

FIFTH SEASON EPISODE GUIDE

By Paula Vitaris

"There's a dead man on the floor in my apartment and it's only a matter of time before he begins to stink the place up."
—Mulder

REDUX

11/2/97. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by R.W. Goodwin.

"Redux" repeats the events of last season's finale "Gethsemane," filling in the gaps that led to the episode's cliffhanger. It's like a prime-time version of an old movie serial that ended on a cliffhanger each week. In "Redux," we learn that Mulder and Scully are in cahoots together to deceive the Consortium and smoke out its mole in the FBI (Scully suspects Skinner). Skinner knows from the autopsy report that the body in Mulder's apartment is not Mulder's. He is furious with Scully for lying about the identity of the dead man, a government operative named Scott Ostelhoff who was killed in a shoot-out with Mulder when Mulder discovered him spying on his apartment from the apartment above. While Scully stalls the FBI inquiry, Mulder takes Ostelhoff's I.D. card and uses it to enter a Department of Defense complex, where he bumps into Michael Kritschgau (John Finn), the DOD employee who told him in "Gethsemane" that the existence of aliens was a government hoax. Kritschgau reiterates to Mulder that the government and the military concocted all the stories about aliens to hide the truth about massive Cold War weapons build-ups. Mulder then uses his fake ID to enter a secret area, where he discovers dozens upon dozens of "alien" bodies (presumably the fake aliens described by Kritschgau in "Gethsemane") and dozens of sleeping pregnant women. He also penetrates the Pentagon archive where he locates Scully's file and retrieves a tube with a liquid he hopes will cure Scully's cancer; it turns out to be merely de-ionized water. Scully also learns that her DNA matches DNA taken from the ice core samples retrieved in "Gethsemane," further evidence, she believes, that her cancer was manufactured by humans, not aliens. The end of "Redux" catches up with the end of "Gethsemane": Scully "denounces" Mulder's work and collapses.

"Redux" is all plot, plot, plot. Much of the plot is unbelievable. Why is Mulder surprised someone is eavesdropping on him? This is not the first time his apartment has been bugged. Why would someone spying on Mulder possess phone records leading back to the FBI? Is someone trying to frame Skinner? If so, it's not borne out in the episode. Mulder enters secret DOD levels with incredible ease, although it makes no sense that a

The Cancer Man is apparently assassinated at the end of "Redux II." Guess what (stop me if you've heard this one): he isn't really dead.



"Redux" resolved the fourth season cliffhanger "Gethsemane." Guess what? Mulder didn't really kill himself after all. Surprised? We thought not.

low-level operative like Ostelhoff would have access to these areas. Scully has inexplicably become an expert in DNA testing as well as pathology, and just as inexplicably, all the equipment she needs is located at a paleoclimatology lab. The episode drags, too, with endless voiceovers from Mulder and Scully that function as a "Redux"-within-a-"Redux": just as "Redux" explains "Gethsemane," the voiceovers explain "Redux." They're convenient shorthand for characterization and motivation but end up sucking the energy out of the episode. Kritschgau's monologue on the government's alien hoax, accompanied by shot after shot drawn from documentary footage, is insufferable. There's also the question of the believability of Kritschgau's story, but Mulder seems to buy it.

There is one truly galvanizing scene, and that's the confrontation between Scully and Skinner after he follows her to the lab where she is performing her DNA test. The suspicions, the accusations, the withholding of information, the decision to trust, if only for a few more hours—suddenly, "Redux" springs to vibrant life, only to sink back into the narrative mud afterwards.

One also wonders about the choices Mulder and Scully make in this episode, both tactical and moral. Mulder's assault on Ostelhoff is extraordinarily foolish, ending, naturally, in disaster, when Ostelhoff grabs his weapon and Mulder shoots him first. (Lucky for Mulder the neighbors don't hear anything, although they heard the shooting in the building back in "Anasazi.") Then there's the choice Mulder and Scully make to mutilate Ostelhoff's corpse, pass him off as Mulder and lie to Skinner and the FBI committee. They are taking a big step towards becoming the thing they are trying to fight, yet there is no hesitation on their part, no concern about what they are doing. The episode tells us that what they're doing is quite all right, that the ends do justify the means. It's a disturbing turnabout for a series—and two characters—that until now refused to take the easy way out.

"I saved your ass, Agent Mulder!"

—Skinner

REDUX II

11/9/97. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

You can't help keep thinking of "One Breath" while watching "Redux II." The basic plot isn't all that different, but it's impossible to duplicate the magic of "One Breath." Of course, that doesn't stop the writers from trying. So once again, Scully is hospitalized and close to death, while Mulder, now officially alive, tries to maneuver through a web of lies and deceit to find a cure for Scully. But where everything in "One Breath" moved inexorably towards a heart-wrenching resolution, here it's paint-by-numbers. That almost mystical bond between them in "One Breath" is now diluted by a plot overstuffing with FBI hearings, the

possible return of Samantha, and Scully's turn not towards Mulder or even her own strength but to God. As the episode proceeds, Mulder tries to find out the truth about the mole in the FBI and Kritschgau's allegations about government cover-ups. He encounters the Cigarette Smoking Man, who tries to lure Mulder to his side by throwing him some very big carrots, including the information that the tube of de-ionized water holds precious cargo: a chip identical to the one removed from Scully's neck last season. Later on, the Smoking Man arranges a meeting between Mulder and a woman (Megan Leitch) Mulder takes to be Samantha. She tearfully relates what has happened since her abduction and how she has been cared for by her "father"—to Mulder's shock, the Cigarette Smoking Man. The next morning the Smoking Man offers Mulder a deal: quit the FBI and he'll show him the truth about aliens and everything he's ever been searching for, but Mulder refuses. At the next session of the FBI inquiry, Mulder names Section Chief Blevins as the mole (Blevins is assassinated within minutes). And a hit man shoots the Cigarette Smoking Man. While all this is going on, Scully has the new chip placed back in her neck, undergoes last-minute experimental chemotherapy and also prays with Father McCue (Arnie Walters) for salvation. The next day at the hospital Skinner tells Mulder the cancer is in remission, the Smoking Man's body has disappeared, and Blevins was on the payroll of a biotech company called Roush.



A moment of agony for Mulder in "Redux II," as he fears he will not be able to find the cure for Scully's advancing cancer.

It's all wrapped up neatly yet ambiguously. Mulder still has no evidence that Kritschgau's statements are true. Actually, he doesn't have anything anymore. At the end, he's exiled himself to the hospital corridor, alone and apart from Scully and her celebrating family. His quest has been taken from him, because he believes the woman he met was Samantha. While the diner scene is deeply affecting, thanks to the sensitive acting of Duchovny and Leitch, this plot development is a major misstep. It strips Mulder of his motivating force and leaves him empty, without purpose. There's something offensive, both to Mulder and Samantha, in passing off what should have been the climax of the show as a B-plot, just another twist in an episode full of twists. Shooting the Cigarette Smoking Man is a cheap ploy. He's obviously not dead, so why do it? As for Scully, it's a relief the cancer is in remission so the show can move beyond the melodramatics of this medical soap opera, in which Scully's cancer barely affects her until it's time for the expected moment of life or death. The prayer scene is sheer emotional manipulation. And just as the return of Samantha robs Mulder of his defining force, Scully's need to submit to powers outside herself the Consortium's chip, and yes, God—or face death, robs her of the qualities that made her most admirable, particularly as the rare female character on television with a mind of her own. If only Scully's quandaries had concerned her professional life, not her sinuses (or her ovaries).



What makes "Redux II" tolerable is Duchovny, who always hits the right notes of anger, despair, grief, relief, or emotional numbness. He is ably assisted by Pileggi's stern but supportive Skinner and Pat Skipper as Scully's over-protective brother.

"We at the FCC enjoy forging positive ties with the American public. It's our way of saying communication is just another way of sharing."
—Byers

UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

★★★

11/16/97. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Kim Manners.

"Unusual Suspects" is filler—but amusing filler, with some rather dire implications at the end for Mulder. Set in the past, it provides a convenient continuity break between the conspiracy arc of the previous three episodes and the present day stand-alone episodes to follow. The year is 1989. The location: a Baltimore computer and electronics show. Among the dealers are one Melvin Frohike (Tom Braidwood) and one Ringo Langly (Dean Haglund), apparently long-time rivals. The Federal Communications Commission has set up shop in a nearby booth manned by straight-arrow bureaucrat John Fitzgerald Byers (Bruce Harwood). Yes, these three are the Lone Gunmen, but before they were the Lone Gunmen. Byers spots a mysterious, cool, Hitchcockian blonde in distress (Signy Coleman) and is instantly smitten. Her name is Holly Modeski, she says, and she is searching for her daughter, who has been abducted by her "psychotic" ex-boyfriend. Byers agrees to help her, and soon, to his horror, he finds himself hacking into a secret Department of Defense computer database, downloading a file on the missing girl, and enlisting a quarreling Frohike and Langly to help him decode it. Then the boyfriend appears—but he turns out to be a young Agent Fox Mulder. According to Agent Mulder and the Justice Department, Byers' new crush is a former government chemist responsible for the deaths of several colleagues. After that, all hell breaks loose—the Department of Defense is on to the hack and takes away Byers' FCC colleague. Modeski (whose real first name is Suzanne, not Holly), claims she's been framed, then finds a listening device in her molar, which she removes with a pair of pliers. There's a shoot-out at a warehouse where unknown government forces have stored a paranoia-inducing gas that will be tested on an unknowing citizenry through asthma inhalers.

In one day, the world has turned upside down for the putative Lone Gunmen, who have had their eyes opened to governmental hidden agendas. The greatest change is in Byers, who had been a loyal public servant. Harwood is a delight as the naive Byers, registering expertly the shifts in Byers' world view with the arrival of each new bit of information. And Haglund and Braidwood make for good comic relief; they get the best lines. Haglund's Dungeons and Dragons scene is

Pursued by the virtually invisible predator in "Detour," agents Mulder and Scully spend a fearful night isolated in the woods.



In a crossover episode, **HOMICIDE's Detective Munch (Richard Belzer) interrogates Bruce Harwood's Byers in "Unusual Suspects."**

hilarious, especially at the end, when Langly orders Frohike to "say it" and Frohike is forced to admit that Langly has "the best kung fu." Signy Coleman is nicely mysterious as Modeski. The reappearance of a not-yet dead X (Steven Williams) at the warehouse is welcome, since Williams burns up the screen whenever he's in the shot and X was such a fascinating character. Best of all is a cameo appearance by Richard Belzer, reprising his **HOMICIDE** character, the cynical Detective Munch, who interrogates Byers in the episode's framing scenes. Duchovny seems to have fun as the younger Mulder, too. But what happens to Mulder is more than a little disturbing. Mulder is sprayed with the paranoia-inducing gas at the warehouse and believes he's seeing aliens—a hallucination most likely conjured up from his memory of a UFO exhibit at the convention. This doesn't exactly jibe with the oft-told story that hypnotic regression first unlocked his memories of Samantha's abduction. So was it gas or was it hypnosis? Mulder's belief in gas-induced hallucinations doesn't say much for his ability to think rationally.

"Unfortunately around this time of year I always develop this severe hemorrhoidal condition."

—Mulder

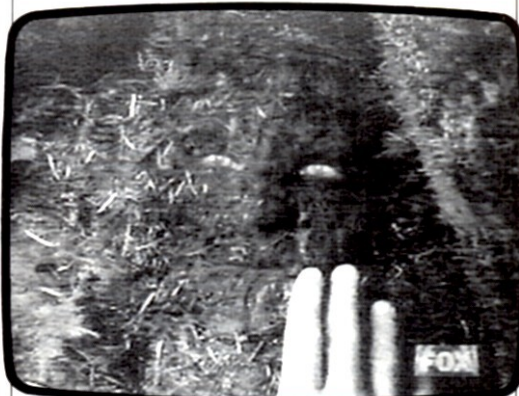
DETOUR

★★

11/23/97. Editor: Casey O Rohrs. Written by Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Brett Dowler.

Mulder and Scully are reluctantly on the way to a "Teamwork" communications seminar in Florida with another pair of FBI agents when the trip is interrupted by a roadblock. Several people have disappeared in the nearby woods, possibly the result of a wild animal attack. Mulder, seizing an excuse to escape the unwanted seminar, quickly involves himself in the case; evidence leads him to speculate that some kind of unknown forest creature is fighting back against encroaching development. He and Scully, along with search and rescue chief Michele Fazekas (Colleen Flynn) and tech-head Jeff Glaser (Anthony Rapp), search the woods using an infra-red device. They spot two figures, but after a chase, Michele and Jeff also disappear suddenly and Mulder is attacked and wounded. Mulder and Scully are stranded in the woods overnight. The next morning, Scully falls into the creatures' lair and discovers its victims, some dead, some on the verge of death. When she is attacked in the cave, she shoots one of the creatures, which turns out to be a manlike being formed out of a wood and leaf substance. The other FBI agents and police locate and rescue everyone. Mulder theorizes that the creatures may be the remnants of the company of Ponce de Leon, who came to Florida 400 years ago searching for the Fountain of Youth. Perhaps they've adapted so well they have become literally part of the woods and now are reacting to protect their home.

"Detour" is about communication—or, miscommunication; a deliberate detour on Mulder's part, to avoid serious talk. His discomfort concerning the communications seminar is nicely observed. Every time Scully attempts to connect with him, he deflects her, either by walking out when she brings him wine and cheese at the motel, or by wisecracking, when they're lost in the woods and she wants to talk about her near-death from cancer. These scenes don't resonate particularly deeply—the dialogue isn't revealing or profound. Scully's question to Mulder about whether he's ever thought about death is preposterous, considering how often they've been close to death over the past few years. And although Scully gets to bring up her cancer, Mulder is written as a blank; he seems utterly unaffected by the events of "Gethsemane," "Redux" and "Redux II." There's not even a clue that Mulder has told Scully about Samantha's return. Scully's singing to a wounded (and temporarily infantile) Mulder is a failed attempt to create "a special X-FILES moment," a poor substitute for meaningful dialogue between the two. There are no breakthroughs for Mulder and Scully, unless one counts their building together in the cave a "tower" of bodies—a grotesque version of the tower-building trust exercise described by one of the other FBI agents—as their own peculiar way of communicating.



The monsters in "Detour" are descendants of Spanish Conquistadors who have evolved the ability to camouflage themselves in the woods.

But where "Detour" really fails is as an X-File. Mulder's theories about the unseen predator are not a leap of genius thinking; they're so nonsensical that he comes off looking like an idiot. The investigation through the woods is strictly from Bad Television Writing 101. Here we have four people planning to spend hours in the woods without adequate preparation or equipment. Only Michele has substantial outdoor training, and she is the only one to bring survival gear (which means she doesn't know much about properly equipping a rescue team). So of course when she disappears, Mulder and Scully are stuck without water, food, fire, shelter, first aid or a radio. (At least they have their guns!) It's Mulder who has figured out that the forest creature's mode of attack is to divide and conquer its prey. But, oddly enough, as soon as he and the others locate two creatures via the infra-red, they divide up. Unfortunately, what could have been a wonderful PREDATOR-type episode, exploiting the most basic of stories, instead only skims the surface of humanity's responses to the primordial forest. Even the cinematography is flattened out to a dull wash of gray and green; the woods don't look mysterious or frightening at all—just wet.

Flynn is excellent as Michele Fazekas, and the brief appearance of **RENT** star Anthony Rapp as Jeff is most welcome. And even if the forest creature's glowing red eyes are bad camouflage, they make for a very creepy effect.



"Scully, do you think it's too soon to get my own 1-900 number?"

—Mulder

POST-MODERN PROMETHEUS

★1/2

11/30/97. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written and directed by Chris Carter.

A cautionary tale told through the pages of a comic book, "Post-Modern Prometheus" is Chris Carter's updated take on the Frankenstein story, with a nod towards both Mary Shelley in the episode's title and towards James Whales' *FRANKENSTEIN* and *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, in its use of black-and-white film stock and thunder and lightning as dramatic accents. The difference is that the *FRANKENSTEIN* movies are horror classics, and "Post-Modern Prometheus" is...something else.

The story begins with the turning back of a comic book cover. Mulder and Scully come to a small Indiana town in response to a letter from a woman who saw Mulder on *THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW*: Shaineh Berkowitz (Patti Tierce) claims that a man with a misshapen face invaded her home, rendered her unconscious, and made her pregnant—an assault identical to the one that produced her son Izzie (Stewart Gale) 18 years ago. Mulder thinks there may be something to the woman's story, once he spots Izzie's self-published comic book, "The Great Mutato," about a man with the face of a monster. Soon he and Scully are not only looking for the Mutato but have met an old man who claims the real monster is his geneticist son, Dr. Pollidori (John O'Hurley). Pollidori's wife, Elizabeth (Miriam Smith), falls victim to Shaineh's assault and when Mulder and Scully investigate, they also fall unconscious, not observing that Dr. Pollidori's father stands nearby wearing a gas mask. What Mulder and Scully don't know is that the old man is sheltering the Mutato, who is the product of one of Pollidori's experiments. Pollidori and his father quarrel, and Pollidori kills him; then, to cover his guilt, Pollidori leads the townspeople to his father's farm to hunt down the Mutato. Mulder and Scully arrive first, having realized that the deformed man (Chris Owens) is not the murderer. Pollidori and the Mutato are taken into custody, but then Mulder, like a character in a Pirandello play, makes demands of the writer, because this isn't the right ending. The episode ends with Mulder and Scully taking the Mutato to a Cher concert and everyone having a great time. The comic book closes.

Humor has certainly proven to be an effective element in the Frankenstein story; director James Whales, in *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, injected some marvelously campy moments. Also, it seems quite right that *THE X-FILES* would pay its own homage, because the series has been dealing with arrogant scientists and doctors who since the first season have manipulated life.

Unfortunately, "Post-Modern Prometheus" falls

Scully's brother Bill gives his stricken sister words of encouragement in "A Christmas Carol," an episode where disbelief is hung out to dry.



Toby Lindala's monster makeup for The Great Mutato, in Chris Carter's misfired *FRANKENSTEIN* takeoff "The Post-Modern Prometheus."

flatter than the chemical pancakes used to anesthetize the victims of this episode. The great silent comedian Harold Lloyd once wrote that comedy lies "in the humor of events, not in any conscious effort of the author to be cute." "Post-Modern Prometheus" is fatally self-conscious and fatally cute. The script throws together a collection of situations and observations that bear little relation to each other. The episode comments on the consequences of unchecked scientific experimentation and the foolishness of a populace that aspires to nothing more than getting on television—especially if it's *THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW*—and the notion that people really are nothing more than animals driven by instinct. None of this fits together really well, and the literalness of the comedy is painful, with the barn scene a particular low point. The mob of townspeople herd together and individuals are picked out by the camera in tandem with the animals they resemble. And that's the totality of the commentary; it's taken no further than that. They're just dumb animals whose opinions about Mulder and Scully fluctuate on the sole basis of whether they believe the agents will get their town on *THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW*.

The mean-spiritedness of this is mind-boggling. All the characters are caricatures—or sketches of caricatures. The only one with any inner life at all, Dr. Pollidori's wife, Elizabeth, is treated as a joke. None of this is funny, although it's supposed to be; the humor is lumpy and ungainly, as is the direction. The barn scene serves again as an example, where the crowd mills about and the blocking has no sense of space or pace or rhythm. It brings to mind the equally unfunny and clumsy mob scenes in "Syzygy." And then the episode stops dead for the Mutato's Big Speech, which is all exposition and fails completely to evoke the poignancy it should. But most egregious is the ending at the Cher concert, as the Mutato twists to the music and Mulder and Scully dance. On the surface, it looks like a sweet bit of wish-fulfillment, but probe deeper and it's as mean-spirited as the rest of the episode. It's a false ending; you can wish all you want that the Mutato gets to see his beloved Cher, but that doesn't change the fact that he participated in at least two sexual assaults on women. But this ending doesn't acknowledge that; it's irony-free. (Perhaps a better source for this episode should have been Murnau's *THE LAST LAUGH*, with its tacked-on and scathingly parodic "happy ending.") The ending also points out another flaw, the episode's fuzzy narrative voice. Who is telling this story? It seems that this episode must be an issue of Izzie's comic book, because the real Mulder would never call out for the writer to change the ending (it's clearly a literary device). So we are given a comic book written by a clueless young man with little to say, and who even portrays himself as such. But even this is uncertain; there are scenes that Izzie couldn't possibly have known about, particularly Mulder's unexpected confession to Shaineh that he doesn't

know if he believes in "all that" (i.e., the aliens) anymore. This is a line of vital import for Mulder, and the only clue for a good part of the season to the doubt that must be tormenting him; yet here it is as a throw-away line in an episode that's essentially a fairy-tale. It's inconceivable that Izzie would know what Mulder's going through. So maybe it isn't Izzie's comic book. And thus we have an episode with no particular point of view.

On the positive side, the cast is fine. Duchovny and Anderson seem to be having fun, particularly Duchovny, who usually blooms when a bit of humor is thrown his way. Chris Owens does his best under what looks like a ton of makeup. And that double head is really spectacular.

"I'd appreciate seeing everything that you have...in the spirit of the season?"

—Scully to Detective Kresge

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

★1/2

12/7/97. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Written by Vince Gilligan, John Shiban, Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Peter Markle.

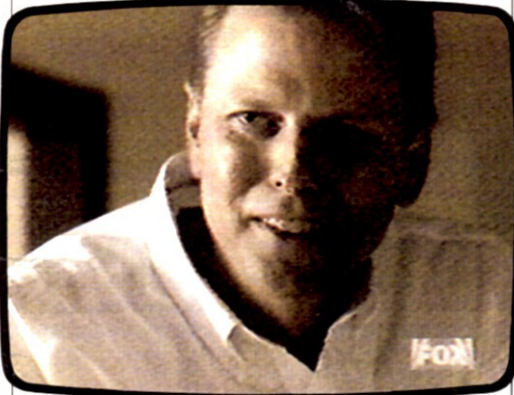
As in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, a ghostly message and a series of dreams is presaged with unexpected chimes, but instead of servant bells, it's the phone. Scully has arrived at her brother Bill's home at a San Diego naval base to spend the Christmas holiday. The phone rings, Scully picks it up, and hears what sounds like the voice of Melissa, her murdered sister, with a mysterious message: "She needs you; go to her." Scully traces the call back to a nearby house, where she finds the police investigating the suicide of one Mrs. Roberta



In "A Christmas Carol," a ghostly voice leads Scully to an investigation involving a young girl who turns out to be her biological child.

Sim. The dead woman has a three-year-old adopted daughter named Emily (Lauren Diwold), an extremely ill child enrolled in an experimental treatment program at the Transgen Corporation. Working with the sardonic Det. John Kresge (a wonderful John Pyper-Ferguson), Scully uncovers evidence that Mrs. Sim's death was murder, not a suicide, and the police arrest Emily's father. Scully observes two suspicious men at the jail and discovers that Sim has hung himself; again, she suspects a staged suicide. Meanwhile, Scully is struck by Emily's resemblance to Melissa at that age, and a DNA test suggests that Emily is indeed Melissa's daughter. Scully also experiences a series of dreams in which she contemplates the path her life has taken. Scully finally tells her mother she has been left barren. She also decides she wants to adopt Emily, but a social worker tells her that, due to the danger of her job and her recent personal history, adoption may not be possible. Then Scully receives even more shocking news: a second DNA test confirms that Emily is not Melissa's daughter but Scully's.

"Christmas Carol" is one of those episodes where disbelief isn't suspended so much as hung by the neck until dead, where the "real" world has a lost touch with reality. It's a world where overnight DNA tests are performed by an FBI lab that in real





Having apparently taken lessons from Mike Hammer in *KISS ME, DEADLY*, Mulder begins angrily slapping around suspects in "Emily."

life would never do the tests since they are not part of an assigned case, and helpful couriers deliver the results at Christmas. It's a world where Scully can fill out an application to adopt a child and find herself the instant recipient of a home visit by a social worker on Christmas Eve. When the technical details are this sloppy, it's hard to believe in the characters' actions and emotions.

The Scully of this episode has come far from the strong-minded woman of earlier seasons. Everything that's happened to her has driven her into a state resembling anesthetization, until the shock of Emily drives her to, well, tears. You'd think she'd be angry after all that's been done to her, but no. Scully tells the social worker how she is now rethinking her life, but it comes off as an incredibly belated response to abduction, cancer and numerous instances of near-death. There's an unsettling misogynistic whiff to the idea that only after she loses her ability to be a mother would Scully have this realization that maybe it's time for a change. (Would Mulder have the same reaction if he learned he could not father children?) Gillian Anderson has had to cry on cue so much lately that she has perfected Scully-on-the-verge of tears; it's time to move her on to something more challenging.

The dream sequences are handled nicely, but the last one between Melissa and Scully contains a deeply disturbing inconsistency. In it, we learn that Scully received her cross as a Christmas present, although in second season's "Ascension" Mrs. Scully told Mulder she had given it to Dana for her 15th birthday. According to co-writer Frank Spotnitz, the writing staff was aware of the change in story, but felt it dovetailed so nicely with the themes of "Christmas Carol" they decided to use it. It's one thing when inconsistencies creep in by mistake (and there have been some doozies), but to have it done deliberately makes you want to sue for writer malpractice. If they deliberately alter an already-established history, how can the viewer count on anything seen over the past five years?

"Who is the man who would create a life whose only hope is to die?" —Scully

EMILY

12/13/97. Editor: Casey O Rohrs. Written by Vince Gilligan, John Shiban, Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners.

Mulder arrives in San Diego to help Scully. In a retread of what is now a familiar X-FILES plot, he is the active half of the partnership, running around and uncovering the nefarious doings of the Conspiracy, while Scully remains at the hospital, this time to oversee treatment for a failing Emily. Mulder tells Scully there are no ordinary records on Emily, since she came into the world in a way that doesn't require such records. He also discovers that the conspiracy is using old women as incubators for hybrid fetuses—an image first seen in "Redux II." Scully also has a court hearing where she presents her case for adopting Emily,

but soon her desire to adopt becomes moot. The only way Emily might survive is if Scully hands her back to the mysterious forces that created her from Scully's ova and an unknown donor's sperm. In fact, who that donor is becomes an interesting question: a boyl is discovered on Emily's neck. When a doctor lances it, it spews forth a poisonous green substance identical to that seen in the clones of previous mythology episodes. Emily must be some kind of hybrid herself. Scully refuses to hand Emily over to Transgen, since it would mean a life spent as a human guinea pig. And she cancels all treatment, despite the consequences. Emily dies in a scene that is frighteningly manipulative yet devoid of any true emotion. At Emily's funeral, Scully opens the casket to find the little girl's remains have been stolen; lying inside is the cross she gave Emily in "Christmas Carol."

Like "Christmas Carol," "Emily" presents a situation that simply could not exist in the real world, as Scully would have no authority whatsoever to be making decisions regarding Emily's care. Scully's court hearing happens as magically and instantaneously as her visit from the social worker in the previous episode. The plotting of "Emily" is weak. It fails to follow up on an important point introduced at the beginning of "Christmas Carol": the phone call from Melissa. If Scully really believes her dead sister is calling her, the implications are enormous, yet she never acknowledges them. If it wasn't Melissa, then who was it? Scully expresses no interest in finding out. Mulder's encounters with the shape-shifters and clones repeats information we have learned in past episodes. He wanders around one of the Conspiracy's facilities with no interference whatsoever.

The worst problems concern the characterizations. The episode begins with a ludicrous dream sequence: Scully, clad in a diaphanous dress, trudges through an endless tract of sand, with yet another voice-over explaining how she has always been alone and cut off from people because she's afraid of them dying. This revelation comes out of the blue; since when has Scully felt so isolated? This is really Mulder's emotional territory, but this season he and Scully switch personalities whenever the plot requires. Scully has always had family to support her in ways Mulder's never did; just last week in "Christmas Carol" she bonded with her mother and remembered her sister with warmth and fondness. In "Redux II" she re-established her faith in God. This development just doesn't track.

As for Mulder, he has become a thug. The FBI agent whose smarts and sense of morality, even in a confusing, ambivalent world, were his greatest weapons, now has no compunction about beating up an unarmed man and kicking him while he's down. That the man is Dr. Calderon, the physician in charge of Emily's experimental treatment and thus part of the conspiracy (and unknown to Mulder, apparently a clone), is irrelevant. If only

A victim in "Kitsunegari," a disappointing sequel to the excellent "Pusher," is painted blue by his murderer for symbolic reasons.



there was some clue that Mulder's actions are the result of a hidden rage caused by the lies he believed he's been told and the loss of his quest, but there's not even a hint of this in the script. It's done purely for effect, and it's repulsive. Then there is Mulder's statement at the court hearing, where he reveals to a startled Scully that her ova had been extracted and he had found the facility where they were held in frozen storage. How could he possibly not have told this to Scully before the hearing, rather than surprise her with it in a courtroom setting? His excuse that he was protecting her doesn't wash. How can she even bear to work with him after this? Instead, she reacts with mild anger, then drops it. These are Mulder's lowest moments ever; he's lost all sense of right and wrong.

The episode's use of religious imagery is extraordinarily unsubtle, particularly a dissolve from Scully and Emily to a church's stained glass window depicting the Madonna and Child. Scully's not a woman anymore; she's a martyr and a saint, this dissolve seems to be saying. Her "choice" to let Emily die is no choice at all; there is absolutely no way she could let Emily return to the men who created her. And whereas Mary's decision to bear



In "Emily," despite her best efforts, Scully finds herself unable to save the seriously ill daughter she only recently realized she had.

her child, knowing he was born to be sacrificed, changed the world, Emily's death changes nothing: the experiments will continue with other children. The heavy-handedness of the symbolism grows even worse, when Scully's sister-in-law gives birth just as Emily dies. And her death is peculiarly unaffected, as no real emotional connection was ever established between Scully and Emily.

There's something sadistic about Scully's suffering in this two-parter. She's been abducted, experimented upon, stricken with almost-fatal cancer (albeit nearly pain-free TV cancer). How much more do the writers want to dump on her? It's depressing that the only storyline they can come up to create a "dramatically interesting" situation for Scully, after all she's been through, is to torture her with the unexpected discovery of a dying daughter.

"Okay, you do me a favor, Scully. You give me a call when you think I've come to my senses, all right?"

—Mulder

KITSUNEGARI

1/4/98. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Written by Vince Gilligan & Tim Minear. Directed by Daniel Sackheim.

"Pusher" remains one of THE X-FILES' most unforgettable episodes, so the impulse to do a sequel is understandable. But this follow-up is tame compared to the original. The basic premise—that Modell survived both a shot to the head and his fatal brain tumor—is a little hard to swallow, even if he is not quite dead at the end of "Pusher." In "Kitsunegari," Modell (Robert Wisden), is physically and mentally impaired. Or so his

keepers think. Modell escapes from Lorton Prison and Skinner, Mulder and Scully lead a team of FBI agents to find him. Mulder finds it out of character that Modell leaves everyone he encounters alive, and when a murder victim finally turns up—Nathan Bowman, the lawyer who prosecuted Modell—Mulder suspects Modell did not commit the crime, especially after Modell warns him not to “play the game” instead of “pushing” him to die. Instead, Mulder’s suspicions fall on Linda Bowman (Diana Scarwid), the wife of the murdered prosecutor. Skinner believes Mulder’s mental state has been affected by Modell, relieves him of duty and orders him to go home, but Mulder continues the investigation on his own. Modell appears at the safe house where Linda is being sheltered and Skinner, believing Modell has a gun (it’s really his cocked finger), shoots him. Another death (Modell’s physical therapist) and a realization that Linda has “pushed” him convinces Mulder that Linda is the culprit. He tails her to a warehouse, where she “pushes” him into thinking that Scully, who has followed him, is really Linda. On gut instinct, he shoots “Scully”—who turns out to be Linda, who is not only Modell’s long-lost sister but is suffering from an identical brain tumor.

“Kitsunegari”—Japanese for “fox hunt,”—has its pleasures. The image of the murdered Nathan Bowman covered in cerulean blue paint is particularly striking. The moment where Mulder’s suspicions fall on Linda is spooky, and the scene in the hospital where Linda stops the heart of the suffering Modell is sensitively performed. But the basic concept of the long-lost sister out for revenge is a cheesy one. And it’s hard to believe that Modell has suddenly turned into such a nice guy that he will break out of prison to stop his sister and warn Mulder; he’s become a toothless character. Linda, despite a good performance from Scarwid, doesn’t come close to matching the Modell of “Pusher” as a mesmerizing villain. Nor is there the drive towards the inevitable showdown, the meeting of “worthy adversaries,” that so energized “Pusher.” “Kitsunegari” is afflicted by a sense of “been there, done that.” Also, David Duchovny must have had a bad week at work; at times Mulder comes off as inappropriately hostile and sarcastic that you get the feeling the actor’s own frustrations (whatever they might have been) have bled over into his performance.

“He’s been in therapy for his anger since 1995.”
—Scully

“That could be me.”
—Mulder

SCHIZOGENY ★★

1/11/98. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Jessica Scott & Mike Wollaefer. Directed by Ralph Hemecker.

The plot of “Schizogeny” is more tangled than the episode’s paranormal root system, but underneath lie some powerful themes. The case of a teenage boy, Bobby Rich (Chad Lindberg) brings Mulder and Scully to Coats Grove, Michigan,

For all its flaws, the killer tree roots story of “Schizogeny” was more satisfying than most of the episodes seen in season five.



Diana Scarwid guest stars in “Kitsunegari,” as the vengeful sister of “The Pusher’s” Modell, whose psychic power she shares.

where Bobby is accused of murdering his stepfather, Phil, by forcing him to ingest 12 pounds of mud in the family’s failing hazelnut orchard. Mulder believes Bobby to be innocent. He and Scully find that Bobby and another teenager named Lisa Baiocchi (Katherine Isabelle) have been undergoing therapy with a local psychologist, Karin Matthews (Sarah-Jane Redmond, memorable as the demonic Lucy Butler in the MILLENNIUM episode “Lamentations”). Karin believes that Bobby and Lisa are both abused children and she has been working with them on “empowering” themselves. When Lisa’s father is killed, the physical evidence causes Mulder to theorize that somehow the root systems of the orchards have become empowered, too, and are responsible for dragging the two men to their deaths. And the conduit of the power is Karin, whose own abuse at the hands of her father caused her to develop a split personality and project onto Bobby and Lisa the fantasy that they were also abused.

“Schizogeny” tip-toes towards excellence, but refuses to go all the way. Imagine PSYCHO meeting the legend of the Fisher King. Karin Matthews is both Norman Bates and a female Fisher King (or should that be Fisher Queen?). Her identity is split between her own and her father’s, she keeps her father’s body in the root cellar, and rage is expressed in the barrenness of the land and the murderous actions of the roots. Director Ralph Hemecker (who did such a splendid job directing “The Curse of Frank Black,” one of the best MILLENNIUM episodes this season) catches all the bleakness of this story with numerous shots of stark, leafless branches silhouetted against the frosty nighttime sky.

There is another level to this episode that also works well: Mulder’s identification with and sympathy for the put-upon Bobby, a kid he describes as “hard to love.” (He could be talking about himself.) Bobby’s relationship with his irritated stepfather (as well as Lisa’s with her equally irritated father) might have served as a vehicle for Mulder to reflect on his own relationship with his cold and distant father. While there are a few lines in the script to indicate Mulder’s identification with Bobby, the link between the two arises mostly out of Duchovny’s performance, in the passion with which he invests Mulder’s belief in Bobby’s innocence and acknowledges their similarity. But the episode steps back from taking it any farther; nothing really new is revealed about Mulder through this case. Karin is also handled poorly, in that she ends up becoming a complete monster whose fate is destruction. And destroyed she is; she is decapitated by an axe-wielding man who seems to be the guardian of the orchards (this character is never developed either). It’s hideous and gratuitous, even if her death saves Mulder and Bobby; surely she could have been stopped some other way. Even Norman Bates survived at the end of PSYCHO. There are scenes that could come from a grade-B horror movie: for instance, Lisa foolishly descending into Karin’s basement when anyone with an ounce of sense

would be exiting speedily out the front door. Also, there’s little ambiguity about this X-file: we see the roots moving; we see them responding to Karin. There’s little left to wonder about. Still, considering the surface quality of many of the episodes this season, “Schizogeny,” for all its flaws, delivers something a little more satisfying to chew over.

“Like evidence of conjury or the black arts or shamanism, divination, wicca or any kind of pagan or neo-pagan practice? Charms, cards, familiars, bloodstones or hex signs or any of the ritual tableaux associated with the occult? Santeria, voodoo, macumba, any high or low magic?”

—Scully

CHINGA ★

2/8/98. Editor: Casey O Rohrs. Written by Stephen King & Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

“Chinga” is a major disappointment, considering that the script was co-written by one of the most popular and prolific horror authors of our time and television’s top purveyor of millennial chills. Once again, Mulder and Scully are not working together (thanks to the shooting schedule of THE X-FILES movie). Scully is on vacation in a Maine fishing village, but before she can even check into her motel, she comes upon a scene of self-inflicted mass mutilation including one fatality. She reluctantly assists the local police chief, Captain Jack Bonsaint (Larry Musser) in investigating the incident, occasionally calling a bored Mulder to ask his opinion. The townspeople believe a young widow, Melissa Turner (Susannah



“Chinga,” horror novelist Stephen King’s collaboration with Chris Carter, is a major disappointment—a tired killer doll story.

Hoffman) is at fault; one woman proclaims Melissa to be a witch and a whore who has passed on her cursed lineage to her autistic daughter Polly (Jenny-Lynn Hutcheson). The real malefactor isn’t Melissa or Polly, but Polly’s doll. If Polly doesn’t get her way, the doll’s eyes pop open, she utters a catch phrase (“Let’s have fun!” or “I want to play!”) and mayhem ensues. An ever more desperate Melissa, who has premonitory visions of the episode’s various victims, tries everything she can to stop the doll, including fleeing town, but at each turn she is thwarted. Finally she nails every window and door shut and tries to burn down her house but again the doll intervenes, just as Scully and Captain Bonsaint arrive. Scully grabs the doll, thrusts it into a microwave, and saves the day.

“Chinga” isn’t scary in the least, but it is unintentionally funny (except for the scenes with Mulder, which are meant to be funny but aren’t). Imagine if Pusher were a doll—that’s the premise. Like Pusher, the doll can force people to hurt themselves—even kill themselves. And since we know the doll is evil, there’s not much more to the episode other than watching people get killed in various gruesome ways while Scully and Vonsant finally collect enough information to lead them back to the Turner residence in the nick of time. If





With makeup borrowed from Daryl Hannah in **BLADE RUNNER**, Kristin Lehman's Esther Nairn perpetuates the image of hackers as cool rebels.

the script made clear that the doll served as a conduit for Polly's will, that might have added a level of genuine horror, but this remains unclear. The double ending is ludicrous. First, the doll wills Melissa into hammering her own head, and while Scully tries to wrest the doll from Polly, Bonsaint does nothing to stop Melissa. And then, in a coda, the burned doll is once again fished from the sea and announces, "I want to play." Here we go again. There are some familiar King touches; seemingly innocent lines of dialogue and song lyrics turn menacing when repeated in conjunction with the horrific events. But there is none of the specificity of Maine's small town life that make King's books so vivid.

The characterizations of Mulder and Scully are muddled. Since Scully is off on her own, she must represent both her usual viewpoint as well as Mulder's. It is exceedingly strange to hear her suggesting to Bonsaint that they should consider "extreme possibilities," although Anderson makes this switch as credible as she can. Actually, it's strange that after five years of witnessing extreme possibilities Scully isn't already in Mulder's camp, but since she's always stuck to the scientific explanation, no matter what, her taking this position now seems forced—you can see the hand of the writer. And Mulder, via phone, starts offering scientific explanations; suddenly he's Scully, since Scully is now Mulder. The writers should have just given Duchovny the week off, rather than present the Mulder of "Chinga." This Mulder is a fool. It's not a pretty sight. He's pledged not to work for one weekend, but he can find nothing else to occupy his time. So he bangs his basketball out of boredom and tells Scully it's construction work; he hangs around the office anyway; he spends who knows how much time sharpening pencils and throwing them into the ceiling (and the pencils fall down on him, a pathetic gag). Again, if only there were some hint that the loss of Mulder's quest has caused this mindless behavior, but it's impossible to glean this either from the script or Duchovny's performance. Mulder is played simply for sitcom-level yucks. And that's the only scary thing about "Chinga."

"Why don't you let us ask the questions?"

—Scully

"Why don't you bite me?"

—Esther Nairn

KILL SWITCH

★★★

2/15/98. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Written by William Gibson & Tom Maddox. Directed by Rob Bowman.

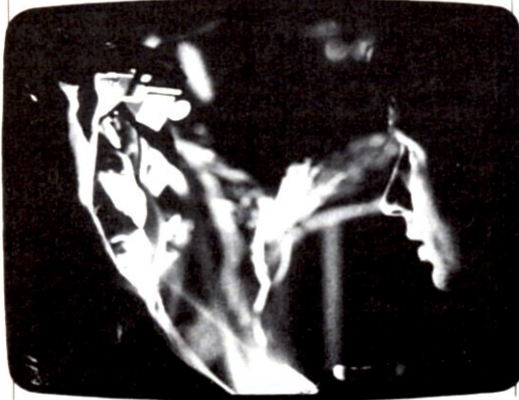
"Kill Switch" is another kind of Frankenstein story. Anonymous phone calls send assorted drug dealers and criminals as well as a team of federal agents to an all-night Washington, D.C., diner; a massive shoot-out ensues in which everyone is killed. One of the victims is an innocent customer, Donald Gelman (Patrick Keating), a reclusive computer genius who invented the Internet. The

man's e-mail leads Mulder and Scully to "Invisigoth," a Gelman protégé named Esther Nairn (Kristin Lehman). She explains that Gelman had created a sentient artificial intelligence which he unloaded onto the Net, to see how it evolved, but now the A.I. intends to destroy its creators, including her and another colleague, her lover David Markham. Nairn is in constant danger: whenever the A.I. locates her, it programs a satellite laser beam at her. She and Scully and Mulder barely escape one such blast. The CD-ROM Mulder and Scully found in Gelman's laptop is a "kill switch," a virus Gelman created to destroy the A.I. But the computer intelligence has become so powerful that the only way to apply the kill switch is to upload it at the physical node that serves as the A.I.'s home base. Mulder tracks down the home node at an abandoned chicken farm, while Scully and a handcuffed Esther search for David. They find his house in ruins and realize the A.I. found him first. Entering the farmhouse, Mulder is captured by the A.I.'s mechanical arms and subjected to a virtual reality scenario in which the A.I. tries to lure from him the location of the kill switch. Scully and Esther rescue Mulder by giving the A.I. the kill switch. Mulder and Scully escape the house, but Esther remains, deliberately strapping herself into the embrace of the A.I., which gives her what she wants: a physical death but a metaphysical immortality, with her consciousness uploaded into the Net, where she believes she will be reunited with David.

"Kill Switch" marks the welcome return of director Rob Bowman, back from the X-FILES movie. It's a great improvement over THE X-FILES' earlier A.I. episode, first season's "Ghost in the Machine." Bowman's direction is fast-paced and energetic, and the episode conveys a disturbing weirdness that has been missing from much of this season. The plot isn't without its flaws—it's illogical that Mulder would put a CD-ROM into his car CD player; he'd put it into his computer. And why not simply cut the A.I.'s power supply? Even so, the story is suspenseful and gripping, as Mulder, Scully and Esther try to elude the A.I. and locate its home base before it can kill them. While the underlying theme of the episode, whether artificial intelligence is life, is a familiar one to any SF fan, it's treated very well in this context. Esther, with her goth raccoon-eyes makeup, tight black leather vest and pants, is the computer scientist as punk. She's a woman with major bad attitude, but underneath it all she is shattered by the loss of Gelman and Markham. Kristin Lehman catches the mingled toughness and heartbreak of the character, a woman so desperate for the connection she hasn't experienced in life that she is willing to die to achieve it.

Mulder's virtual reality experience is a highlight of the episode. It's campy and silly and horrifying, revelatory both of his desires (beauteous bimbo nurses) and his fears (beauteous bimbo nurses and amputation... Freud could have a field day with this) and his subconscious attitudes

In "Kill Switch," Mulder's search for a dangerous artificial intelligence leads him to a techno-geek whose mind has been absorbed into the machine.



towards Scully (she's his doctor, she'll kick butt for him, but there is also the fear of betrayal). Duchovny plays this for all its worth, and Kate Luyben as the seductive yet threatening nurse is a delight. Unfortunately, Scully is played too harshly in the first half of the episode, protesting far too much when it's clear she and Mulder and Esther are being targeted by the A.I. She warms up later on, especially during the scene when Esther believes David has been killed.

"Erotic...yeah."

—Sheriff Hartwell, looking at Scully

BAD BLOOD

★★★1/2

2/22/98. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Cliff Bole.

Night. A boy is running through the woods, screaming for help. In pursuit is a mysterious figure. The boy stumbles and the pursuer catches up with him—and pounds a stake through the boy's heart. A voice is heard: "Mulder?" It's Mulder who has killed the boy, convinced he's a



A pizza-delivering bloodsucker prepares to take a bite out of an innocent victim in "Bad Blood," a tale of good ol' boy vampires in a small town.

vampire, but when Scully catches up with him, she pulls off the fanged teeth: they're plastic fakes. Back at the FBI, Mulder and Scully know they're in trouble, facing a lawsuit from the boy's family, and for Mulder, possible criminal prosecution. Their report is due to Skinner, and Mulder wants to know if Scully saw what he saw. So Scully gives her version of the events, and then Mulder gives his. The case opens with Mulder telling Scully they're going to Chaney, Texas (an homage no doubt to silent horror actor Lon Chaney), to find out why cattle and one unlucky tourist have been left drained of blood. While Scully autopsies the first tourist, Mulder checks out the local cemetery with the local sheriff, Hartwell (Luke Wilson), under the assumption that vampires would return there. A second tourist is murdered and an exhausted, hungry Scully drags herself back to the funeral home for another autopsy. The lab results show that both victims had been drugged, and both had eaten pizza. Scully suddenly realizes that the pizza she had ordered at the motel had been delivered just as she was leaving for the second autopsy and that Mulder would be eating it. She races back to find him drugged and the pizza delivery boy, Ronnie (Patrick Renna), also in the room. She shoots; Ronnie escapes; she and Mulder (who recovers quickly) give chase, ending in Mulder's killing the boy. Mulder tells Scully he saw Ronnie's eyes glowing green and that he was unaffected by two shots from Scully's gun. Scully saw only normal eyes and feels she missed Ronnie. But before they can hand in their report, Skinner orders them back to Texas, because Ronnie's corpse has disappeared and the coroner has a bite on his neck. Turns out the vampires were real after all—Mulder finds Ronnie sleeping in a coffin and is attacked by the



In "Bad Blood," Scully finds herself attracted to a local sheriff (Luke Wilson), who turns out to be one of the townful of vampires.

entire town of vampires, while Scully is given knock-out drops by the handsome vampire Sheriff Hartwell. The next morning the town is deserted. End of story.

The tone of "Bad Blood" is primarily comic, and it is chock-full of truly amusing moments, many of them arising out of the juxtaposition of the differing stories offered by Mulder and Scully. Duchovny and Anderson have a field day with this material. Particularly charming is Scully's goofy grin when she gets a look at the quietly alluring Sheriff Hartwell. Her impatience during the autopsies, with the jump cuts as she weighs various bloody organs, is a hoot. The two versions of the motel scene, especially Scully's version, when she is relaxing on her "magic fingers" bed, are also wonderfully funny. And it's worth the price of admission to hear a drugged Mulder crooning the theme to SHAFT and Duchovny's startled objection to Scully's tale that he did no such thing. One gag—Mulder hanging on for dear life to a runaway RV—doesn't work at all; Mulder looks like a bumbling fool instead of a smart man caught in an absurd situation.

However, there are serious and disturbing issues underlying the humor, particularly in how Mulder and Scully perceive each other. In Scully's story, Mulder comes off as overbearing (if dedicated to the job) and belittling. In Mulder's story, Scully comes off as hostile and uncooperative. Their relationship seems to be a strangely passive-aggressive one (particularly on Scully's part). They complain to each other, but skirt around any meaningful dialogue. Their mutual befuddlement at the end does not signal a resolution to their conflicts. The premise—the reason why Mulder and Scully recount their stories to each other—is also problematic. Mulder has killed a teenage boy, a boy who he thought was a vampire but apparently is not. Instead of experiencing guilt and taking responsibility for his actions, he is worried about an impending lawsuit from Ronnie's family and about his career. He's ready to blame his actions on the drug (even though he had recovered enough to run pell mell through the woods, knock down a strong teen, restrain the desperately struggling boy, and pound that stake into his heart). It's Mulder at his most thoughtless and despicable; in fact, it's hard to believe it's Mulder at all.

The episode collapses in the fourth act, when all the ambiguity vanishes. At least most of the usual vampire clichés are avoided; they're nice vampires, who just want to be good neighbors. The sheriff even apologizes for Ronnie's bad behavior, just as Scully realizes she's been drugged. And writer Vince Gilligan introduces some amusing vampire lore that's seldom if ever been filmed before, like an obsessive need to count dropped seeds and untie shoelaces.

The guest cast is excellent, particularly Luke Wilson as Hartwell. Wilson manages to portray

both the competent lawman (if you believe Scully's story) and a dim-witted hick (if you believe Mulder's story).

"One more anal-probing, gyro-pyro levitating ectoplasm alien anti-matter story and I'm going to take out my gun and shoot somebody."
—Mulder

PATIENT X

★★ 1/2

3/1/98. Editor: Casey O Rohrs. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners.

"Patient X" is the first half of one of a solid two-parter. Krycek (Nicholas Lea) and Marita Covarrubias (Laurie Holden) face off at the site of a mass incineration in Kazakhstan, former Soviet Union. Krycek captures a boy, Dmitri (Alex Shostak, Jr.) who witnessed first a spaceship, then the slaughter carried out by men whose eyes and mouths have been sewn shut. Krycek subjects Dmitri to one of the black oil tests, orders his eyes and mouth sewn shut to prevent the oil from escaping, and takes him on board a ship bound to New York. Krycek wants to deal with the Consortium; he has possession of a vaccine that will cure the black oil infection and Dmitri is an important witness to the aliens' activities. The Consortium desperately wants the vaccine, because it means they will have a way to fight the aliens who plan to colonize the planet. They also believe there is a rebellion growing among the aliens and that the killing in Kazakhstan was carried out by the rebels to prevent the beginnings of colonization. They debate if they should ally themselves with this new force. Everyone's plans go awry when Marita sneaks Dmitri off the ship and he escapes from her, leaving her in a black oil-induced coma. Meanwhile, Mulder is attending a conference of UFO enthusiasts and abductees at which he announces they are all dupes; the alien stories are cover-ups for massive build-ups in military spending. Mulder encounters Dr. Heinz Werber (Jim Jansen), the hypnotist who years ago had helped him recall his memories of Samantha's abduction. He takes Mulder to meet "Patient X," a woman named Cassandra Spender (Veronica Cartwright, of ALIEN), who states she has been abducted many times and knows she will be abducted again. At the FBI, Scully is accosted by Agent Jeffrey Spender (Chris Owens), Cassandra's son, who asks her to keep Mulder away from his mother, because she is a very disturbed woman. But Scully herself cannot stay away, because she, like Cassandra, feels the call to be somewhere—a call she believes originates from the chip in her neck. Dozens of people converge on Skyland Mountain in Virginia (where Duane Barry took Scully) and like the people in Kazakhstan, are burned to death by the "faceless" men. This latest mass death does not deter Scully, or Cassandra, from a third rendezvous at a bridge in Pennsylvania,

Scully, having been mysteriously drawn to a gathering of other abductees, looks up at the approach of what could be a UFO in "Patient X."



where once again, the men with the sewn faces appear to set fire to the crowd.

"Patient X" is a rare episode in that it actually advances the X-FILES mythology, with the news of a vaccine to combat the black oil, the revelation that the aliens really do intend to colonize earth but a rebellion has caused an unexpected advance in the timetable, and that the Consortium wants to fight the colonization. Could the Consortium possibly be...the good guys? This alien-resistance scheme throws the show squarely into a hard science fiction scenario which could turn schlocky. It's a double-edged sword, because THE X-FILES' appeal has always lain in the ambiguity of its do-the-aliens-exist-or-not underpinnings, but at the same time the audience needs some answers. So far, so good, but let's hope THE X-FILES doesn't metamorphosize into V.

"Patient X" indulges itself with too many repellent images: the "faceless men," clear shots of charred corpses, and close-ups of Dmitri's beaten and bloody face stitched shut (reminiscent of similarly maimed faces in the pilot of MILLENNIUM). The camera seems to take a perverse delight in death, pain and mutilation, with the distressing effect of numbing the viewer to the horror.



Chris Owens, who played the young Cigarette Smoking Man last season, shows up in "Patient X" as Agent Jeffrey Spender. Family resemblance?

Nicholas Lea as Krycek is an immense asset to this two-parter; the actor is so dynamic that his mere appearance jacks up the intensity level, although not even he can make credible the silly "rough necking" scene between Krycek and Marita. Veronica Cartwright is completely believable and very poignant as Cassandra Spender, and her scenes with a confused, doubting Scully are wonderful. Considering her name, Mulder should pay more attention to what she has to say. Chris Owens, who was terrific as the young Cigarette Smoking Man in last season's "Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man" and survived "Post-Modern Prometheus," is stuck with a real drip of a character, the kind of smug guy who needs a good, swift kick in the butt. The episode's main problem lies with the handling of Mulder's belief—or lack of it—in what used to be the cornerstone of his worldview: the existence of aliens and UFOs. Since the end of "Redux II," he's either been a goof-off or his usual monster-hunting self, with nary a shred of the self-doubt you'd expect to be haunting him. Now here he is as a full-blown skeptic, willing to tell an entire auditorium of people they're all fools for believing in aliens. How did he get to this point? And why? Kritschgau never offered any solid proof and finding Scully's chip in a government facility means little, when he's known all along of government involvement in the alien cover-up conspiracy. He—as well as the audience—has never seen evidence to support such a drastic change in position, and so he just looks foolish, especially since the next scene shows the Consortium discussing alien colonization.



A flashback in "The Red and the Black" shows Scully's memory of what happened in "Patient X": she watches as Cassandra Spender is abducted.

"Don't let yourself be used."

—Agent Spender to Scully

THE RED AND THE BLACK

★★★

3/8/98. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Chris Carter.

For once, a second half of a two-parter that is as strong as the first half. The episode opens at a cabin perched on a snowy mountain, where an unknown man is writing a letter of reconciliation to his son; the envelope is addressed to Agent Spender. Scully survives the attack on the bridge, but she is in shock and hospitalized. Spender is furious and upset that his mother has disappeared. When Scully awakens, she remembers nothing of the event, not even her trip to Pennsylvania. Mulder tells her that x-rays reveal all the dead had implanted chips. She tells him that without any memories, she cannot follow his theories. She agrees to be hypnotized by Dr. Werber, and in the session relates a shocking story of the approach of a huge, brilliantly lit spaceship, its disappearance, the approach of another ship which draws up Cassandra Spender in a beam of light; and finally, the arrival of the facially mutilated men who begin to set the people ablaze. The Consortium tests the vaccine on the comatose Marita but with no success. Airmen at Wiekamp Air Force Base capture the survivor of a crash on one of the base's fields; the Consortium believe him to be one of the alien rebels. There is division among the Consortium members; the Well Manicured Man is for working with the rebels; the Elder (Don Williams) thinks they must wait. Spender tells Scully that as a boy he believed his mother's stories but now he knows they are not true. Krycek shows up at Mulder's apartment and tells him about the alien rebellion and that a rebel is being held at Wiekamp. The fourth act is an action sequence: Mulder and Scully drive to Wiekamp, Mulder sneaks onto the truck holding the alien rebel, but before he can rescue him, the Bounty Hunter (Brian Thompson) from "Colony" and "End Game" and "Talitha Cumi" appears with his deadly ice pick. The next thing Mulder knows, he's alone in the truck and air force personnel are swarming all over. Marita seems to be on the road to recovery, although she's still comatose, and the letter addressed to Spender is returned to sender: the Cigarette Smoking Man.

We don't learn all that much more in "The Red and the Black" than in "Patient X," but it serves to deepen the storyline introduced in the first episode and to make Mulder's and Scully's positions ever more shaky. Krycek's development is rather puzzling, however. The man has been through more personality changes than Joanne Woodward in *THE THREE FACES OF EVE*. Here he abandons his power of position in Russia and softens up enough to warn Mulder about the alien invasion. There is no explanation whatsoever for Krycek's turnaround.

However, two of the scenes are genuine X-

FILES classics. The first is Scully's hypnosis scene, in which Scully is virtually orgasmic in the intensity of her recall (Anderson is marvelous). The camera work and special effects of the flashbacks are gorgeous, especially the shot of Cassandra floating up to the ship in a swirl of blue light and dust, and the overhead shots of a stupefied Scully. The other scene is the confrontation between Mulder and Krycek in Mulder's apartment, where Krycek delivers his warning to a furious but helpless Mulder (Krycek has him pinned), topped off by an electrifying gesture: Krycek seals his message by kissing Mulder's cheek. Krycek is a kind of trickster figure: he's dangerous and untrustworthy, yet he cannot be discounted. Mulder's silent confusion and despair after Krycek leaves is one of the few moments for him this year that is genuine in its emotion. "The Red and the Black" works very well in twisting Mulder and Scully round and round; Mulder experiences doubt at the end of the episode about his new-found skepticism; Scully feels she witnessed something out of this world at the bridge, but then begins to have doubts about what she recalled. It's also good to see the two partners working together, even communicating their feelings, which they do so rarely. Still, one wonders what the writers are doing with Krycek.

And then there's the return of the Cigarette Smoking Man—not exactly a surprise. Now he's Spender's father, the man who abandoned Cassandra and drove her to insanity (so Spender says). This is where *THE X-FILES* turns into soap opera. First Samantha and Mrs. Mulder, now Spender, and Cassandra. The Cigarette Smoking Man must have been the Conspiracy Casanova of his day.

"Do you know what an X-File is?"

—Dales to Mulder

TRAVELERS

★

3/29/98. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by John Shiban & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by William A. Graham.

The year is 1990. In rural Wisconsin, a sheriff and a landlord enter a house to evict an elderly tenant named Edward Skur. They find a desiccated body in the bathtub. Skur attacks the sheriff, who shoots him. Skur dies muttering the name Mulder. In Washington, D.C., Mulder, still a profiler with the FBI Behavioral Sciences Unit, calls on retired FBI agent Arthur Dales (Darren McGavin), who had opened the original file on Skur back in 1952. Mulder is curious why his name was the last thing Skur said. A reluctant Dales tells Mulder what really happened so long ago. The rest of the episode takes place in a prolonged flashback. It's the era of the McCarthy hearings and Communist witch hunts. The young Dales (Frederic Lane) and his oddly-named partner Hayes Michel (Brian Leckner) arrest Ed Skur (Garret Dillahunt) on charges of contempt for failing to appear before a Congressional committee. Skur is found hung in

They Came From Within: a parasitic alien organism, implanted in a human being as part of an experiment, causes havoc in "Travelers."



his cell shortly thereafter, but Dales spots him alive that night. He gives chase but is terrified when Skur overcomes him and crab-like legs emerge from Skur's mouth. But before anything else can happen, a neighbor calls out and Skur runs off. Justice Department attorney Roy Cohn (David Moreland) calls Dales in and orders him to amend his report and eliminate Skur's name in the interests of national security. While investigating yet another homicide, Dales receives a mysterious message to meet someone at a bar; the contact turns out to be a young State Department official named Mulder (Dean Aylesworth), who warns Dales that Skur and two other men are not Communists but patriots and victims of "xeno-transplantation," surgery to graft another species into the body, a procedure Nazi doctors experimented with during the war. Dales is called into a meeting with FBI director Hoover (David Fredericks), who cryptically tells him that we must do the things even our enemies are ashamed to do to ensure our survival. Dales, Mulder, and a third man arrange a meeting with Skur, who is captured by Mulder and his accomplice, and Dales walks away with nothing. It's the end of the case for him, and he doesn't hear of Skur again for 38 years, until



In "Travelers," Mulder visits retired FBI agent Arthur Dales (*THE NIGHT STALKER*'s Darren McGavin), who worked on X-files in the past.

Mulder knocks on his door.

"Travelers," like "Unusual Suspects," is filler, but unlike "Unusual Suspects," it's not particularly entertaining. The episode's visuals are outstanding, making this, at least, a joy to watch. But, the story is paper-thin. Arthur Dales is not an intriguing character, although he has some resonance as a possible reflection of a future Mulder. Frederic Lane is fine as the younger Dales, but that's not saying much, since the part is the typical one of a young, naive agent initiated into the dark, clandestine byways of his job. And if you're going to bring in Darren McGavin, don't use him in a minor role where he mostly narrates! Bill Mulder is equally dull. This episode, with its historical characters (Cohn and Hoover) and its crustacean-like alien parasites, comes off like a reject from *DARK SKIES*, with a bit of Heinlein thrown in for good measure. The revisionist history does a disservice to the real-life people who stood up for their rights in the early 1950s and suffered blacklisting, imprisonment, and stress-induced illness and death. It's okay: they weren't Communists—they had aliens inside them! The use of historical characters was a cheap device on *DARK SKIES*, and considering how everyone considered *DARK SKIES* an *X-FILES* rip-off, the irony is pathetic. Hoover and Cohn come off as mere mouthpieces justifying the conspiracy's "ends justify the means" mentality. The scenes when the alien emerges from Skur's mouth are technically expert, but repulsive and nonsensical, since an autopsy on one of the afflicted men reveals the creature is stitched to the internal organs—but then we see Skur's parasite exiting freely through his mouth and entering Michel's. How come it doesn't eat Skur's organs as it eats those of the other

victims? Michel as the partner—i.e., the X-FILES Red Shirt—is killed off, for no other reason than to create a shocking moment.

Continuity is unforgivably sloppy. Mulder did not learn about his father's involvement in the conspiracy until "Anasazi," yet now we're told he learned about it several years earlier. He didn't learn about Nazi scientist involvement until "Paper Clip," but now that's invalid, too. In "Shapes," Mulder informs Scully that Hoover opened the X-Files in 1946, but in "Travelers" a records clerk tells Dales she put the files in "X" because she ran out of room in the "U" drawer. Mulder wears a wedding ring (and he's smoking!) although he clearly lives in the same bachelor apartment he has always occupied. Duchovny stated he wore the ring intentionally to create speculation, but this back-end development makes you want to rip your hair out in frustration. You can see Duchovny looking for something to do, since nothing is there for him in the script—so he wears the ring, smokes and keeps smoothing back his hair to give an impression of youthful nervousness. The hair-smoothing gesture is far from subtle—they don't want us to miss that ring.

The ending is morally unfeasible. Mulder wonders how Skur escaped, and Dales speculates that someone might have let him go in order to someday expose the crimes committed against Skur and others. One last flashback shows Bill Mulder releasing Skur. But what kind of charity is this? Skur is a victim, but he's also a killer who will continue to kill, thanks to what was done to him. Bill Mulder is willing to let more murder be done in the vague hope this will expose the conspiracy, but he evades all responsibility by refusing to be involved in that exposure himself. The portrait painted of this man in earlier episodes has never been pretty (he permitted his daughter to be abducted; he treated his son with contempt) but this action is so vile one begins to think he deserved what happened to him in "Anasazi." It is beyond comprehension that Dales and Mulder—especially Mulder—also seem to think this action is justified. The real x-file this season is why the writers are so insistent on draining from Mulder everything that made him not only sympathetic, but admirable.

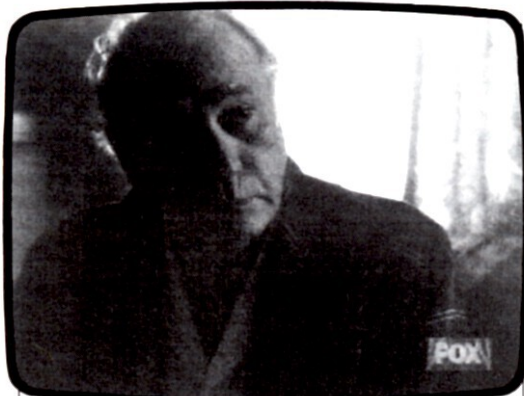
"Somewhere Marcia Clark weeps, but you still haven't got a weapon." —Marty

MIND'S EYE ★★1/2

4/19/98. Editor: Casey O. Rohrs. Written by Tim Minear. Directed by Kim Manners.

The Wilmington, Delaware police find a young woman named Marty Glenn (Lili Taylor) at a motel murder scene and book her for the crime. Detective Penneck (Blu Mankula) asks Mulder and Scully for help on the case, because the circumstances are so peculiar. Marty is blind, yet allegedly she took a 60-mile cab ride to the scene and carved a precise C-shaped cut in the victim. Mulder is dubious that

In "Mind's Eye," Mulder visits Marty in jail; he believes the blind woman's presence at a crime scene was due to a psychic link with a killer.



Darren McGavin's role in "Travelers" turns out to be a minor one, which mostly consists of his narrating past events seen in flashback.

Marty is guilty, but Det. Penneck says he feels Marty—who has a long rap sheet for minor crimes—has a "sixth sense" that lets her see in the dark, like a bat.

Mulder and Scully interrogate Marty. She is hostile, uncooperative and sarcastic, and refuses to confess. Mulder feels drawn to her and is convinced that she is innocent. Scully is not so sure. A lie detector test confirms Mulder's suspicions that Marty is hiding something, although an eye exam confirms she cannot see physically. Mulder notices her pupils suddenly contract and suspects Marty can "see," but in her mind's eye, not with her real eyes. Meanwhile, a recently paroled convict named Gotts (Richard Fitzpatrick) is arranging a drug deal, but takes some time out to harass a woman at a bar. Marty "sees" the action through the Gotts' eyes and calls him at the bar to warn him off. After she is released from jail without being charged, she "sees" the man murder the woman in an alley. She rushes to the scene and when apprehended by police, claims to have committed both murders. Mulder asks Marty who she is protecting, but she won't say. He tells her he believes it's the man who murdered her mother when she was pregnant with Marty, an attack that caused Marty's blindness. Gotts tracks down Marty and she "sees" herself as he sees her and she knows she is in danger from this man. Tests on the blood from a glove Scully found at the first murder scene confirm Gotts is Marty's father. She is to be moved to a safe location and goes home to pack with Det. Penneck, but suddenly cold-cocks Penneck and grabs his gun. She knows her father is coming to kill her. When he enters the apartment, she shoots him point-blank. This time she is guilty of a homicide.

"Mind's Eye" is strikingly reminiscent of third season's "Oubliette," but since the new episode doesn't have the specific connection "Oubliette" drew between Lucy and Mulder's sister Samantha, it doesn't touch the heart as deeply. Mulder's sympathy for Marty blossoms too quickly and seems forced, although his affinity for troubled young women is not without precedent and thus ultimately believable. Scully is pretty much on auto-pilot; although she uncovers some valuable evidence, another character could have done the same without changing the story. In fact, Mulder and Scully don't have much effect on the story whatsoever, which really is about Marty and the torment she undergoes when her father, after many years, is freed from jail and she is forced to see, through his eyes, his unrestrained cruelty and violence. She makes the choice to go to prison herself rather than return there through the eyes of her father. At least it will be her experience, not her father's. The price to take control of her own life, though, is pre-meditated murder, so Marty is not without stain herself. Unfortunately, the story makes the choice too obvious for Marty (and too easy for the audience) by presenting Gotts as such an unregenerate slime that all you can think is that he deserves what he gets. It's vigilante justice.

The admirable actress Lili Taylor graces this episode with her heartfelt portrayal, modulating from super-tough to super-vulnerable in a blink. It is she who makes "Mind's Eye" truly memorable. The work of director Manners and cinematographer Ransom is also highly effective, particularly in the distorted shots where Marty sees through her father's eyes. The shot where from her father's POV she "sees" herself shoot him is masterful in conception and execution.

"As much as I have my faith, Father, I am a scientist, trained to weigh evidence. Science only teaches us how, not why." —Scully

ALL SOULS ★

4/26/98. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Teleplay by Frank Spotnitz & John Shiban. Story by Billy Brown & Dan Angel. Directed by Allen Coulter.

"All Souls" unfolds in flashback, as Scully confesses to a priest her involvement in a case with religious implications. A week ago, Father McCue (Arnie Walkder) asked Scully to help out a family that had recently lost their adopted daughter, Dara, under puzzling circumstances that can't be explained by the police. Father McCue feels that because Scully had suffered a similar loss, she would be the right person to look into the death. Dara (Emily Perkins), a wheelchair-bound adolescent, had just been baptized. That night her father saw her walking down the street during a violent storm and when he went after her, found her dead in a kneeling position of prayer, her eyes burned out. Scully asks Mulder to find Dara's adoption records. They reveal Dara was a quadruplet. A priest named Father Gregory (Jody Racicot) arrives at a local psychiatric institution to take home the girl



Marty Glenn (Lili Taylor) is discovered by police as she is cleaning up a crime scene. But she's blind, so how could she have committed a murder?

he has arranged to adopt, a disturbed youngster named Paula Koklos. He is prevented from taking Paula by her new social worker, Aaron Starkey (Glenn Morshower), who says all the paper work isn't finished. That night, Paula is killed the same way Dara was. Scully arrives the next morning and notices an inverted cross in Paula's room. She autopsies Paula and notices bony protrusions on the clavicle that she thinks look like the stubs of angel wings. During the autopsy, she is dumfounded by a vision of Emily on the autopsy table, whispering, "Mommy, please..." Scully and Mulder talk to Father Gregory at his church, the Church of St. Peter the Sinner. Scully is shaken by Father Gregory's assertion that there is a struggle going on between good and evil that puts "the messengers" in danger; she feels he's talking directly to her. Mulder thinks Gregory is a dangerous wacko; Scully has her doubts. They track down the third sister, but she, too, has been killed. They arrest Father Gregory, who tells them he is trying to save the girls from the Devil, but Scully believes it's not the Devil who wants the girls. Left alone in the interrogation room,



Gregory is visited by Starkey, who begins to radiate a light so intense it burns Gregory to death. When Scully leaves the police station later that night, she experiences a remarkable vision: a man (Tracy Eloffson) with four faces standing in a blaze of light. Shaken, she goes to Father McCue, who tells her the story of the Seraphim and their disfigured half-divine children, the Nephilim, who weren't meant to be and whose souls must be called home before the devil gets them. But what Scully saw was a figment of her imagination, he says. Scully, with Mulder's help, finds the fourth girl but when the blazing man appears, the girl pulls away from Scully, who suddenly sees Emily once more pleading to be let go. Scully lets go of Emily's hand—and the last girl, like her sisters, dies, her eyes burned out. At least the Devil has been thwarted. Scully feels entirely responsible for the last girl's death and tearfully ponders its meaning.

With its trip into blatant religiosity, "All Souls" comes off like a bad episode of *MILLENNIUM*. The great director Ernst Lubitsch once told another great director, Billy Wilder, not to spell things out for the audience, as if they were idiots, just put two and two together and let the audience add it up. "All Souls" violates this sage piece of advice, starting with the teaser, when Dara confronts the angel on the street. As her soul is taken, the camera pans to the right and stops to linger on a telephone pole that forms a cross. Uh oh, this must be a sequel to "A Christmas Carol" and "Emily."

Scully's woe is interminable; she is in tears practically throughout. And it's all for a child for whom it is impossible to feel anything, thanks to



In a *MILLENNIUM*-type episode, Scully has a vision of a blazing Seraphim who has come to Earth to reclaim half-divine offspring of angels.

tells her he's following someone, but then we see him enter a porn movie theater. While Mulder's consumption of pornography has served in the past to symbolize his isolation and lack of significant relationships, here it's just a tasteless joke, making him look like an insensitive creep while Scully chastely suffers on and on. This is gender stereotyping to an extreme degree in a show that used to transcend the stereotypes. And while Mulder has never been a believer in organized, Western religion, the scorn with which he treats an emotionally fragile Scully is disgraceful, especially when he turns around the next minute and advises her to step away from the case because she's too involved (say, isn't that why Father McCue wanted her on this case?). This is advice Mulder would never take from anyone, including Scully.

Father McCue is the most annoying priest on television.

The cinematography and the special effects are outstanding, particularly in the use of blinding light to obscure the angel and the revelation of the angel's four heads.

"What happened to your hand?"

—Skinner

"Terrorist lie detector."

—Mulder

THE PINE BLUFF VARIANT

★ ★ 1/2

5/3/98. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by John Shiban. Directed by Rob Bowman.

Skinner and Scully observe from a van Mulder and other agents staking out a park where a known domestic terrorist named Jacob Haley (Daniel von Bargen) has arranged to meet a contact. The two suspects connect, an envelope is passed, Haley leaves (with Mulder in pursuit) and the second man collapses, his flesh eaten away. Scully is so alarmed for Mulder's safety that she runs after him, and to her shock, sees him letting Haley drive off in a car. The next day she confronts Mulder about his actions, but he shrugs off her inquiries. They both attend a meeting of a joint FBI/CIA group that is tracking Haley's movements. Haley is second-in-command of an extremist right-wing group led by one Arthur Bremer (Michael McRae). Tests show the man in the park was killed by a biotoxin that has not yet been identified. Meanwhile, Mulder continues to act suspiciously: Scully sees him drive off with Haley to a meeting where he tells him he identifies with his group's goals, but Haley distrusts him. Scully follows Mulder but she is forced off the road and escorted into the presence of Skinner and U.S. Attorney Leamus (Sam Anderson). She's told that Mulder is working undercover, that he was approached by Bremer's group after he spoke at a UFO conference and denounced government cover-ups. Mulder is threatened by Haley and physically coerced by Haley's companion, the Gimp (Armin Moattor), who breaks his pinky. In Ohio, the patrons and staff of a movie theater are found dead, their flesh

eaten just like the man in the park. Scully arrives to investigate.

Back in Washington, she tells Mulder she knows he's undercover; outside Mulder's apartment someone is listening to their conversation with a laser beam listening device. Mulder tells Skinner the terrorist group is planning to hit a bank; he is given fake microfiche files with Federal Reserve schedules to pass to Haley. Scully learns that the deadly pathogen is a form of streptococcus which has been coated with a synthetic protective covering which gives them an adhesive quality; dermal contact activates the contagion. But Scully finds the germ is similar to but much more advanced than one developed at the Army's Pine Bluff facility in the 1960s, leading her to believe that that program continued even after the government officially cancelled it. Where this version came from, no one knows. Bremer and Haley force Mulder to wear a mask and join the terrorist group in the bank robbery. Afterwards, when Scully recognizes Mulder on the bank's videotape, thanks to his taped finger, the FBI rushes to the bank. Scully realizes that the real purpose of the robbery was to expose people once more to the germ—another test. Back at terrorist headquarters, Bremer forces Haley and Mulder to their knees. He plays the tape of Mulder and Scully talking—Haley realizes he's been duped. Bremer lets Haley go and orders the Gimp to shoot Mulder, but then he suddenly shoots the Gimp and orders Mulder to get out of there. Mulder realizes Bremer is a government operative and rushes back to the bank, where he confronts Skinner and Leamus. He accuses Leamus of knowing all along about the biotoxin and the tests. Leamus tells him sometimes it's his job to protect people from knowing the truth. Shortly after Haley drives off, his car goes off the road: he is the latest victim of the biotoxin.

The plot of "The Pine Bluff Variant" is one you might see on any cop or action/suspense show, and after five years of conspiracy betrayals, the ending is not much of a surprise. The episode's main flaw is the red herring of Scully's suspicions at the beginning. It's inconceivable that she, as Mulder's partner, would not be told that he is on an undercover assignment—what she doesn't know is precisely what could get him in trouble, as it almost does. Nor would Mulder ever throw in with terrorists, so this isn't remotely suspenseful for the audience. The writers must have realized how silly this was, since Scully learns Mulder's true mission by the end of act one. However, thanks to Rob Bowman's direction, Willingham's crisp editing, Mark Snow's music (Snow's metallic tick-tock expertly jacks up the tension) and a number of exciting set-pieces for Mulder, it's an absorbing hour of entertainment. The scene where Haley interrogates Mulder while the Gimp bends back Mulder's pinky until he finally breaks it is especially gripping. It's not often we see our heroes hurt in such a startling and immediate way. The bank robbery scene and the execution scenes are also well staged. Duchovny does an excellent job

In "The Pine Bluff Variant," a terrorist group dons monster masks during a bank heist that turns out to have more than robbery as its motive.



Mulder's undercover identity is found out when tries to investigate a group of anti-government terrorists in "The Pine Bluff Variant."

the manipulative dreariness of those two earlier episodes. "All Souls" might have worked if the writers had handled the story more delicately; for instance, if they had made this a regular case, instead of having Father McCue, with all the tact and grace of the bull in the china shop, request Scully's assistance; and if Scully had not seen visions of Emily. If Scully had released the fourth girl's hand without seeing Emily, the more metaphorical treatment might created a true sense of pathos. But it's probably a lost cause, since this is a continuation of a storyline that failed the first time around to evoke any true emotion. This notion that Scully has been "chosen" to save children was interesting back in "Revelations," but it's getting ridiculous, especially since it now means that she has to let them go to their deaths to "save" them. This is such a dreadful burden of guilt to put on Scully and a terrible way to create "drama" and "conflict" for her. Gillian Anderson is fine, delivering all the tears and quivering lip you could ask for, but what a waste of an excellent actress who has traveled down this tear-stained route far too many times. Besides, when is Scully going to admit she is not just chosen, but downright psychic?

Mulder is treated disrespectfully. When we first see him, he's in a phone booth talking to Scully. He

of conveying Mulder's pain and stress while attempting to maintain a facade of complicity with men who are ready to kill him at any moment. Anderson doesn't have as much fun in this episode but she is otherwise fine in a conventional part.

"Monsters? I'm your boy."

—Mulder

FOLIE A DEUX

★★★

5/10/98. Editor: Casey O. Rohrs. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Kim Manners.

Gary Lambert (Brian Markinson) is an employee of a direct-marketing vinyl siding firm called VinylRite located in Oak Brook, Illinois. Gary is terrified of his boss, Greg Pincus (John Apicella), who he believes is not a man, but a man-sized insect-like creature that buzzes and flits around the office and sucks the life out of people, turning them into zombies. But he's the only one who can see the insect-man; to everyone else he's simply Mr. Pincus. After Gary sends a taped message to a local radio station warning of the creature that stalks VinylRite and demanding the tape be played 24 hours a day, Skinner tells Mulder and Scully to make a threat assessment on the company, which is being careful ever since an employee at another branch threatened people with a gun several years ago.

Mulder is annoyed by what he considers a time-waster of an assignment and tells Scully not to bother going—he'll take care of it himself. He talks to Pincus, listens to the tape and decides whoever sent it is merely deranged. He asks Scully to look through the X-Files for a phrase heard on the tape, "hiding in the light," which is how Lambert believes Pincus disguises himself. Mulder then returns to VinylRite and walks right into a hostage situation: Gary is brandishing a high-powered rifle and has separated the "zombies" and Mr. Pincus from "the actual humans." He wants a cameraman to come in and reveal Mr. Pincus's true identity to the world: The FBI sends in the cameraman. Mulder pretends to be a job applicant, but his cover is blown when FBI Agent Rice (Roger R. Cross) uses Scully's cell phone to call him. Gary is about to kill Pincus on camera when Mulder intervenes. Gary begs him to turn around and look at Pincus and when he does, Mulder sees what Gary sees: a huge insect-like creature. Just then, the police crush through the wall and shoot Gary. The crisis is over, but Mulder is shaken by more than just being a hostage. He goes back to D.C., where he tells a worried Scully what he saw. She suggests that it was a hallucination brought on by the ordeal. Mulder returns to Illinois, and has shipped to Scully the body of a man killed by Gary during the hostage situation. She finds the corpse has deteriorated more than expected; Mulder says that's because he was already dead. At Gary's house, Mulder sees one of Pincus' "zombies" staring at him; she disappears but moments later drives away with Pincus. He traces Pincus to another VinylRite employee's home and

In "Folie a Deux," assistant Director Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) loses his patience with Mulder's claim that he is pursuing a monster disguised as a man.



After attacking a man he believes to be a monster in disguise, Mulder is confined to a psychiatric unit, where he is easy prey, in "Folie a Deux."

sees him bite her, but she accuses Mulder of being her attacker. Skinner arrives to investigate this, but when Mulder attacks Pincus, Skinner has him committed to a hospital psychiatric unit. Tied down by wrist restraints, Mulder is helpless to defend himself when the insect creature enters his room. Fortunately, Scully has just arrived to tell Mulder she found evidence of bite marks on the neck of the "zombie" in her autopsy bay. To her shock, she sees Mulder's nurse as a zombie and rushes to his room, shooting at something she sees in the dark. Back at the FBI, Scully is noncommittal in her report to Skinner, pronounces Mulder fit for duty, and then tells a waiting Mulder that she told the truth as best she knew it. Was it a "Folie a deux," a madness shared by two?

"Folie a Deux" is the scariest episode of the year. The insect creature, with its "now you see it, now you don't," herky-jerky movements and its buzzing sound, is a triumph for the special effects and post-production team. Even the casting for Pincus is just right. Apicella, with his round countenance, mild manner and high-pitched voice seems the soul of innocence, until he flashes a look of malevolence towards Mulder. Brian Markinson, is also wonderful as the nervous Gary. Kim Manners works in all sorts of tilted and skewed camera angles, often low shots, to demonstrate the mental instability of the characters while also keeping the audience off-balance. One of the best is a very low-angle shot of Mulder gazing down at Pincus' latest victim, oblivious to the bug-creature above him skittering across the ceiling and out the window. Another terrific moment is when Mulder first sees the insect: the lights sputter out in the room where Gary is holding the hostages and Mulder turns around, at Gary's insistence, to look at Pincus... and sees, in the darkness, the menacing form of the giant insect. In fact, any scene with the big bug is a real chiller; another nail-biter is when Pincus, behind Skinner's back, lets Mulder see his true insect form while he moves to attack Skinner, thus forcing Mulder to retaliate in a way that makes him look insane.

There's a nice metaphor at work in the script (and well realized in performance by the cast, aurally by the sound design and physically by the set design) of people caught in low-paying, soul-numbing jobs being little more than insect-type drones, anonymous workers in a buzzing, busy hive of a workplace. The tiny carrels could be the cells in a bee nest. No wonder Mr. Pincus likes to hide himself in such a setting. He probably feels right at home.

The script is structured in two parts, the first half dealing with Markinson's confrontation with the big bug, the second half dealing with Mulder's (and ultimately Scully's) realization. The second half is thus rather repetitive, but the insect is such a terrific monster that it carries the episode on its chitinous shoulders. This is one of the few times that Scully sees something out of the ordinary at the same time Mulder sees it, a rare moment of unity for them (especially this season). Unfortunately, there really is no question of

whether they are sharing a delusion or not, because the script pulls its punches in act three, when we see, from an objective angle, Pincus driving a car with one of his zombie victims in the passenger seat. Mulder is too far away behind the car for this to represent his POV. The loss of ambiguity dilutes the power of the episode, turning it into a big bug hunt. This narrative coddling keeps the episode from attaining true classic status; in the end, it simply isn't as horrifying as it should have been, because we know too much. Even so, the episode is so well realized that there is much to enjoy and be frightened by. That is one hell of a bug. Where is a can of "Die, Bug, Die!" when you need it?

"You know you're going places when the Assistant Director tidies up your office for you."
—Mulder

THE END

★★★

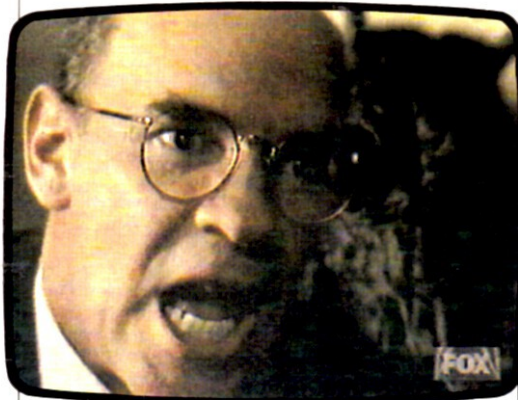
5/17/98. Editor: Heather MacDougall. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by R.W. Goodwin.

An important chess match between a Russian master and a 12-year-old boy named Gibson (Jeff Gulka) is taking place in a huge, sold-out arena in Vancouver, B.C. During the match, the boy hears some odd, electronic-like sounds. He looks around



The season finale, "The End," finds the Cigarette Smoking Man back in action, working for the conspirators who previously tried to kill him.

at the crowd but apparently sees nothing. He checkmates his opponent and pushes back in his chair just as the other man is shot with a high-powered rifle. Pandemonium erupts as the crowd rushes towards the exits. Meanwhile, in the Laurentian Mountains of Quebec, parachuters approach the remote cabin occupied by the Cigarette Smoking Man; after a brief gun battle and chase, he comes face to face with Krycek, who's been sent to bring him back. Mulder finds Skinner in his office, and after a brief discussion of Mulder's long-term plans, Skinner tells him about the assassination in Vancouver, adding that the shooter (Martin Ferraro), a former employee of the NSA, has been caught. Agent Spender (Chris Owens), who has been put in charge of the case by "outside forces," has specifically asked Mulder not to be put on the team. Mulder takes Skinner's hint and immediately intrudes on Spender's briefing. To Spender's annoyance, he points out something Spender hadn't noticed on the videotape, how the boy seems to have anticipated the shot pre-cognitively. One member of Spender's team is Agent Diana Fowley (Mimi Rogers), who knew Mulder in his early days in the Bureau and, like him, has an interest in the paranormal. At a psychiatric hospital, Gibson passes ESP tests with flying colors and also undergoes neurological tests. Mulder interrogates the shooter and suggests he will get immunity if he reveals what he knows about the boy. Meanwhile, the Well-Manicured Man (John Neville) and the First Elder (Don Williams) meet with the Cigarette Smoking Man. They want him to finish the botched assassination. Diana and Mulder discuss Gibson, then talk about the past five years



since Diana went to Europe to work on terrorism cases. Scully sees them talking and retreats to her car, calling Mulder from her cell phone. She has the results of Gibson's tests, and she also knows, thank to Frohike, that Fowley was once Mulder's "chickadee." At a meeting in Skinner's office, Scully states that Gibson has abnormal activity in an area of the brain called the "God Module." Mulder adds that Gibson may be the key to not only all human potential but all spiritual and paranormal phenomena, everything that's in the X-Files. He wants immunity for the shooter so he will reveal what he knows about the boy, and he is willing to risk the X-Files to ask the Attorney General for that immunity. Mulder informs the shooter he needs more information before immunity will be granted, and the man tells him the boy is "the missing link." Mulder realizes that this may refer to a link between humans and aliens, a theory Spender finds preposterous. Shortly afterwards, the shooter is shot through the slot in his door. Diana comes to relieve Scully from watching Gibson from the new safe location at a motel, but she is also shot. The Cigarette Smoking Man hands Gibson over to the Well-Manicured Man and Krycek; Mulder furiously assaults an outraged Spender, whom he holds responsible for the death of the shooter and the wounding of Diana. Back at Mulder's, Scully gets the news from Skinner that Diana is still alive, but there is talk of



The Cigarette Smoking Man delivers a 12-year-old boy with psychic powers (Jeff Gulka) to the Well-Manicured Man (John Neville) in "The End."

into the show, after the writers wrote themselves into a corner by pretending to kill him off.

And with all that Mulder and Scully have uncovered, why would the murder of a chess player and the abduction of Gibson's warrant a shut-down of the X-Files? If anything, the FBI should be beefing up Mulder's budget, considering what he and Scully have uncovered about Gibson. Or is Janet Reno part of the Conspiracy, too? Security is a joke. No guards are in sight monitoring the assassin's cell, and it's no surprise he's killed off so easily—although the Cigarette Smoking Man's threatening note on the packaging of a pack of Morleys is a clever way to signal the impending murder. At one point Mulder and Spender leave the shooter's cell without locking it. Gibson is guarded with minimal personnel who are easily overcome; Diana might as well be wearing a sign saying "shoot me" when she looks out the window of the motel room where the FBI is keeping Gibson. And where are Gibson's parents? We see them for a moment in the teaser, and Mulder speaks of them, but they otherwise absent, when they should play a prominent part of the story. Scully especially should be curious about them, after what she learned in "Christmas Carol" about Emily's parents.

Again, Mulder's characterization presents a problem. Although he's as close to his old self as he's come in a long time—smart, confident, sarcastic and able to perceive things others don't—he also suddenly believes in aliens again. One can get whiplash watching Mulder's beliefs ping-pong back and forth this season. The idea of putting Mulder through a period of self-questioning is a good one, but instead of a finely drawn portrait of a person experiencing a doubt so great it leads him down an unexpected road—i.e., skepticism—we've seen a Mulder who has been bounced from one end of the spectrum to the other without anything in between. Krycek's message and Scully's hypnotic regression in "The Red and Black" are not

Agent Spender (Chris Owens), the Cancer Man's alleged son, returns in "The End," heading a briefing regarding the assassination of a chess master.



sufficient explanation for Mulder's sudden return to his old theories. But since the show couldn't deal satisfactorily with a non-believing Mulder, it's probably for the best that he believes again. Don't question why, because there are no logical answers.

Mimi Rogers, who starred with David Duchovny in *THE RAPTURE*, is lovely as Diana Fowley. Diana's affection for Mulder is touching, but she's not much of an agent; it's hard to believe someone as experienced as she would fall asleep on the job. And if she doesn't return next season, there seems little reason for her existence, other than to make Scully jealous and perhaps provide an oblique reference to the wedding ring Mulder sported in "Travelers." Shooting her is an easy way to get rid of her, even if she wasn't killed. The jealousy angle is played, thankfully, as subtly and low-key as possible, expressed in great deal through the editing of the reaction shots. And the foundation of the jealousy is not made explicit: professional jealousy, or is there something more? The show is teetering dangerously close to putting out in the open something that best be left boxed up. Gillian Anderson's performance in this episode is her best this year, which isn't surprising since she's finally been given something to do other than complain or cry. She is a model of restraint and the subtle mix of emotions that cross her face when she



A fan favorite, Nicholas Lea makes a reappearance as the ambiguous Krycek in "The End," now acting as the Well-Manicured Man's right-hand man.

Mulder's former partner and old flame, Agent Diana Fowley (Mimi Rogers) discuss their present case and reminisce about old times in "The End."

closing the X-files and reassigning her and Mulder. Mulder realizes that this entire affair was planned from the beginning. The Cigarette Smoking Man stands in Mulder's darkened office, lighting a cigarette; he removes Samantha's case file from the cabinet. On his way out he sees Spender and tells him he is his son. Cut to firemen exiting an elevator and Mulder and Scully finding the charred remains of their office. The X-files have been destroyed.

"The End" is an effective, sometimes even moving, conclusion to a scattershot season. The destruction of Mulder's X-files represents a turning point, both for the show itself, which is now moving to Los Angeles for production, but also for Mulder, who has been emotionally lost at sea this season. Anything can happen now. It's a far superior cliffhanger to last season's "Gethsemane." Gibson's abilities also represent a wild card, an intriguing new factor, although how his mental powers are the key to everything in the X-files is not very clear.

The rest of the episode is a mixed bag. Krycek has been reduced to the Well-Manicured Man's errand boy and chauffeur (a curious job for a one-armed man!). John Neville, a great actor of stage and occasionally screen, gets to say "God!" a lot, while the Cigarette Smoking Man gets all the juicy lines. Why the change of heart about killing Gibson? Also, there's no explanation as to why the Consortium suddenly needs the Cigarette Smoking Man to do its dirty work, when he's messed up so many times before, to the point where they tried to assassinate him. It's just an excuse to get him back

returns to her car to call Mulder is beautifully done. Yet the unspoken rivalry between Scully and Diana makes it seem as if THE X-FILES has been afflicted by a case of creeping ALLY MCBEAL-ization. Put two women and one man in a room, and the two women are automatically jealous of each other. This kind of characterization shows lack of imagination, and if it works at all it's because of Gillian Anderson.

Spender is still a unpleasant snob, but then, he's meant to be that way. Chris Owens almost makes you like the guy or at least feel sorry for him whenever Mulder withers him with a glance or a choice line like "You're insulting me when you should be taking notes." The "I am your father," "what?" business between Spender and the Cigarette Smoking Man is grade-A, one hundred percent pure soap; alas, we're sure to get more of it in season six.

None of this dampens the possibilities opened up by "the God Module" or the final scene, where a benumbed, stunned Mulder contemplates the ruin of his dreams while Scully holds on to him, both to comfort and to be comforted. How ironic that this destruction comes only a couple of days after Mulder had told Skinner that his "long-term plans" were the X-Files, in which he hoped to find the truth. The episode opens big and wide with a glorious, ultra-cinematic crane shot that surveys the chess match arena from up high and then closes in on the two players and it comes full circle to two other players, Mulder and Scully. The machinations of "The End" are the biggest chess game of all, and even if Mulder and Scully have been checked for now, by no means are they checkmated. □