, just because they're poor and Mexican); and worst of all, a narrative structure of conflicting viewpoints, most likely inspired by last season's "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space,'" Unlike that sublime episode, here the overlapping storylines come off like an imposed and desperate grab to make a profound statement about humanity's need for storytelling, especially if you're a miserable migrant worker and have nothing else to look forward to in life than soap operas ("El Mundo Gira" means "The World Turns" in Spanish). The message is patronizing, to say the least.

It's always a pleasure to see Ruben Blades, even if he's stuck in the by now tiresome minority authority figure role taken on earlier by B.D. Wong in "Hell Money" and Carl Lumbly in "Teliko." Jon Joffin's cinematography is quite nice; he has a real affinity for catching the beauty of rural landscapes.

"On the other hand, how evolved can a man be who drives a Dodge Dart?"

—Mulder

LEONARD BETTS

★★★

1/26/97. Written by Vince Gilligan, John Shiban, Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

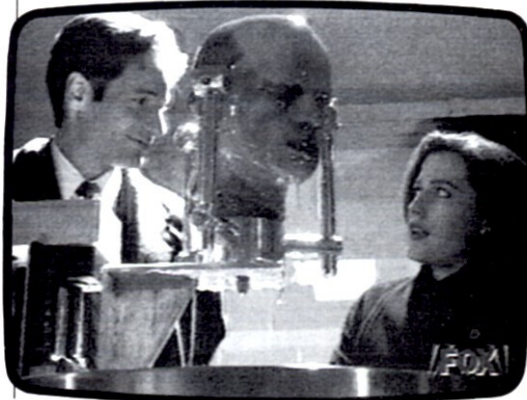
Leonard Betts (Paul McCrane), a Pittsburgh EMT, is decapitated in an ambulance crash, but that doesn't stop his headless corpse from walking out of the morgue, tossing his now useless head into the medical waste incinerator on the way out. Mulder and Scully soon find the head, and examination reveals that it is completely riddled with cancer. Mulder opines that Leonard is able to regenerate body parts, even his head, because he doesn't just have cancer; he *is* cancer. Not only that—he nourishes himself on excised tumors and is able to sense cancerous individuals. Mulder and Scully track down Leonard's mother, Elaine Tanner, who claims that her son died in a car accident six years ago. Actually, she is protecting Leonard, who is upstairs in an iodine bath, growing a new head. The investigation turns into a criminal manhunt when Leonard's former EMT partner, Michelle Wilkes (Jennifer Clement), discovers Leonard is alive, and he kills her lest she expose him. Leonard tries to fake his own death by growing a second body and putting it at the wheel of a car that bursts into flame when the two agents fire their weapons at it, but Mulder suspects a ruse and returns to Mrs. Tanner's house, where they find Leonard has extracted a small cancerous mass from his mother for food, called 911, and then departed. Scully accompanies Mrs. Tanner to the hospital in the ambulance but, once there, realizes Leonard is hiding on top of the vehicle. He attacks her and she kills him with a shock from a pair of defibrillator paddles, but not before he takes out his knife and tells her she has what he needs; i.e., she has cancer. Later that night, she wakes up to find she is experiencing a nosebleed.

There have been many outrageous cases on the *X-FILES*, but this is one of the most enjoyable. A headless corpse walking around, assaulting a lab worker and taking his clothes, and making its way home? A medical and scientific impossibility: how does he sense or see anything; how does he make his limbs move? Better not ask. Although "Leonard Betts" is not a comedy, the three writers take such pleasure in the story that you buy the situation. There is a lot of situational (and scary) humor in the script: Mulder's ill-disguised revulsion at rooting through the body parts in the incinerator, while Scully doesn't blink an eye; Leonard's head opening its eyes and looking up at a startled Scully; the cheerful scientist who slices up the head so he can get a good tissue sample. And both Mulder and Scully get funny lines, including Duchovny's ad lib of "Siskel or Ebert?" when he finds Leonard's latest discard, a torn-off thumb.

But underlying the humor is a very serious story. Invasion or violation of the body has always been an *X-FILES* theme, and cancer is the ultimate invader. The episode balances expertly the humor and the horror, until the final scenes (the fight

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Mulder and Scully examine the abandoned head of "Leonard Betts," a cancer-devouring man capable of regenerating such lost body parts.



between Scully and Leonard, Mulder's conversation with Scully, the nosebleed) when the tone is solemn, grave. The conversation between Mulder and Scully is one of the season's best scenes. Scully is terrified that she may have cancer but does not tell Mulder; Mulder realizes something is wrong but does not know what, so all he can do is be supportive. Duchovny and Anderson are terrific here, as is the decision to cut all the sound effects at this point and have Mulder and Scully slowly drive off into the night accompanied only by the melancholy chords of Mark Snow's score. Real life drama falls away at this point; this show is about a man and a woman on a mythical quest with modern-day trappings, and this magical moment acknowledges that.

"You're refusing an assignment based on the adventures of Moose and Squirrel?"

—Mulder to Scully

NEVER AGAIN

★★★

2/2/97. Written by Glen Morgan & James Wong. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Jim Gross.

"Meanwhile, Scully goes on a date." This was the *TV Guide* description of the B-plot to first season's "The Jersey Devil." Nearly four years later, Scully finally goes on another date. It all begins when she comes into the office at an emotional low point. After four years with the X-Files, she is trying to figure out where her life is going and what her place is in the FBI and with Mulder. Mulder is not receptive; he is nearly manic with worry, because he is about to leave for Graceland on an enforced vacation, thanks to some obscure regulation. Things go from bad to worse when Mulder hands Scully an assignment to go to Philadelphia and check out some Russian emigres who claim to be selling secret reports about crashed alien ships in the U.S.S.R. She resents his attitude; he resents her resentment. He leaves, and she goes, reluctantly, to Philadelphia. While discovering that the Russian reports are indeed bogus, Scully meets a young man named Ed Jerse (Rodney Rowland). Following a phone tiff with Mulder, she impulsively calls Ed and takes him up on his offer of a date. What she doesn't know is that Ed is hugely bitter after a recent divorce and Betty, the tattoo of a woman on his arm, is talking to him, driving him mad with her taunts about all the women he meets. Scully decides to get a tattoo, like Ed, to mark the occasion of their meeting; then they return to his apartment, where the next morning she learns the hard way about Ed's psychotic breaks.

"Never Again" certainly is a change of pace for THE X-FILES and for Scully. It's startling to see her unhappiness suddenly expressed so openly, yet four years of Mulder's self-absorption, along with everything else that's happened to her, make Scully's petulance understandable. Anderson and Rowland have a great deal of chemistry together, and Scully and Ed's mutual attraction is completely believable. Furthermore, unlike Mulder, Ed listens

On forced vacation (at Graceland, no less!) Mulder breaks into an Elvis-like karate move after hearing that Scully is going on a date.



"Leonard Betts," who feeds on cancer, attacks Scully, indicating that she has a tumor—a theme explored throughout the rest of the season.

to Scully, which draws her in right away. No wonder she wants to help, not run, when she learns he may be responsible for a murder. But the episode is not really about Scully and Ed so much as it is about Scully realizing that, as close as she is to Mulder, her life belongs to her and not to anyone else; and it's about Mulder realizing that, alone as he feels himself, he matters to Scully, and she matters to him. The final line, Mulder's "But it's..." says more about what's going through his head than an entire speech.

Anderson gives a wonderful account of Scully's life lesson, particularly when Scully gets tattooed on her back. The look of mingled pain and joy on her face is exquisite to behold—when have we ever seen Scully look like *that*?—and Mark Snow's slow, almost druggy music, is the perfect accompaniment. The image of the dried rose as a symbol for Scully is quite lovely. Alas, what a disappointment to have the story's more intimate moments edited to leave open the question whether Scully and Ed physically consummated their brief relationship. What else could have happened, and why play coy about it? The audience is grown up enough to understand that Scully is an extraordinary woman—with normal human desires. The X-file here should not be whether Scully and Ed had sex; the mystery is the origin of the voice in Ed's head. Another disappointment is the placement of this episode after "Leonard Betts," although it was filmed first. Nothing in this episode points to fear of cancer as Scully's motivation for her behavior. The events of the past four years are more than sufficient to make her go off as she does. Ironically, the cancer motivation lessens the gravity of her concerns, which are those of a woman contemplating the path of her life, not her death. "Memento Mori" is the proper follow-up to "Leonard Betts." "Never Again" may not be best Scully-centered episode ever ("Irresistible" is), but it's a fascinating look at a whole new side of her.

"What makes you think this is a conspiracy, that the government's involved?"

—Scully

"What makes you think it isn't?"

—Mulder

MEMENTO MORI

★★1/2

2/9/97. Written by Carter, Gilligan, John Shiban, Spotnitz. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

Scully has cancer. That is the overwhelming, insurmountable fact of "Memento Mori." The episode opens on a striking image, a modern-day, technological memento mori: an x-ray of Scully's skull, the cancer brightly glowing in the area of her sinus cavity. In voice over, we hear Scully read out loud her diary, which she now writes as if it were a letter to Mulder, explaining her thoughts and feelings as she deals with her illness, and which she hopes will help him if the day should come when she can no longer be with him.

The story proper begins with Scully's telling Mulder that her cancer is untreatable by conventional methods, so they decide to return to Allentown, Pennsylvania, to see the MUFON women Scully met in "Nisei." They find that all the women, including Betsy Hagopian, who was already sick in "Nisei," have died. The only exception is Penny Northern, (Gillian Barber) who is afflicted but still alive and receiving an experimental treatment from a Dr. Scanlon. Scully checks herself in for the same treatment. Mulder pursues other avenues, first asking Skinner to set up a meeting with the Cigarette Smoking Man. Skinner refuses, telling him to seek another way, so Mulder initiates a break-in, with the aid of the Lone Gunmen, at the Lombard Research Facility, where he discovers that Scanlon is a member of the staff. He sends Byers to warn Scully to discontinue treatment, and continues snooping around until he stumbles upon a group of young male clones, who show him the tanks where new clones are growing and a storage facility where human ova, including Scully's, is kept. One of the clones explains the abducted women underwent a high radiation treatment that caused superovulation, but they were then left barren after the ova were extracted. The radiation also gave them cancer. An assassin shows up, and Mulder barely escapes with his life. He returns directly to the hospital, where he sits, waiting for Scully, who is maintaining a vigil by Penny's bed. Penny dies, and Scully—at her lowest point, because of the



Following up on the seed planted in "Leonard Betts," Scully is diagnosed with an inoperable cancer in "Memento Mori."

nausea caused by the discontinued treatment and by her grief about Penny—is comforted by Mulder.

"Memento Mori" is a tearjerker, all right. Much of it works because of the conviction that Duchovny and Anderson bring to their roles; in some scenes, their acting is the episode. They breathe life upon it much as Mulder instills spirit back in Scully at the end. Otherwise, "Memento Mori" seems like a slow-motion, less pointed remake of "One Breath," with a few scenes from "The Erlenmeyer Flask," "End Game," and "Nisei" thrown in to flesh out the story. Scully's in the hospital, and when she's not writing platitudes in her journal, she is speaking them with Penny. Mulder runs around trying to find the cure and, as in "One Breath," seeks out the Lone Gunmen, who provide information no one else can acquire. We see clones and water tanks and Betsy Hagopian's house again. Mulder and Scully's mutual support again gives them the courage to go on. Mulder learns a smidgen of new information, about the ova. This has been a bad season for mothers and children, all of whom seem to find a common enemy either in patriarchal society in general or more specifically in the patriarchal conspiracy, as in Scully's case. The male characters of this series have a lot to answer for. Two scenes play true: Skinner's clandestine deal with the devil, the Cigarette Smoking Man, a terrific plot twist that could have been stretched out for a long time, but



ran into a brick wall in "Zero Sum." The other is the conversation in the hospital hallway at the end between Mulder and Scully. This is Mulder's finest moment, when he rises above his fear and habitual self-absorption to bolster Scully's faltering spirits and bring her back to life. And so she revives, exquisitely and unforgettably, demonstrating the backbone and grit that has been hers from the pilot on. Duchovny and Anderson are so into the moment here that they imbue what could have been something maudlin with great power and meaning. Anderson, despite her wan face (the sickest she looks this season), is absolutely radiant with Scully's realization that she must seek the truth within herself.

Unfortunately, Scully is never this strong again this season, unless her cancer doesn't figure into an episode. And that leads into:

1. The writers have to either deal with the cancer or ignore it. To deal with it with any veracity whatsoever, Scully would take medical leave and pursue the latest experimental treatments, some of which might make her very sick. But if the writers did this, then they could not have Mulder and Scully doing what they're supposed to do in this show: investigate unexplained cases. Therefore, they have chosen to ignore it. They mention it now and then, and Scully gets the occasional nosebleed, but it's not real cancer. It's fantasy television cancer. Despite all the aliens and mutants and ghosts, this show is based in reality. Scully saying she's going to walk out of the hospital and go back to work, because that's how she came in, is sheer nonsense—or maybe a death wish. If the truth is really in her, as she says, it's time to go to the Mayo Clinic. Fantasy cancer is at its worst in "Gethsemane," where we learn it's spread to her bloodstream but she not only looks great—she also feels so healthy she can chase down a speeding car in a parking garage.

2. The cancer glues Mulder and Scully together. If there is any conflict between them—and the heart of this show is the conflict between their differing views of the world—then Mulder looks like, well, a schmuck. He's always been a selfish neurotic obsessive, and viewers tolerate that because of his passion and his extraordinarily dysfunctional background. But Scully has cancer, and Mulder's quest and problems, extreme though they are, must take second place to his partner's physical health. But since Mulder's problems can't, for the sake of the show, disappear, Scully's cancer does the disappearing act (in "Demons" and "Synchrony"), or the writers just don't have her tell him what's going on (like in "Gethsemane," where she doesn't tell him the cancer has spread). After all they've been through, why Scully won't tell Mulder how ill she is (we have to take her word for it, since she appears unchanged) is a mystery.

3. You don't need cancer to write stories about issues that could potentially divide Mulder and Scully. They're already right there, built into the

The investigation of a murder in the Jewish community leads Mulder and Scully to a neo-Nazi sympathizer in "Kaddish."



In "Memento Mori," Scully seeks out the Mutual UFO Network women seen in last season's "Nisei." All but one are dead from cancer.

show from day one. We saw some of these explored in "Never Again," and they have arisen in other episodes, like "The Erlenmeyer Flask," "Colony," and "Anasazi." These things should arise naturally, in and of themselves, because of who Mulder and Scully are. Cancer is just an easy device to push them to the forefront.

"It seems pretty redundant, doesn't it? Messing up somebody you've already killed?"

—Mulder

KADDISH

★★★

2/16/97. Written by Howard Gordon. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

"Kaddish" draws upon Jewish tradition and lore for its murder mystery. A Hassidic shopkeeper in Brooklyn named Isaac Luria is murdered by three young toughs. When one of the toughs is murdered, and Isaac's fingerprints are found on his body, the Brooklyn police contact the FBI's civil rights division, which forwards the case to Mulder and Scully. They contact Isaac's fiancé, Ariel Weiss (Justine Miceli), and her father Jacob (David Groh), and ask to exhume Isaac's coffin, to see if he really is there. Jacob shows them an anti-semitic brochure that leads them to a Nazi printer named Brunjes (Jonathan Whittaker), who Mulder and Scully suspect initiated the original attack on Isaac. Another one of the toughs is murdered by Isaac's grave, and in their investigation at the site, Mulder finds in the grave a sacred Hebrew text, the *Sefer Yetzirah*. A scholar (David Freedman) describes the book's contents to him: it contains instructions for the creation of a golem, a soulless man formed out of mud, whose role is to protect the community. Enough evidence turns up to place Jacob Weiss under arrest, despite Ariel's protests that he is innocent. When Mulder and Scully return to talk to Ariel, she shows them a ring decorated with a miniature castle and tells them how it was a communal wedding ring worn by all the brides in the little town in Europe her father came from. The town was destroyed in the Holocaust, and her father has hidden the ring all these years, but he felt her union with Isaac would symbolically restore the community he had lost. Mulder begins to suspect that the revenge killings of Isaac's murderers, including Brunjes, are not motivated by hate, but by love.

"Kaddish" is a flawed yet unusually affecting episode. Its main problem are the neo-Nazi villains. Considering the story's Brooklyn setting, where the racial tensions are between Orthodox Jews and the African-American community, bringing in a Neo-Nazi villain is a cop-out. They make it almost easy to justify the revenge killings. Gordon had originally made Isaac's killers African-American, and it's a pity the network insisted on simplifying what could have been a complex examination of the tragic conflict between two communities that have so much in common. Even so, Gordon created some

Cigarette Smoking Man indulging in arguably unreliable memories or even sheer fantasy, as if he were writing another story in his head. Or the narrator could be Frohike, giving his interpretation of the magazine story he feels might have been written by the Cigarette Smoking Man.

But for Morgan and Wong, the events are the real history, even if they are related in flashback. "The Cigarette Smoking Man's flashbacks were my idea, because I indeed wanted the episode to be a memoir," Morgan said. But the idea that Frohike could be the real narrator was a Carter-imposed addition to the script, to make it seem as if the events of the episode were not real. Carter even changed the name of the script, from "Memoirs of a Cigarette Smoking Man" to "Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man." "The episode is a parody of conspiracy theories, yet in context of the television show, I would like to think that it happened," Morgan said. "The episode does make it look like it could be Frohike's or Cancer Man's imagination, but I think it's just as believable as anything else we've seen on the show."

"I approached it as if the events were real," added Wong. "It was kind of a self-parody, in that we were having a little bit of fun with the show, but I had to approach it like it happened. The script is written in such a way that you can take it for how you want it. It's not rock solid that this actually happened, but on the other hand, we're not winking to or nudging the audience. It is ambiguous enough for the audience to go, 'It could be his overblown memory of who he is or his overblown feeling of how powerful he is or what he's done in his life.' Or it could be Frohike telling who he thinks the Cancer Man is."

"Musings" opens in 1961 with the young Cigarette Smoking Man (played by Chris Owens) and young Bill Mulder as Army captains stationed at Fort Bragg. Morgan had read about military units at Fort Bragg that supposedly carried out assassinations at the behest of the CIA, and there is a clear implication that the young Cigarette Smoking Man has already participated in several illicit operations. We also learn that the Cigarette Smoking Man had been raised in an orphanage after the death of his mother and the execution of his father, a Soviet spy. He is summoned to a secret meeting where a major general (Donnelly Rhodes) tells him that even though his father was a communist spy, he was an "extraordinary man," and the general knows this quality runs in the family. The general then speaks disparagingly of the failed Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba, whereupon another man, in civilian clothes, offers the young Cigarette Smoking Man a startling mission, the assassination of President Kennedy. Morgan explained, "Everything America has done in

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interesting parallels with his villains. The significance of words and letters in Jewish culture is made clear (even the spaces between letters have meaning), but Brunjes, the printer, takes no heed of the harm his words cause. His minions are even more soulless than the golem. There is also a nice parallel drawn between the paranoid Brunjes and Mulder, pointing out, again, what happens when words are used irresponsibly. Although Gordon's script ignores, in many places, real Jewish practice and custom, the story still derives naturally from the ethnic setting, unlike some of the other episodes where the ethnicity of the characters seems grafted onto the script merely to add some color. Here the events arise out of the characters themselves, and the burdens their traditions and history place upon them. Ariel not only grieves for her murdered husband, but feels the weight of history upon her in the form of her father's wish to see his community restored by her marriage; in creating the golem, she not only brings her beloved back to life but fulfills her father's wishes. She cannot help what she does, yet what she does is wrong, and death is the result. The final scene between Ariel and the golem, now in the handsome form of Isaac, is profoundly moving, as Ariel tearfully says her final goodbyes and tenderly erases the letter on the golem's hand which will cause his destruction. He disintegrates, the mud looking like tear drops, and as Ariel feels the dirt in her hand, the image recalls the beginning of the episode, where she threw dirt on Isaac's grave. The mud is a leitmotif, a reminder



Mulder gets a bead on a vengeful Vietnam vet who has been assassinating generals who hid the truth about POWs, in "Unrequited."

of death, a beautiful way to translate into visual terms the depth of Ariel's grief. Anderson is very good. Duchovny too, though his performance is odd, in that his Mulder is so strongly affected by the case, yet never says why. There is some underlying motivation here that is never made clear, something more than just righteous anger at the racist Brunjes.

"I found his story compelling, personally, but then again, I believed the Warren Commission."

—Mulder

UNREQUITED

2/23/97. Teleplay by Howard Gordon & Chris Carter. Story by Gordon. Directed by James Charleston. Editor, Jim Gross.

A slight story that collapses under the weight of its message, "Unrequited" fails to bring to life any of the guest characters. A Vietnam POW, Nathaniel Trager (Peter LaCroix), is rescued from 20 years of captivity by a paramilitary group and brought back to the United States, where he promptly vanishes. Soon, generals are being murdered, at close range, by an armed assassin no one can see. Mulder theorizes that, during his captivity, Teager may have learned the trick of making himself invisible and is now taking



In "Kaddish," Ariel (Justine Miceli) erases from her dead fiancé's hand the Kabbalistic symbol, that has brought him back to life as a golem.

advantage of his ability to take revenge on the generals who covered up the facts about American POWs left in Vietnam. Scully has virtually no theory to offer, except to doubt such a thing can be done.

Although the episode copies the technique used successfully in "Colony," "Tunguska," "End Game," and "Terma,"—of beginning an episode at a dramatic moment (in this case, Mulder and Scully and other FBI agents are trying to spot Teager in a crowd before he can shoot another general) and returning to it later on—here it just comes off as a writer's device. It's some anonymous general in peril, and it's hard to get worked up on his behalf. The rest of the episode proceeds in flashback, and by the end you're almost glad the general may be shot, because, like all the other military personnel here, he is a stereotype, not a fleshed out character. The generals are all hypocritical fat-cats (note to TV producers: generals are not allocated stretch limousines); the vets are all victims. Scott Hylands, as the blowhard Marine general Bloch, overacts dreadfully. LaCroix, a Vancouver actor (previously seen in "E.B.E." and "Ascension") gets a big break here as Teager, and he tries hard, but even he can't bring the character to life. The real mystery is the whereabouts of the military's own protective services and the Secret Service? why is the FBI suddenly guarding generals? Marita Covarrubias is dragged into the whole thing, too, for no other reason than to shove the plot forward. There is some emotional resonance towards the end, when Mulder, at his most pigheaded, accuses Skinner, a Vietnam vet himself, of caving in to the military after Teager's body is identified as someone else's, and the case is more or less closed. In a rare, welcome moment of vulnerability, Mitch Pileggi lets himself go and shows, in a close-up, the pain behind Skinner's tightly-wound reserve. And that says a thousand things more meaningful than the crane shot that

"Unrequited" begins in mid-story, with an assassination attempt on a general by an assailant who can make himself "unseen."



lingers on a flapping American flag. But it's too little, too late.

"The only way to fly."

—Larold Rebhun, passenger on flight 549

TEMPUS FUGIT

★★1/2

3/16/97. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

"Tempus Fugit" begins and ends with the death of innocents, bystanders to the events of a conspiracy of which they have little or no knowledge. Among the dead is Max Fenig, the alien abductee of first season's "Fallen Angel," who returns in the teaser as a passenger on doomed Flight 549, which has plowed into the ground in Northville, New York. When Max's sister, Sharon Graffia (Chilton Crane), informs Mulder and Scully of Max's presence on the flight, the agents attach themselves to the investigation. Mulder discovers discrepancies between the reported time of the crash and the time on one passenger's watch (before all the recovered watches mysteriously disappear), and he quickly forwards the theory that Max was transporting an item that drew the attention of an alien aircraft, which may have some bearing on the cause of the crash. Scully and National Transportation Safety Board investigator Mike Millar (Joe Spano) are dubious, until Air Force Reserve sergeant Louis Frish (Tom Collins)



In "Tempus Fugit," a commercial airline crash seems to be linked to the presence of a UFO that was pursuing one of the passengers.

states he believes the military shot down the plane. Mulder suggests the military shot down an alien aircraft, resulting somehow in the crash of Flight 549. Unknown to Mulder and Scully, one member of the investigative team is a man named Garrett, who uses acid to erase the face and fingerprints from the corpse of an operative who had been on the plane in pursuit of Max. Scully takes Frish to Washington, D.C., to place him under federal protection, while Mulder goes diving into the Great Scanadaga Lake, in search of the missing downed alien craft. In Washington, where Scully has taken Frish to meet a federal marshal, Garrett shoots at Frish, but instead hits a tipsy Agent Pendrell, who accidentally stepped into the line of fire.

"Tempus Fugit" ("time flees" in Latin) is a huge episode, full of long shots of enormous locations like the crash site and the hangar where the wreckage is being assembled. There's lots of action too, including an nighttime car chase sequence on an airport runway: Mulder, Scully and Frish dodge an incoming plane while pursued at high speed by conspiracy thugs. The scene gets the blood pumping, but adds absolutely nothing to the story.

As the first half of a two-parter, "Tempus Fugit" is gripping, because of the action, the impressive location work, the possible return of aliens, and the unraveling of yet another conspiracy. Duchovny and Anderson make the most of the Scully birthday celebration that takes



Max, previously seen in "Fallen Angel," is abducted by aliens in "Max," a flashback explanation of the crash in "Tempus Fugit."

place, early on, in the restaurant where Pendrell will be shot, and Duchovny effectively communicates Mulder's sadness when he inspects Max's corpse. But what a disappointment to bring back Scott Bellis, so wonderful as Max in "Fallen Angel," and then give him nothing to do except look scared in the teaser when he realizes the aliens have caught up with him. Also, Scully looks foolish when she lets Frish make a call from her apartment, since it predictably alerts the conspiracists to their presence in Washington. And Mulder's clear view of the alien body in the submerged alien ship robs this story of any ambiguity.

Spano is warm and sympathetic as Millar, the honest investigator, and Collins catches perfectly the bearing of a military man. Mark Snow works the miracle of expressing, in music, the passage and loss of time, and the loss of human life.

"I'd go with you, but I'm afraid they'd lock me up."

—Mulder to Scully (when they need to interview an inmate at a mental institution)

MAX ★ 1/2
3/23/97. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

The military apprehends Mulder as he emerges from the Great Scanadaga Lake. Scully shoots Garrett in the leg, but he escapes. Scully's nose bleeds; Pendrell is bundled off to the hospital, and Skinner arrives to inform Scully that the military are placing Frish and Mulder under military arrest. Scully retrieves Mulder from custody and tells him that Sharon isn't really Max's sister—she's an aeronautics engineer who has been in and out of mental institutions. Mulder, who has small radiation blisters on his forehead, is convinced they are from the craft at the bottom of the lake and that the military shot down the UFO that had Flight 549 gripped in a beam. They try to convince a dubious Millar that Max was carrying something illicit on the plane: Scully thinks it's a case of high tech industrial espionage; Mulder is convinced the device was constructed with alien technology that the aliens wanted back. Millar can only wrap up the investigation, although he knows something is not right. Scully visits Sharon in the hospital; Mulder goes to Max's trailer and finds an airport baggage claim ticket. He claims Max's bag and boards the next flight to Washington, D.C., even though he knows he is being pursued by conspiracy gunmen. Garrett follows Mulder on board, but everyone's plans go a little awry just as Mulder's watch stops.

Like "Tempus Fugit," "Max" looks really good. The alien abduction sequence, seen in flashback as Mulder describes what he thinks happened to Max, is an excellent combination of lighting and computerized and mechanical effects. It's been a long time since we had a meat and potatoes alien story, too. But unlike a lot of two-parters that have too much, this one has too little. It could have been a taut one-hour episode, but we get meaningless

action sequences, like the airport chase in "Tempus Fugit" or the unnecessary (but eye-popping) mid-air abduction of Max, followed by an overlong scene of panicking passengers when the plane goes out of control. There is no ambiguity to the story, no doubt at the end as to what happened. And then there is Mulder, who gets on a packed plane, knowing men with guns are after him, knowing that what's in his bag will attract the attention of the aliens. The theme of this two-parter is the death of innocents—Pendrell, the passengers of Flight 549—who step unknowingly into the path of the bad guys (Max at least knew the risks). This is not just obsessive Mulder being thoughtless; this is out and out bad writing, not thinking through what Mulder would do in that situation. The last thing he'd do would be to trap himself on the plane, where he could lose the evidence to the bad guys or the aliens, or put all those passengers into the same danger that Max put them. Then to cap that, Scully offers her thoughts on the meaning of the key chain Mulder gave her in "Tempus Fugit," in what may be the worst piece of dialogue yet on this show—her words are a speech that could have been cranked out by presidential advisors. Gillian Anderson should take home an Emmy just for getting through it and making it sound almost natural.

"So this photo that was never taken, when was it never taken?"

—Scully

SYNCHRONY ★★
4/13/97. Written by Howard Gordon & David Greenwalt. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Jim Gross.

Jason Nichols, a young M.I.T. cryobiologist (Joseph Fuqua), is accused of pushing one of his graduate students into the path of a bus; the police believe his motive to be fear that the student would go public with his knowledge that Nichols falsified data in order to renew a research grant. Nichols claims he was trying to save the student; furthermore, a mysterious old man (Michael Fairman) had called him by name and warned him about the bus before being bundled away by a campus policeman who is subsequently found frozen to death, as is a Japanese scientist named Yonichi. Mulder and Scully learn from Nichols' girlfriend, Lisa Ianelli (Susan Lee Hoffman) that Nichols is working on a chemical compound that will let biological cells survive the freezing process; right now it exists only a computer model. Strangely enough, it is found in the blood samples of the campus policeman and Yonichi. After Mulder and Scully find a photo of Lisa, Nichols and Yonichi—even though the three have never met—Mulder suspects the old man may be a visitor from the future who has returned to change the past.

In a show that has always acknowledged the weight of history, the motives of the elder Jason ring true: he has returned because time travel has caused a world without history, without hope, where

In "Synchrony," Scully examines a victim who has been mysteriously frozen to death—by a chemical process that could only have come from the future.



everything is known (a world very unlike the world of the X-Files!) Other than that, "Synchrony" is a middling episode. Mulder and Scully run around but have little effect on the action, and the guest characters, while nicely acted, are not particularly compelling. And time travel is a little weird, even for THE X-FILES; although it is based in scientific theory, it takes away from the reality that is this show's foundation. There are effective moments sprinkled throughout, like Mulder's using Scully's theories from her physics thesis to explain why time travel may be possible, but there are some unfortunate plot holes too. Why do the police stop watching old Jason's hotel room? (So Lisa can meet with him without interruption and learn important facts.) Why does Mulder send young Jason off to find Scully, instead of just calling her cell phone? (So Jason can duck out and find old Jason and battle with him until they both burst into flames,



Darin Morgan, who won an Emmy for writing "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," appears before the camera in Vince Gilligan's "Small Potatoes."

apparently because they both can't exist in the same time period.) The various bodies, both frozen and burned, are wonderfully gruesome.

"Just because I was born with a tail, no woman would want me?"

—Eddie Van Blundht

SMALL POTATOES ★★★★★
4/20/97. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Cliff Bole. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

Belying its title, "Small Potatoes" is a four-course meal of comic riches, sorely needed in this downbeat season. Vince Gilligan proves that, if we can't have Darin Morgan ("Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space,'"") writing comedy, then Gilligan amply fills his shoes. The difference between the two writers is that Gilligan is the believer who writes from inside the characters' heads, and Morgan is the skeptical, acerbic outsider. Despite the disparity in their approaches, both of them understand Mulder and Scully and use their comedy to strip away the two agents' pretensions to reveal, sometimes only for a startling second, the humanity beneath.

It's only fitting, then, that Darin Morgan returns to THE X-FILES, if not as a writer, then as an actor. And for an Emmy-winning writer, he's not bad in front of the camera; in a performance that seems based on Eddie Bracken's work in Preston Sturges comedies, he is delightful as sad-sack Eddie Van Blundht, a man with the ability to morph himself into the shape of other people. Eddie, who was born with a tail that he had surgically removed, is convinced he is completely unattractive, so he uses his gift to pose as the husbands of several women in his little West Virginia town. The result of his romantic encounters are so many babies with tails that the couples, all clients of a fertility specialist, are ready to lynch the doctor, until DNA tests prove they have the same father. Mulder and Scully investigate. Eddie traps Mulder in a hospital closet, takes his place, and targets Scully as next on his list of romantic conquests. It's amazing what a bottle of

wine, a puppy-dog face, and a willingness to make small talk can accomplish, even with the business-like Scully.

Morgan is wonderful, and so is Gillian Anderson (the look on her face when she realizes Mulder is not Mulder, just as he is about to kiss her, is sublime). The show, though, really belongs to Duchovny, who sheds po-faced Mulder with what seems like an enormous sigh of relief (not surprising, considering how well he's handled the deadpan humor in Darin Morgan's own episodes). He instantly transforms himself into Eddie, with all of the mannerisms and expressions that Morgan gives the character. Even better, he successfully meets the challenge of playing Eddie while Eddie is pretending to be Mulder. And Duchovny does physical comedy too: the funniest thing all year is Duchovny, as Eddie, nearly falling out of Mulder's office chair.

There is more to this episode, however, than comedy. Both Morgan and Duchovny capture the sadder side of Eddie, a man with not a shred of self-esteem. One of the most illuminating and painful scenes occurs when Eddie, in the guise of his own father, verbally abuses himself with what surely were his real father's words. Knowing Eddie's history makes him more than just a comic character, and Mulder can see himself in this man, with whom, on a superficial level, he has nothing in common. Both Eddie and Mulder represent extremes: Eddie knows how to talk to women, but in the end it's all small talk and one night stands; Mulder doesn't know the meaning of small talk, but any sexual encounters he might have would be one-night stands too. And neither of them will ever get Agent Scully. Mulder's little line to Scully, "I'm no Eddie Van Blundt," may possibly be the most revealing thing he's ever said about himself, and both he and Scully are fully aware of it's implications. A first-rate script by Gilligan, first-rate performances all around, and an excellent X-FILES debut by director Cliff Bole (STAR TREK: TNG).

"You sound agitated, Mr. Skinner."

—the Cigarette Smoking Man

ZERO SUM

★ 1/2

5/4/97. Written by Gordon & Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Michael S. Stern.

Gillian Anderson took a week off from THE X-FILES to film a supporting role in the feature film THE MIGHTY, so Scully is absent from this episode, which focuses on Skinner and Mulder. The excuse for Scully's absence is that she is in the hospital getting tests. Her cancer, in fact, is the impetus behind the actions in this episode. Skinner is compelled, through his deal with the Cigarette Smoking Man made back in "Memento Mori," to clean up all traces of an incident that has potential to expose the conspiracy. Those bees from "Herrenvolk" are back: a shipment was damaged when it was sent, via courier, to a small West Virginia town. The packages ended up at the delivery company's routing factory for inspection, and now the bees have nested in the walls. A female employee is killed when the bees swarm her. Unfortunately, Skinner is not exactly cautious about hiding his role in this cover-up (maybe he wants Mulder to find out?), and it's not long before Mulder discovers who has eliminated the evidence, including computer files sent to him by the local detective on the bee death case. Skinner confesses his deal to Mulder, and the two work together to piece together exactly what Skinner was covering up. Meanwhile, in a scene that is a direct steal from Alfred Hitchcock's THE BIRDS, the Conspirators carry out their latest experiment by loosing the smallpox-carrying (!) bees on a schoolyard full of children. Marita Covarrubias also shows up, to find out what Skinner knows. The episode ends with a frustrated Skinner nearly shooting the Cigarette Smoking Man and Marita seemingly as a member of the Conspiracy.

The pacing and tone are off in the first quarter of this episode, with long scenes of Skinner, the



Skinner, who has been coerced into covering up evidence for the Cancer Man, is racked with guilt upon viewing one of the conspiracy's victims.

Assistant Director of the FBI no less, carrying out the unpleasant task of covering up the bee incident at the express delivery company. There is something unintentionally comic about watching the vital, ultra-dignified Skinner scrubbing the bathroom floor and checking to make sure it's spotless. We might be tempted to regard Skinner stripping down to his BVDs as the physical expression of his helplessness brought on by his deal to do the Cigarette Smoking Man's bidding in exchange for a cure for Scully's cancer, but alas, it's merely gratuitous eye candy. The most egregious plot twist, however, is Skinner's telling Mulder about his deal. Whatever ironic tragedy the writers might have developed out of this pact with the Cigarette Smoking Man has been blown, instantly. Still, maybe that's for the best—the real conflict lies between Mulder and the Smoking Man, not Skinner and the Smoking Man. The episode, then, is purely plot; it gives out a bit more information about the Conspiracy: now we know why they're engaging in bee husbandry, although the ultimate purpose of this fast-acting smallpox remains unknown; we learn Marita isn't on the up and up with Mulder; and Scully is a bit sicker, which dovetails into the events of "Elegy" and "Gethsemane." Duchovny and Pileggi give good performances in this episode, but that's all that can be said of them. Anderson's absence also drives home that an episode without Scully feels pretty empty. The one real moment in "Zero Sum" is the look of shock on Mulder's face when Skinner's image solidifies on the computer screen.

"I'm just a human being, after all!"

—Chuck Forsch

ELEGY

★★★

5/4/97. Written by John Shiban. Directed by James Charleston. Editor, Jim Gross.

The plot that is the X-file falls apart by the end

Mulder tries to recuperate in "Demons," after waking up covered in blood, in a strange hotel room with no memories of the past 48 hours.



of "Elegy," but the emotional impact on Scully, who finds herself confronted by a supernatural harbinger of death, is memorable. Someone in the Washington, D.C., area is killing young women. Mulder becomes intrigued when he hears that Angie Pintero, the owner of a bowling alley, saw the image of one of the victims in the machinery of a pin setter, moments before her body was actually found across the street. Mulder thinks that Angie has seen a "fetch," a spirit that appears to people about to die (Angie later suffers a fatal heart attack). They trace a 911 call that alerted the police to the body, and the police suspect Harold Spuller, an inmate of a psychiatric institution who worked part-time at the bowling alley. Harold clearly has knowledge of the case but is too scared to talk. The true culprit is revealed when a nurse at the psychiatric hospital attacks Scully in the same way she attacked her previous victims.

Nancy Fish, wearing a really bad wig, plays Nurse Innes as if she were Nurse Ratchet on speed; the character's motives are muddled and not particularly interesting. In other words, the X-file itself is more or less irrelevant, except as a device to get Scully, who sees the image of another murder victim while cleaning up her latest nosebleed, to face her own mortality. Also, this is one of those episodes in which, annoyingly, Scully



In "Elegy," actress Nancy Fish plays the murderous Nurse Innes like ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST's Nurse Ratchet on speed.

is more of a psychologist than Mulder—who even asks her for a psychological interpretation of the case! Steven M. Porter as Harold, Alex Bruhanski as Angie, and Sydney Lassick (ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST) as Chuck Forsch are all wonderful, and Gillian Anderson renders beautifully Scully's shock and confusion at witnessing the frightening sight of the ghostly girl with the cut throat. The most telling scenes are at the end: when Scully finally tells Mulder about the apparition, he responds with a mixture of anger and worry, and she retreats to her car to cry alone. Only the hardest of hearts wouldn't break for Scully; but the episode would have been even more effective if the case had been compelling, too. Sadly, Harold's off-screen death comes as a mere afterthought.

"I feel really good right now."

—Mulder, after a seizure

DEMONS

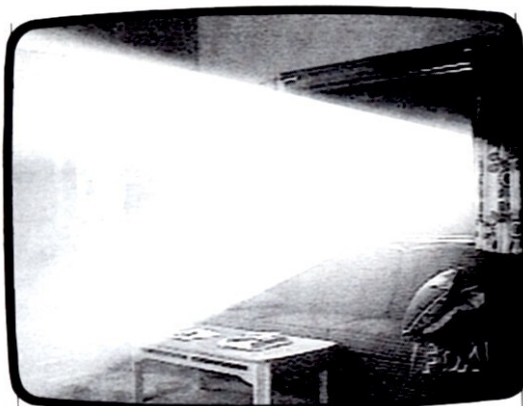
★★★ 1/2

5/11/97. Written by R.W. Goodwin. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor, Heather MacDougall.

"Demons" opens on a totally disorienting scene: a hyper-realistic flashback of bursts of light and sound in which Mulder finds himself at his family's Rhode Island summer house, where 12-year-old Fox and 8-year-old Samantha watch in fear as their parents scream and argue. Cut to Mulder waking up in a strange Rhode Island motel room, his head pounding, memory of the last two days gone, and blood on his shirt. Waking up with amnesia, and retracing one's footsteps are a hoary

movie device (remember D.O.A., not to mention last season's "Avatar"?), so in that aspect, "Demons" is disappointing. But it works as a character study of Mulder, who, we soon learn, will go to any length—except one—to find out what happened to Samantha. After Scully arrives in record time, she and Mulder investigate the events of the past two days. They trace him back to a house owned by a couple named David and Amy Cassandra, who they find shot dead, and Mulder is arrested by the local police as a suspect. At the same time, he continues to suffer seizures, from which he learns more and more about that night in Rhode Island, and for the first time he experiences a childhood memory of the Cigarette Smoking Man (played by Chris Owens, first seen in "Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man"). Fortunately both for Mulder and for moving the story along, Scully soon uncovers enough evidence to free him. They learn that Amy Cassandra and another man, a police officer who has committed suicide, believed themselves to be alien abductees and had been treated by a Dr. Charlie Goldstein (Mike Nussbaum) with a combination of a hallucinogenic anesthetic (also found in Mulder's bloodstream), light and sound stimulation, and most frighteningly, a small hole drilled in the skull. Mulder and Scully believe that Mulder must have also been treated by this man. Convinced by his flashbacks that his mother knows more than she has revealed, he and Scully drive to her house, but she greets Mulder's questions with hostility and a slap. Mulder, desperate to find the answers, returns to Dr. Goldstein for one more treatment, then retreats to his family's summer house to undergo, willingly, as many seizures and flashbacks as he can, in the hope that he will finally what happened to Samantha.

"Demons" is a sad story. The structure is not particularly imaginative, but Mulder's condition is intriguing. What can you say about a man, desperate to access the blank spot in his memory, who will let



One of the many flashbacks experienced by Mulder in the course of "Demons," as he tries to access his memories of his sister's abduction.

suggesting very strongly that Mulder's parents and the Cigarette Smoking Man were involved, rather than aliens. Mulder's alien memories must be covering something incredibly painful. In this regard, THE X-FILES is turning into a generational saga, a prime time soap opera, which is not necessarily bad. Aliens are spooky, but human relationships are even spookier. Scully writes in her computer at the end that Mulder has recovered, but she fears the long-term effects. If only that had been followed up in the season finale, "Gethsemane," for which "Demons" could have made a perfect lead-in.

"Sorry I'm late, my ship got stuck in traffic."

—Bill Scully, Jr.

GETHSEMANE

5/18/97. Written by Carter. Directed by R.W. Goodwin.
Editor, Michael S. Stern.

★★

More than any other season's-end cliffhanger, "Gethsemane" withholds so much information that it barely qualifies as a complete episode. It literally ends in the middle of the story—a story that begins with Scully looking at an offscreen body in Mulder's apartment and announcing, "It's him." She then reports to a committee headed by Section Chief Blevins (Charles Cioffi) that she is ready to reveal the illegitimacy of Agent Mulder's work. Except for a few more scenes of Scully before the committee, the rest of the episode is told in flashback, beginning with the discovery of an alien corpse frozen in the remote Yukon. Dr. Arlinsky (Matthew Walker) at the Smithsonian contacts Mulder, and the two journey to the Yukon, where they find the entire expedition has been shot dead, with the exception of Arlinsky's colleague Babcock, who, wounded but still alive, has buried the corpse. The three manage to transport it back to Washington, where Arlinsky performs a preliminary autopsy. Scully, meanwhile, is dealing with her family and her cancer, which has spread to her bloodstream. She refuses to go to the Yukon with Mulder but will work on authenticating the ice cores taken from the site. When the cores are stolen, Scully tracks down the thief—a low-level Department of Defense employee named Michael Kristchgau (John Finn), who tells Mulder and Scully a shocking story: that there are no aliens, that the government has manufactured all the evidence to make "passionate adepts" like Mulder believe, in order to cover up the government's real misdeeds. Mulder is highly dubious, but Scully, for once, does believe; when Mulder asks why, she tells him that Kristchgau told her the men behind the hoax gave her her cancer to make Mulder believe. A shaken Mulder departs in order to get back to Arlinsky's lab, but he finds Arlinsky and Babcock shot dead, and the E.B.E.'s body gone. He returns home, and as he watches footage of scientists discussing the likely possibility of alien life, tears run down his face. Scully then tells the committee that Agent Mulder died of an apparent gun shot to the head.

"Gethsemane" is a twisty episode that tries to turn the series' premise on its head, but it is not particularly successful. It has some brilliant moments, particularly the autopsy scene with its meticulously constructed alien corpse, even more persuasive than the one in the Alien Autopsy video show on the Fox Network. But even if the Yukon alien turns out to be a fake, it's going to take more than that and some government flunkies to make credible the notion that all the ghosts, mutants, and shape shifters with magical healing powers were cooked up in a government lab (the amount of tax dollars expended in such an effort would be mind-boggling). There is a wonderful debate towards the end between Mulder and Scully on the necessity of finding proof to back up one's beliefs, but it is weakened by the sheer unbeliefability of this man Kristchgau, so easily and conveniently found by Scully. Why would they give him any credence at all? Actually, we don't know if they do. This is where "Gethsemane" runs into real problems. For the first time ever, the audience is left in the dark regarding Mulder and Scully's decisions and actions. This isn't suspense; it's manipulation. It's an either-or kind of cliffhanger: either Mulder's dead, or he's faked his death (well, he's not dead—that's a no-brainer); either Scully is in on some scam with Mulder, or she's not; either she's betraying Mulder, or she's not; either the alien is a fake, or it's not; either Kristchgau is telling the truth, or he's not. The clues in "Gethsemane" are not really clues, because all these questions could be answered either way next season (except Mulder's not dead). Carter might as well flip a coin to decide what happens next. The title

"Gethsemane" refers to the garden where Jesus suffered through his night of agony before his betrayal and death and resurrection; if Carter is intending to tell a similar story (and a worthy idea it is), then in the effort to leave everyone hanging over the summer, he has skipped right past all the potentially wrenching drama, the decisions that Mulder and Scully must make in this moment of crisis. Undoubtedly, we'll learn about the missing pieces in another flashback next season, but it won't be the same as watching the story unfold in real time. Duchovny and Anderson struggle manfully with this script, but since it gives them no clues as to what their characters are doing, their performances are curiously neutral. Scully's apparent disdain of sympathy, which keeps her from telling Mulder, the person to whom she is closest, about the dire state of her health, simply won't wash. The cancer is a device, not a reality, here. Nor does the script take advantage of what happened to Mulder in "Demons." The lingering trauma from that episode could easily have been used to reinforce the notion that Mulder might still be suicidal. But then, his suicide is a hoax anyway; so why make an issue of it? THE X-FILES has painted itself into a tight corner. Let's hope Mulder and Scully extricate themselves with grace and dexterity in the fall.

Is he dead, or will he be back? (Do you really have any doubt?) "Gethsemane" ends with the announcement that Mulder has killed himself.



Dr. Arlinsky (Matthew Walker) performs an autopsy on an alien body—supposedly a hoax perpetrated by the government—in "Gethsemane."

himself be physically and mentally tortured twice (for that is what Dr. Goldstein does) rather than persist in getting his mother to confess what she knows? Either Mulder is terrified of his mother, or he is terrified of learning the truth, no matter how much he says he wants to know it. Certainly, whatever he sees as a result of Goldstein's procedures is suspect and grossly unreliable. The jumpy, grainy flashbacks, full of sound and fury, are stupendous visuals, produced by the simple method of stopping and starting the camera, which also created the white flashes of light. Duchovny is excellent—he really makes it seem like the blood is rushing straight to his head whenever Mulder has a seizure. Anderson could not be better. It is Scully's boundless faith in Mulder, and her courage and clear-eyed objectivity, that save him from the suicidal state brought on by Goldstein's treatment and his own desperation at what he thinks he has learned. The mystery of what happened to Samantha remains as engrossing as ever, with this episode (like "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip")

