

SIXTH SEASON EPISODE GUIDE

By Paula Vitaris

"You can kill a man but you can't kill what he stands for, not unless you first break his spirit. That's a beautiful thing to see."

—Cigarette Smoking Man

THE BEGINNING

★1/2

11/8/98. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

THE X-FILES's sixth season opener ties together last season's finale, "The End," with THE X-FILES movie released in the summer of 1998. Mulder and Scully find themselves facing a panel of doubting FBI brass headed up by a skeptical Assistant Director Maslin (Wendie Malick). Mulder says he's ready to prove his story about his adventures in the Arctic with Scully, but then Scully announces she doesn't have the scientific proof he thought she had. The situation only worsens when he learns that Spender (Chris Owens) and Fowley (Mimi Rogers) have been assigned to the newly reopened X-Files office, and he and Scully will now work for Assistant Director Kersh (James Pickens, Jr., a fine addition to the cast).

"The Beginning" is another mile down the X-FILES Road of Mythology. Monster aliens? This is something out of a schlocky pulp novel with the science of the show dissolved into complete technobabble, where the words "virus" and "DNA" are slung about like hash in a greasy diner. And the word "trust" is the emotional equivalent, with Mulder and Scully arguing over Fowley's intentions, as well as Scully's failure to back up Mulder at the inquiry. Fowley has no life of her own whatsoever; she exists merely to create obstacles between Mulder and Scully, both of whom come off looking not too intelligent.

Skinner points Mulder in the direction of evidence, but otherwise straddles the fence again. The CSM blows smoke. Neither are compelling here. The most interesting character in all of this is little Gibson Praise, played with great veracity by Jeff Gulka. His honesty cuts through all the cant. The surgical torture that Gibson suffers as a Consortium guinea pig is indefensible. With all the computer imaging equipment available these days, there would be no need to open up Gibson's skull. The possible consequences—from brain damage to death—are too great, if we are to believe that the Consortium members feel Gibson is invaluable to them. The only reason Gibson must endure this is to jolt the audience, and that is no reason at all.

THE X-FILES has a new director of photography this season. His name is Bill Roe, and to judge by "The Beginning," he is a great asset. Although the bright sunshine of new Los Angeles-

Jeff Gulka as Gibson Praise, the Consortium's brain surgery guinea pig for alien/human hybrid experiments in season opener "The Beginning."



Bryan Cranston as Patrick Crump in "Drive," the show's take on SPEED. Mulder must keep driving fast to prevent Crump's head from exploding.

based locations is disconcerting—the show's aura of mystery suffers without the Vancouver fog and mist—the lighting of the interiors is eye-catching, particularly the dull red light of the power plant core area.

"It's Mr. Mulder to you, you peanut-picking bastard."

—Mulder to Crump

DRIVE

★★★

11/15/98. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor: Lyne Willingham.

Thoroughly bored by a routine domestic terrorism investigation in Idaho, Mulder takes an interest in a newscast on a farmer's television: Nevada highway police have captured a belligerent speeder who may have taken a hostage. When the woman is rescued and put into a patrol car, she begins banging her head against the window. Suddenly blood spatters the glass; her head has exploded. Mulder ducks the domestic terrorism assignment, convincing a protesting Scully to accompany him. They go to Nevada and Mulder injects himself into the local police investigation. It turns out the speeder is one Patrick Crump (Bryan Cranston), a roofer, and the woman was his wife Vicky (Janine Venable), and they must drive fast to stay alive.

Like Keanu Reeves in SPEED, Mulder must keep driving fast (although without a minimum speed limit to worry about) in order to keep a bomb from exploding—in this case, the bomb being a head (only on the X-FILES...). "Drive" is a highly kinetic episode and director Bowman keeps the action pushing forward at a swift pace, with the characters' realization that time and land is running out on them. The only relief is in the few conversations Mulder has with Crump, who turns out to be, in some ways, not all that different from Mulder himself. Crump is just as paranoid and conspiracy-believing as Mulder.

It's the X-file itself that is the flaw in "Drive." Scully's explanation how Extremely Low Frequency waves might cause insupportable pressure in one's head sounds like pure hokum, and there's no explanation why speed and driving west would lessen the pressure. Scully once again has a Stupid Medical Moment, when she examines Vicky Crump's corpse without using a face mask or protective glasses.

Where "Drive" truly succeeds is in the teamwork displayed by Mulder and Scully. Although communicating mostly by phone, or at times unable to communicate at all, they instinctively trust each other's judgment, in particular when Scully tells the police captain (Michael O'Neill) that Mulder must have a reason for evading the police roadblocks, even though she herself doesn't know why he's done so. Mulder also makes a reasonable intuitive leap in figuring out that high speed and heading west are necessary to keeping Crump alive as long as possible.

"Drive" never achieves a real apotheosis because the climactic moment when Crump dies

takes place off-screen. It passes over the climax and focuses on the anti-climax. Duchovny is excellent at the end, when Mulder exits the car silently, passes Scully, removes his tie and stares out at the sea, sad that he has not been able to save the disagreeable Crump.

James Pickens, Jr., as Kersh, has little screen time, but he is a strong presence, and creates a much different boss than Skinner. He has a low-key irony that, in addition to his position of authority over Mulder and Scully, makes him a bit menacing. But you also have to like him for the sarcastic tinge of his scoldings, even when he's unloading them on Mulder and Scully.

"I suggest you get your Nazi paws off me before I give you one in the kisser!"

1939-Scully

TRIANGLE

★1/2

11/22/98. Written and directed by Chris Carter. Editor: Louise A. Innes.

"Triangle" is certainly an ambitious episode. Carter, who wrote and directed, decided to borrow the technique Hitchcock used in ROPE, shooting each scene until the camera literally ran out of film. This requires an enormous amount of blocking, since one mistake and an entire 10-minute take is wasted. He also shot "Triangle" in a widescreen aspect ratio of 1:85:1.

The narrative structure pays a bit of homage to THE WIZARD OF OZ, since much of the action takes place "over the rainbow"—or inside the Devil's Triangle in the Caribbean—in 1939. The episode also cuts back to the present day, until the fourth act, where the past meets the present. The fourth act thus has shorter scenes, and is full of screen wipes and split-screen work to show each milieu simultaneously. Everyone certainly deserves an A for effort.

The Lone Gunmen, we learn, have downloaded a satellite image that reveals a surprising object floating in the Sargasso Sea off Bermuda: the luxury liner the Queen Anne, disappeared in 1939 and never found, despite sinking, supposedly, in 60 feet of water. Mulder, of course, is unable to resist investigating a ship that popped out of nowhere and flies to Bermuda where he finds himself on the missing Queen Anne. But it's the Queen Anne of September 3, 1939.

Somewhere in all this is a nice little story about trust—putting Mulder and Scully's trust to the test is a recurring theme this season—but it's lost inside the vertiginous camerawork, the endless, monotonous tracking shots up and down hallways, and a fourth act crowd scene (in this case, the British sailors-German soldiers brawl) usually found in a Carter-directed episode. And it's hard to see just what is happening; the lighting is so dark that it often obscures the action completely.

The story is also sacrificed to moments meant to titillate the viewers, particularly Scully kissing Skinner, Mulder kissing 1939-Scully, and Mulder telling Scully he loves her. When are these kisses

Mulder encounters a Scully look-alike in "Triangle," on board the 1939 Queen Anne lost in the Devil's Triangle, which Carter filmed in scope.





Carter works with Duchovny on the set. Carter is leaving open the possibility of another season of the show after the seventh season, beginning in October, and looks forward to launching a second feature film.

summer," he said, "and I can tell you it is not going to happen this summer. But I can see it possibly happening in 2001 or 2002. I don't think you necessarily have to have a movie right in the theaters after that [the season finale]. Maybe a year is a good amount of time before the next movie. Right now, we're playing it by ear, because we've got as much as we can possibly handle."

In doing the second movie without the worry of incorporating it into the television series, Carter's going to have an easier time of it. "I have big ideas for the second movie," he said. "One of the tricks in doing the movie was to be creatively conservative. We still had two more years left to do on the series and we didn't want to do a movie that would reduce interest in the series. I had to perform tricks that most moviemakers don't ever have to think about. And so I'm looking forward to the time when I can make a movie that doesn't necessarily have those requirements or those restrictions."

Of course, making the next movie will require the participation of its stars. Carter feels confident that Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny will make a return appearance. "Gillian asked me the other day about doing the next movie, so I know she's excited to do it," said Carter. "I'm assuming David is excited, too. We've spoken about it. It's a matter of finding the time and setting the time aside. I think both David and Gillian, rightly so, have movie careers ahead of them, and they're very anxious to start doing something besides playing Mulder and Scully. Who

"I had to perform tricks most moviemakers don't ever have to think about. I'm looking forward to a time when I can make a movie that doesn't have those restrictions."

—Chris Carter, Director—

could blame them? So I think it's giving them some time to exercise those creative urges and then come back and put on those FBI clothes again."

But can you tell us for sure? (Again, that letting go problem.) "I know everybody wants definites, but I can tell you that they're very enthusiastic. I can tell you there are no contracts to do it, but I know every-

one's intentions are to do another movie."

Because the show moved from Vancouver to LA last year, cast and crew are still settling in. Carter had seemingly resisted the move from his favorite shooting locale (where MILLENNIUM is still based), but is now pleased with the decision. "We've got a fantastic crew," he said. "I can tell you that actually moving to LA, in a way, rejuvenated the show by giving us new stories to tell, new places to tell them, new staff, new crew. I think the show looks as good as it's ever looked."

Does Carter envision the show continuing with new stars? "It could happen," he said. "I don't know... If I start having anxiety about the future, or changing, finding new Mulders and Scullys, I think it would actually get in the way of doing that good work. So, right now, I don't think about problems that don't exist. But if it came down to it and someone said to me, 'Let's do an eighth year,' and 'would you consider a new Mulder and Scully,' I wouldn't not consider it, but because I don't have to consider it right now, I don't. Is that evasive enough?"

The idea of continuing the show in a series of television movies is not an option. "I don't want to do that," said Carter. "I want

that are not kisses going to end? First it's a faux-Mulder almost kissing Scully in "Small Potatoes," then a real Mulder almost kissing a real Scully in the X-FILES movie, and in "Triangle" Mulder kissing a Scully look-alike whose only meaning for him is her resemblance to his partner.

None of the characters Mulder meets in his dream or time trip is remotely intriguing; they draw our attention only because they're played by X-FILES regulars familiar in other roles. If this episode is a dream, then Mulder's visions of Spender and CSM as Nazi officers, Skinner as a German secretly friendly to the Allies, Scully as a tough-minded government operative on a secret mission, are pedestrian, offering no new insights into these people.

The fourth act is particularly problematic. The choice of Benny Goodman's rousing "Sing, Sing, Sing" on the soundtrack, turns everything—the running around the ship, the big fight—campy, not to be taken seriously. "Isn't this fun?" we're being told. The ballroom battle, for all the flying of fists, is dull and clunky; there's no rhythm, no punch. It's just there, something to distract everyone so Mulder and 1939-Scully can sneak away, giving Mulder the chance to convince her that she must get the sailors to turn the ship around.

Although "Triangle" shares with last year's Carter-written and directed "Post-Modern Prometheus" the idea of the unreliable narrator, the former improves on the latter. We may not know if the 1939 part of this episode is a dream or an actual venture into a Devil's Triangle time warp, but the story is clearly told by Mulder, affording "Triangle" a stronger narrative structure and a true point of view.

Again, the story boils down to the trust Mulder has in Scully, whatever year she exists in, and Scully rushing off to rescue Mulder from his latest mishap. We've seen this kind of protective action by Scully before ("Colony" and "End Game" come to mind), and her loyalty is admirable. The twist this time is that Mulder's trust and affection for Scully has changed into incipient and for now one-sided romance. If Carter really means to bring Mulder and Scully together romantically, then it's time to stop pussy-footing around with such an adolescent approach to their relationship. If romance is not in the cards, then end the tease and focus on what's really in their hearts and minds.

"Mulder, you are acting bizarre!"

—Scully to Morris

"Jealous?"

—Morris to Scully

DREAMLAND

★1/2

11/29/98. Written by Vince Gilligan, John Shiban, Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

THE X-FILES returns to Mulder's Shangri-La,

Mulder finds himself in the body of MIB Morris Fletcher (Michael McKean) in "Dreamland," settling for sitcom level comedy instead of thrills.



Area 51, a.k.a. Dreamland, in a two-parter that might have been a thrilling speculation about what's really going on at the top-secret military base, but instead settles for sitcom-level comedy and a "reset button" finale. Even so, there are some gratifying moments along the way.

"Dreamland" may be THE X-FILES' homage to STAR TREK, considering that a phrase like "space-time continuum" is used to explain the episode's X-file. Body-switching is a familiar science fiction trope. Here, it's mostly a device for weak comedy, with Mulder, in the body of MIB Morris Fletcher (Micheal McKean)—an anti-Mulder—bumbling along while he gets oriented to the unfamiliar territory. Mulder—and Duchovny—never get to express the anxiety anyone would feel in such a situation. The scenes at the MIB office are believable enough and the writers let us see that MIB office politics aren't that much different from office politics anywhere. But once Mulder goes to Morris' house, the comedy turns sour. Morris' family are all caricatures—the kids are stereotypical self-centered adolescents and wife Joanne (Nora Dunn) is a shrew. Duchovny also now has an unfortunate tendency to mug, particularly during a sequence lifted straight out of the Marx Brothers' DUCK SOUP, when Mulder makes broad faces and gestures before a mirror. Duchovny and McKean do a satisfactory if not spectacular job of aping each other's actions, but the bit stops the story dead. Mulder's wacky posturing is out of character; it's the kind of thing Eddie Van Blundht from "Small Potatoes" might do if he had once again assumed Mulder's shape, but not Mulder himself.

Duchovny has a fine moment when Mulder is the only "MIB" to show concern for the agonized gas station attendant who has been fused to the floor. This entire scene, which includes the murder of the attendant and the torching of his business, is played seriously, and suddenly, for a moment, this episode really clicks. The Washington, D.C. scenes, work much better. Gillian Anderson's exasperated reactions to the piggish Morris are a hoot, and Michael McKean, as Morris, is perfect. The terrific thing about McKean is that, even if the episode was played straight, he'd still be right for Morris, because he conveys the idea that Morris, for all that he is a buffoon, is also a dangerous guy. And he humanizes Morris, allowing us to see a man frustrated with his job and his life, but also unable to realize that he's his own worst enemy.

"We could have lots of fun together once you got to know me, you know that, Danes?"

—Morris to Scully

"I still got my gun."

—Scully

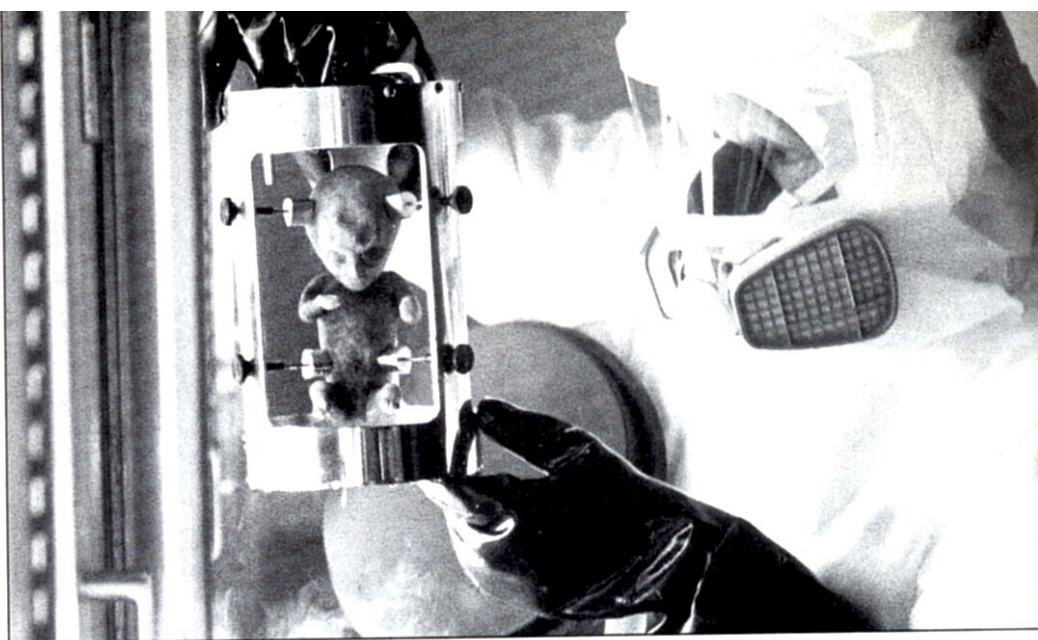
DREAMLAND II

★★

12/6/98. Written by Vince Gilligan, John Shiban, Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor: Lynne Willingham.

The continuation to "Dreamland" begins with

Scully taunts Fletcher in Mulder's body with handcuffs in "Dreamland II," but instead of an apartment sex romp he just gets the third degree.



Extracting DNA from an alien fetus to create the first human/allen hybrid in sixth season's "One Son," the conspiracy's effort to make mankind more resistant to an alien takeover, a final season plot thread.

to do theatrical movies. That's what I'm interested in doing, although I appreciate what ALIEN NATION did."

Though the February two-parter "Two Fathers/One Son" answered a lot of the show's mythology questions, it also raised new ones. Carter likes to keep it ambiguous while shifting the show's direction. "That doesn't necessarily mean that everything's wrapped up and finished," he said. "In fact, there's a lot to do. But we're making some choices, knowing that the show is moving toward a kind of completion, and so we are planning ahead for that. So, this is part of that move to get the ultimate answer, if you will, possibly, about what happened to Mulder's sister. You know, watching THE X-FILES now for some 130-odd episodes, that every time we give you an answer, we also ask a question. Every answer has its own set of questions that come along with it. I think you can look for more of that."

Carter undoubtedly likes the challenge of making changes. He said, "Because so much is going to be explained, you might wonder where we're going to go. You may say, 'Where can they possibly go with this?' We've thought about all those things. I think that will be the thing that keeps people coming back—'Where can they go now?' And I look forward to dealing with a whole new set of problems. And I think when you see the conspiracy exploded, you're going to see that there are lots of characters who were out there working as free agents that might be—create strange bedfellows, and I think that's going to be fun."

“When you see the conspiracy exploded, you’re going to see there are lots of characters who were out there working as free agents who might create strange bedfellows.”

—Chris Carter, Director—

take a lighter tone. We wanted to tell stories. A lot of people have come to love the lighter stories, and I think that beginning with the work that Darin Morgan did, it showed that the show is very elastic. And because of that, it excites the writers and the actors to take the show in different directions, and because it can pop back to shape for a mythology episode, we decided this year to explore some different kinds of storytelling and I think it's been very satisfying for everyone. Certainly the ratings reflect it."

Since Carter is known as the conspiracy theorist's best buddy, one of the critics asked about Carter's own level of paranoia. Has it increased or decreased over the years? "Increased, for the same reason yours has, because of the Internet, because of the invasion of privacy, because of the ridiculous laws that are passed in this country. And the politics of the country are sort of alarming to me, particularly right now, in considering what's on television right now. I guess my paranoia comes from those changes."

Would Carter ever link the X-FILES mythology to current events such as the presidential sex scandal?

"I could never do anything that twisted," he said. □

Morris speculating on Mulder's miserable life, then cuts back to Mulder, near Area 51, being hustled into a truck by soldiers, screaming to Scully that he's really Mulder. He's thrown into a holding cell. The episode's action shifts between Dreamland's Area 51 and F.B.I. headquarters in Washington as Scully tries to make sense of things.

There is minor fun to be had in "Dreamland II;" Scully's adroit trapping of Michael McKean's irredeemably slimy Morris, Gillian Anderson's annoyance with McKean's comic rudeness is amusing. Julia Vera once again delights as the pilot caught in the body of Mrs. Lana Chee. But much of what happens here is purely illogical. How many times can Scully fly out to Nevada in just a few days, and how can she even afford it, when there's no chance she will be reimbursed? The reversal of the time-space continuum warp also makes no sense. Everyone's memory is wiped out, and things "un-happen"—dead people even come back to life—but yet time is undone only in this small bit of Nevada. Scully herself seems inconsistent; she dashes back and forth over the entire continent several times, but told just once that there's no chance of reversing the warp, she gives up further efforts. Her farewell scene with Mulder rings hollow.

While Mulder's oddness, his pain and isolation, his obsessive quest for proof of extraterrestrial life and the paranormal, have been mined successfully for comedy in previous episodes, in the "Dreamland" two-parter they are used as a starting point for dreary, sitcom-level comedy and cloak-and-dagger farce. The tone of the episode is set by Morris' opening monologue, a snide analysis of Mulder's life. Morris, taken seriously, could have been a truly unforgettable character, and General Wegman, by far the most interesting of the others at Area 51, is underused. "Deep Throat," the series' second episode, is a far superior story about similar subject matter. There was no need to make "Dreamland" a two-parter; there is a lot of unnecessary rushing back and forth between Washington and Nevada, in order to stretch out a thin, gimmicky premise. "Dreamland II" winds up with the odious "reset button" firmly pressed. This isn't one of the ambiguous endings for which THE X-FILES became famous; this is refusing to let your characters deal with the consequences.

"Bah, humbug."

—Mulder

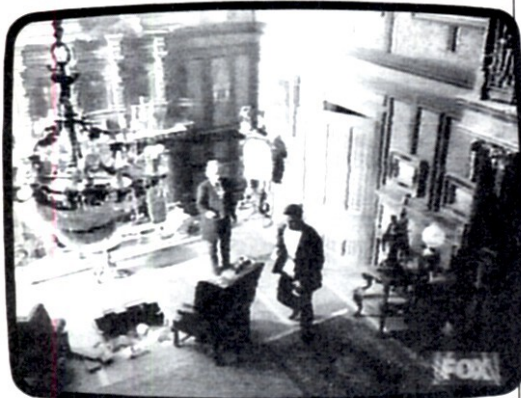
HOW THE GHOSTS STOLE CHRISTMAS

★ 1/2

12/13/98. Written and directed by Chris Carter. Editor: Lynne Willingham.

It's a dark and spooky Christmas Eve. Mulder is staking out an ominous house. Scully drives up and tries to convince Mulder to go home, but he wants her to help him investigate the house. He tells her that it used to be the home of Lyda and Maurice, who committed suicide in 1917, a time of

Mulder and Scully investigate a haunted house, sumptuously designed sets by Corey Kaplan, in the clichéd "How the Ghosts Stole Christmas."



Mulder overcomes Owens as a Nazi soldier in seventh season's "Triangle," an ambitious episode written and directed by Chris Carter, which was set on the World War II Queen Mary, lost in the Devil's Triangle.

The site eloquently and fervently defends Spender, as well as asks fans not to confuse the character with the actor.

Owens especially likes the site's Chris Owens Estrogen Brigade (COEB). You can imagine the homage it pays to the man—and that beats mixing drinks, said Owens, who was delighted to discover the existence of the COEB.

Owens was not quite as thrilled when he first got the script for the February two-parter that exposed much of the mythology of THE X-FILES. The good news was that Spender would be heavily featured, with a focus on the return of his mother, Cassandra Spender (the ex-Mrs. CSM and alien abductee) and conflict with his deadly dad. The bad news involved a bullet with his name on it.

"When I first found out, I thought 'Oh my God, he's killed me.' But it's ambiguous. There's definitely a gun and definitely a shot, but we don't see the body. This leaves the door open for an interpretation," he said. "It could well be a permanent death or a warning shot, a wound. I don't know at this point what's going to happen. It might be an X-FILES death."

So is he dead or not? At the end of two-parter "Two Fathers/One Son," it looked like it. But Owens was under contract to THE X-FILES for several more episodes sixth season. What are the chances he'll be back as an unqualified good guy?

However remote that might seem, it's a sure thing that Owens finds any uncertainty on the show as a definite improvement upon peddling prophylactics. "I worked at Condominium [a condom store

“I know that fans view Spender as a darker character, but he's doing his job trying to survive in a very strange world. You make compromises.”

—Actor Chris Owens—

in Toronto] for four months. I had had so many years of waiting and I'd spent all my money...I needed a job and the guy was just opening the store," he said. "In the interview, he asked me if I was comfortable talking about sex. I said 'Yes, sir.' Advice was part of the job, he wanted people to feel comfortable and relaxed with no pressure."

Owens had no problem making customers feel welcome. He even congratulated a group of women who ventured in one day. "I noticed several women shopping and I stepped out and said, 'Ladies, I'd like to say it's wonderful to see you taking the initiative.' Fortunately, they laughed. Women were less embarrassed than men who came in," he said.

The short-lived experience was fun, especially when it came to observing customers. "Men would always come in and ask for extra-large condoms. I wanted to say, 'They do stretch, you know,'" said Owens, who remembers the glow-in-the-dark condom as a best seller.

Even considering the store discount, his new job offers much more in the way of benefits. "One of the lovely perks of being on the show is that I was invited to the All-Star NHL game in Tampa," said Owens, an avid hockey player who tries to hit the rink twice a week.

When asked about rumors that he is slated to star in Carter's new virtual-reality based drama, HARSH REALM, in the fall, Owens said he has not heard any official word. For that, he should just pop into a neighborhood bar for a drink. After all, it worked before. □

war and pestilence, rather than be separated. Since then, three couples have committed suicide in the house. A series of meetings between a separated Mulder and Scully and the ghosts of Maurice (Ed Asner) and Lyda (Lily Tomlin) ensue. The ghosts psychoanalyze Mulder and Scully, trying to convince them life is not worth living nor can they trust their partner. Whenever Mulder and Scully end the conversation and try to leave the room, they encounter a brick wall.

There are no dream-cum-time warps and no ten-minute takes, but "The Ghosts Who Stole Christmas" is a bottle show variant of "Triangle." It's got the same mock-serious tone and the same basic theme: Mulder and Scully investigate, then escape, from a dangerous location, and in the course of doing so, they undergo a test of their faith in each other.

"Ghosts" takes place in that most beloved locale of horror movies—the haunted house. In fact, this haunted house is so prototypical you can practically see the air quotes around it whenever it's lit up by the lighting—or at least seem to hear them in Mark Snow's organ in the teaser and the tinkling harpsichord later in the episode. Such signaling destroys any suspense. We know what's coming. They might as well put up a neon sign announcing, "Ghosts Be Here. C'mon In!"

The storyline varies from the unoriginal (even the dreadful THE AVENGERS movie used the exit from a room into the same room gimmick) to the genuinely creepy (Mulder's and Scully's corpses under the floorboards). Unfortunately, Maurice and Lyda turn out to be two rather unperceptive ghosts. They're interesting only because they're played by two great actors, Ed Asner and Lily Tomlin. Their goal is to get Mulder and Scully to kill each other, and to do that, they must instill doubt in our heroes. Alas, Maurice and Lyda have decided the best way to do this is to psychoanalyze them and point out all their weaknesses and fears, so we get endless psychobabble dialogue about Mulder and Scully's darker sides, revealing only that Maurice and Lyda misunderstand the relationship.



A flame-enveloped demon forcibly extracts an unholy birth, kicking-off "Terms of Endearment," a middling monster of the week episode.

nothing particularly scary; 3) Mulder and Scully become part of the X-file rather than the investigators of the X-file; 4) the events might not have happened. It's sad to see THE X-FILES degenerating into a stream of self-parodying episodes that contribute no new insights on the characters or the show itself.

"I love you, Laura. No matter what. You know that, poopadoo?"

—Wayne Weinsider

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

1/3/99. Written by David Amann. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor: Louise A. Innes.

"Terms of Endearment," written by newcomer David Amann, is this season's demon episode. Laura (Lisa Jane Persky) and Wayne Weinsider (Bruce Campbell, ARMY OF DARKNESS, BRISCOE COUNTY, JR.) of Hollins, Virginia, are told by their obstetrician that their unborn baby has some strange bony growths on its shoulder and head. Laura takes the news calmly, but Wayne is upset. Laura's brother, Deputy Arky Stevens (Michael Milhoan), goes to FBI HQ and is assured by Agent Spender the case will be given priority, but after Stevens leaves, Spender feeds the report into his shredder. Several days later, Mulder arrives in Hollins, the taped-together strips of Stevens' report in hand. It turns out that Wayne has a second pregnant wife, named Betsy (Grace Phillips), who scolds him for his frequent absences, but it turns out that Betsy wears the pants in this second family.

"Terms of Endearment" is a middling monster-of-the-week episode. Wayne's quest for the perfect family is mildly affecting, and touches on the frequent X-Files theme of familial anxiety, but the emotions raised are not particularly strong, as Wayne is rather a dull demon. Genre fave Bruce Campbell, always a strong presence, does his best to inject milquetoast Wayne with some spine and to make us feel compassion for his murderous character. The real guest star stand-out is the lovely Grace Phillips as Betsy, Weinsider's second pregnant wife. With her icy blue eyes and toothy smile, she expertly walks the line between small-town mother-to-be and secret demoness. She seems altogether "normal," but she imbues Betsy with a disconcerting intensity that keeps you wondering just what she is up to. Lisa Jane Persky gives a solid and sympathetic performance as the unfortunate Laura.

This is the episode that will go down in history for Mulder's statement to Scully that he is not a psychologist. No, he's only the greatest criminal profiler in FBI history, but dang it, he's not a psychologist and how is he supposed to know what Wayne Weinsider is thinking? Perhaps, technically, Mulder isn't a psychologist, since the only degree he has, according to what little information we have about his background, is a Bachelors from Oxford. But for Mulder to declare so bluntly that

he is "not a psychologist" is absolutely ridiculous, undercutting completely his background, his reputation, and the occasional psychological insight the writers allow on the show. Supposedly this line is an ad-lib from David Duchovny. What was he thinking? What were the producers thinking to leave it in?

"Don't ya'll need a warrant or supoena or something like that?"

—Cindy

"We usually just say please."

—Scully

THE RAIN KING

1/8/99. Written by Jeff Bell. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

It's Valentine's Day in drought-ridden Kroner, Kansas, and Sheila Fontaine (Victoria Jackson) is writing a valentine to her boyfriend, ne'er-do-well Daryl Mootz (Clayton Rohner). A drunken Daryl charges in, upset about a wedding announcement Sheila placed in the local paper. They argue, Daryl departs, Sheila cries. As Daryl drives away, drinking a beer, hail begins to fall furiously. He runs off the road, slamming into a tree. The hail, strangely enough, is in the shape of hearts.

The online fans dubbed THE X-FILES' sixth season "X-FILES Lite" with good reason. "The Rain King" is yet another whimsical episode meant to be a wry look at romance rather than criminal activity or even the paranormal. An X-FILES episode where no one dies (except a cow) is certainly a welcome change, but unfortunately, its exploration of love—romantic or platonic—is superficial at best. "The Rain King" has a few genuinely sweet moments, mainly when David Manis as TV weatherman Holman Hardt is on screen. Manis's Holman may be wistful and lovelorn, but he is also an intelligent and a dedicated professional. Mulder and Scully also have a few amusing exchanges concerning their love lives, or lack thereof, and moments like those are truly engaging.

"The Rain King" ultimately fails, however, because the woman at its center, TV station employee Sheila Fontaine, is a selfish, childish, bubble-headed dope. Comedienne Victoria Jackson is disastrously cast; she is unable to scratch below Sheila's candy-shell surface. Sheila is pure cartoon.

This season the show is focusing more and more on the nature of Mulder and Scully's relationship, not only to the detriment of the cases but to the detriment of the relationship itself. It's one thing to leave an X-file ambiguous and unsolved, but to play footsie with Mulder and Scully's feelings towards each other is not only false characterization, but threatens to make the relationship the central focus of the show, rather than the cases themselves, which should be used to define and reflect the relationship.

The dead cow gag is poorly executed (the cow looks like a toy animal that's been jerked away by a string) and offensive, turning the suffering and

Victoria Jackson as Sheila Fontaine kisses Mulder in "The Rain King," another whimsical example of sixth season as X-FILES Lite.



Ed Asner and Lily Tomlin star as Maurice and Lyda, ghosts who psychoanalyze Mulder and Scully in "How the Ghosts Stole Christmas."

The ending veers from out and out disgusting—Mulder and Scully dragging themselves towards the exit, leaving a wide swath of blood on the floor, while Bing Crosby sings "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"—to the grindingly sentimental. And the two ghosts who tried to get our heroes to kill each other or commit suicide are now presented as sweet homebodies who just wanted to enjoy Christmas. And Mulder and Scully exchange presents, to the accompaniment of violins and piano (this must be the official "heart-warming scene").

The pleasures of "The Ghosts Who Stole Christmas" are the gorgeous, beautifully detailed sets designed by Corey Kaplan and the atmospheric lighting by Bill Roe. Visually, this is a feast, especially considering that most of it takes place in one room. But this is the fourth episode in a row in which 1) the tone is mostly comic; 2) there's





Davis as X-FILES CSM, the Cigarette Smoking Man, Chris Carter's potent symbol for the banality of evil.

tour around. It's also a hotel, because a lot of the staterooms have been made into guest rooms." Did any of the cast or crew stay there during the shoot? "I didn't, but I think some of the crew did, at first, until they decided it was a little cramped. The ship itself is still in its original condition—it hasn't been restored or renovated or anything—and it was looking its age."

As if all this wasn't challenging enough, all of Davis's dialogue was in German. "I certainly didn't realize I was going to be speaking a lot of German until I got the script, which just said 'CSM (in German),' he laughed, "and then I went, 'Oh yeah? Okayyyy...'" So how did Davis—who had no more spoken German before than fellow X-FILES actor Nicholas Lea, alias former Smoking Man lackey Alex Krycek, had spoken Russian before Chris Carter asked him to—cope with the tricky Teutonic

“Cigarette Smoking Man is moving from a traditional figure into a real person. There's richness coming in, so for me it's more interesting.”

—Actor William B. Davis—

tones? "One of the German cast members put all my stuff on a microcassette recorder," he explained, "which I had for a week or two ahead of time, so I learned it from that. It seemed to work pretty well—at least to the non-German-speaking people!" Although, having said that, he added: "It was a little more challenging, because there were some real German speakers on the show, which I thought was a little unfair."

Davis was absent from the next few episodes, but came back with a vengeance in the epic "Two Fathers"/"One Son" two-parter aired during February sweeps. "They were major [episodes] for me," he said unnecessarily, "and really quite exciting. It dealt with me on two levels, really, because it dealt a lot with the mythological part of the conspiracy—where it's moving to and what's happening next with that—and at the same time,

death of a helpless animal into grist for the episode's humor mill. The final scene is insipid, with its patently false pastel sky and bird, Judy Garland singing "Over the Rainbow," mommy Sheila smiling and holding her baby while daddy Holman beams on the TV screen. It's THE X-FILES gone mad on a sugar high.

"Choosing by not choosing, defending a center that cannot hold."

—Skinner

S.R. 819

★★

1/17/99. Written by John Shiban. Directed by Daniel Sackheim. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

"S.R. 819" is the annual Skinner-centered episode. It opens with Skinner deathly ill in a hospital emergency room, his body distorted by pulsating, distended veins. As he lies on the table, Skinner muses in a voiceover on the choices he has refused to make in life. When his heart stops, the physician in charge, Dr. Cabrera (Jenny Gago), refuses to resuscitate him. She knows there's no hope. The episode then flashes back 24 hours. Skinner receives a mysterious call; a synthesized voice tells him he has only 24 hours and he's already dead.

Mulder learns that Skinner was doing a security check on Senate Resolution 819, and physicist Kenneth Orgel (John Towey) had come to the F.B.I. to warn Skinner that the bill would be a gross misuse of technology. Mulder believes that Skinner has been infected with nanobots, miniature machines that can be injected into the bloodstream, and that S.R. 819 will export that technology.

"S.R. 819" is the best of the Skinner-centered episodes, but its resolution is unsatisfying. The plot is virtually a retread of the CSM/Skinner subplot from "Memento Mori," except this time it's Krycek who's forced Skinner between a rock and a hard place. The flashback structure with the protagonist in great physical danger has become formulaic now on THE X-FILES, but on a surface level, the story retains a certain amount of suspense. We know, despite the teaser, that Skinner will not die, but the mystery of how he got into that condition is fairly engrossing, thanks in great part to skillful editing and the swift pace of the episode.

But why oh why, if the writers decide to bring back Krycek, do they clap a long wig and a beard on actor Nicholas Lea, keep him mostly in the shadows, and give him only a few minutes of screen time? Lea is one of the show's greatest assets; he is a dynamic actor and his mere presence automatically jacks up the tension. He has been sadly under-used this season.

The episode's real failure, though, lies in Skinner's emotional journey. The episode begins with Skinner's voiceover as he lays dying. He is contemplating his life and how he has always chosen the middle course, straddled the fence. Later he tells Scully that he hasn't been a strong ally to her and Mulder, that he's been living a lie, that he's made mistakes and stupid choices, and

Mitch Pileggi as Skinner in the hospital emergency room in "S.R. 819," deathly ill, his body distorted by pulsating, distended veins.



during the times he's refused to choose, his choices have been made for him. It's a powerful confession from Skinner, yet three weeks later, afforded another opportunity to level with Mulder and Scully, he shuts up tighter than a vacuum-packed jar. He has looked death in the eye and bared his soul to Scully, but now he refuses to do the courageous thing. He will not confide in the two people he knows he can trust, the two people who not only could help him, but want to help him. Skinner may have survived physically, but inside he is dead.

"Most people are idiots."

—Fellig

TITHONUS

★ ★ 1/2

1/24/99. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Michael Watkins. Editor: Louise A. Innes.

New York City. Alfred Fellig (Geoffrey Lewis) silently watches a young woman deliver mail in an office building. She stands out to him because he sees her only in black and white. He follows her onto the elevator. To her relief, he leaves a few floors below, but then the elevator cables snap and the car plunges to the bottom of the shaft. When the doors open, Fellig is there, snapping photos of the dead and injured. Scully and Mulder are called in to investigate Fellig, who is a press service stringer and on-call photographer for the New York Police Department, for murder. The man not only seems to show up first at murder scenes, but two of his negatives from one murder show he was there before he was officially called to the site.

In Greek mythology, Tithonus was the brother of Priam, King of Troy. The goddess Aurora fell in love with him and prevailed upon Jupiter to grant Tithonus immortality, but she forgot to ask Jupiter to grant him eternal youth, so Tithonus continued to age without dying. Finally, he grew so feeble and decrepit that life became intolerable, and he begged Aurora to kill him. Since he could not die, she turned him into a grasshopper. Alfred Fellig does not age—he seems permanently stalled in his early 60s—but perhaps the analogy could be made that he is spiritually worn-out and thus as ready for death as the Tithonus of legend. In any case, it is Fellig's longing for death that allows Scully the opportunity to contemplate, once more, her own mortality.

Unfortunately, Fellig not only sees the soon-to-die in black and white, but is a monochromatic character himself. He has no compassion for the people whose deaths he witnesses and there is nothing in Geoffrey Lewis' performance to indicate that Fellig may be hiding any genuine feelings either from himself or from others for the people he photographs. He is merely very, very tired of life.

Scully's conversations with Fellig take an interesting turn only once, when he says that he's lived long enough, and she asks, "What about love?" That's an unexpected and beautiful question, but the philosophical implications are dropped

Geoffrey Lewis as Alfred Fellig, a crime scene photographer who can foresee death and longs to die himself in the noir-drenched "Tithonus."



Nicholas Lea as Krycek and Chris Owens as Spender watch an alien dissolve into green goo in "Two Fathers," the beginning of a two-parter.

when Fellig suddenly sees her in black and white and knows she's about to die.

This is not Gillian Anderson's finest hour. She looks tired and her performance appears tranquilized, although she does an excellent job of showing Scully's amazement and near-paralysis when she is shot, slowly sliding down to the floor and smearing blood all over the wall. The liveliest performance in the episode comes from Richard Ruccolo, as Agent Ritter.

The episode has a terrific "feel," however, thanks to its unrelieved solemn tone and the noirish, dark grayish-green lighting, although at times it's difficult to distinguish the black and white victims from their surroundings.

"Looking for work, Agent Spender? Because if you are, I've got a whole pile in that middle drawer. I'd love to shove down someone's throat."

—Mulder

TWO FATHERS

★ ★

2/7/99. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor: Lynne Willingham.

The alien invasion storyline heats up in another two-parter, which begins with the Cigarette Smoking Man telling an unseen listener about recent events. The Syndicate's doctors have finally succeeded in creating the first human-alien hybrid: Cassandra Spender, who has been missing since she was abducted by aliens in "The Red and the Black." But a group of faceless rebel aliens suddenly appears and torches all the doctors, leaving Cassandra unharmed.

To judge by the title, this episode was meant to be an examination of the Cigarette Smoking Man and Bill Mulder in their roles as fathers—not only literally as the fathers of Spender and Mulder, but also metaphorically as public officials entrusted with their country's fate. As dads, both men made a botch of it, and they're lucky their sons turned out as well as they did. As government employees, they're even more craven, if that's possible, but since Bill had been opposed to cooperating with the aliens, presumably that makes him the "good," although still flawed, father. The Mulder father and son analysis doesn't go anywhere, however, Mulder has nothing to say about Bill. THE X-FILES did a magnificent job in revealing Mulder's difficult relationship with Bill back in "Colony," "End Game" and "Anasazi," but since then Mulder's feelings about his father and his murder have rarely been touched upon. It's a subject ripe for exploration, even after all this time, and "Two Fathers" could have been the episode to do it, but instead the Cigarette Smoking Man and Spender get all the attention, with ominous lines from the CSM about how one can't imagine the death of children (a bit of ironic foreshadowing, but heavy-handed in retrospect). It's Spender, not Mulder or Scully, who makes the emotional journey in this two-parter. He goes from skeptic and admirer of his evil father to believer and betrayer, thus becoming his "own great man." Although Spender's transformation is credible, it's a little hard to care, because, well, he's such a dweeb. Chris Owens is a wonderful actor, but

he's defeated by the script. Even though the CSM/Spender focus gives the episode a spark of life, it takes away from the two characters who should be at the center of the story, namely, Mulder and Scully.

The episode might also have been called "One Mother," because there is a prominent mother figure, that of Cassandra Spender. Again, this is a character difficult to care about, because she is not written with any consistency. Not only is she a complete goofball, but her opinions shift whenever the plot requires. Last season she firmly believed the aliens were good. This season she suddenly realizes they're bad. Veronica Cartwright fights to give Cassandra humanity and the scene with the CSM confessing he can't kill her is a moving one between the two. (William B. Davis is also very good in this scene.)

The show's mythology has become so labyrinthine that Theseus himself couldn't find his way out of this narrative maze even with a global positioning device. Cassandra supposedly is the first alien-human hybrid. So then what are the Kurts from "Memento Mori?" Cassandra is "the one." Whatever happened to Gibson Praise, who was supposed to be "the one?" Or what about Mulder himself, who was supposed to be the key to the mystery?

At some point necessary ambiguity becomes muddled, illogical and bad writing, and THE X-FILES has crossed the line. This is a show that has become mired in its mythology, for the simple reason that it's been on the air too long, a prisoner of its own success. The secrets of a conspiracy can be withheld only so long before the audience starts demanding some answers, but once the cards are put on the table, suspense evaporates. The mythology now is deadly dull, even more so when a mythology episode is played out as a series of scenes of exposition.

Unless Carter and his writers can come up with a logical way to forestall the alien invasion (other than just ignoring it completely), this show is heading straight down a path already trodden by dozens of books, short stories, movies and other television shows.

Visually, the episode looks very good, filmed mostly in dark blues and grays. It's hard to do much with all those close-ups. But the scenes in the hangar are eye-poppers, with doors slowly opening and the aliens walking forward, obscured by the bright light. It's all very reminiscent of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, a great movie about humanity's encounter with aliens. If only THE X-FILES could reproduce that film's sense of wonder. THE X-FILES used to be about wonder, but there has been precious little of that lately.



A hangar delegation of Gray aliens, as the Syndicate—government and military officials—offer a U.S. flag in capitulation in "One Son."

"I heard gray is the new black."

—Mulder

ONE SON

★ 1/2

2/14/99. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor: Louise A. Innes.

October 13, 1973. Members of the Syndicate,





Davis (r) with fellow regulars Nicholas Lea and Mitch Pileggi, savoring season seven's acting challenges.

there's an ongoing personal plot in relation to my son Spender."

Indeed—"Two Fathers" and "One Son" revealed more about the machinations and motivations of the character than his own episode, "Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man," did back in the fourth season. Not only do we learn his name (CGB Spender), but we can see the pain he has caused his own former wife (Cassandra Spender) and son (Jeffrey)—not to mention, it is hinted, his biological daughter (Samantha). "It's terrific for me, really," he enthused, "because I'm moving from, I suppose, a traditional figure in the plot into being a real person, in a way. There's a lot of richness coming into the character. Things are being laid that show more and more different sides to the character, so for me it's getting more and more interesting."

At the time of our interview, Davis was unaware that the vast majority of the flashback scenes in "Two Fathers" and "One Son" would ultimately be cut from the broadcast episodes, according to guest actress Veronica Cartwright. "We did quite a lot of flashbacks to 1973," he said, "which is interesting, because you see the journey of the character, and an almost youthful enthusiasm to what one was doing, instead of this burnt-out thing he's become." Unlike several previous flashback episodes, on this occasion the more youthful Smoking Man is being played by Davis himself. "It's been more a question of giving us facelifts, actually," he explained, referring to Don S. Williams and Peter Donat's youthful visages in the scenes which survived Chris Carter's scissors. "We're all being remarkably

“I don’t do as many ‘kindly grandfathers’ as I used to play before X-FILES. [Recently] I was a nice guy trying to help everybody on VOYAGE OF TERROR.”

—Actor William B. Davis—

well made-up to look younger. They do a process of stretching the skin with a series of different ties which then have to go under a wig in order to mask them," he explained. "It was a very strange experience to go into the makeup room and come out looking 25 years younger. We come out of the makeup trailer with our hearts skipping a beat, and jumping about, and feeling quite

youthful—but then at the end of the night it's always quite depressing to rather rapidly age 25 years."

Although Davis said that, due to his X-FILES notoriety, casting directors tend not to offer as many "kindly grandfathers" as he used to play before THE X-FILES, he has managed to portray one "very nice guy" recently—in a made-for-television movie called VOYAGE OF TERROR, starring Lindsay Wagner, Martin Sheen and Brian Dennehy. "It was all about a virus taking over a ship," he said, "and I was this nice guy on shore trying to help everybody out. After that," he continued, "if it works out in terms of timing, I'm going to do a feature that's shooting in Toronto [KILLING MOON, with Penelope Ann Miller and Daniel Baldwin] about a virus loose on an aeroplane, rather than a ship," he chuckled, adding: "I'm not such a nice guy in that one. I also did a very interesting character in a student film for a young Canadian writer-director [Michael Zaidan] called THE LAST TZADDICK, which is a Jewish wise man. There were apparently 12 of them, and I play this crazy old patient in a spooky hospital where the lights don't quite work right because there's been an earthquake...it's a very sweet little film." □

government officials and military officials meet the Gray aliens in a hangar, offering the Grays a U.S. flag as a symbol of cooperation. Present day. A CDC team led by Diana Fowley breaks down the door to Mulder's apartment and hustles Mulder, Scully and Cassandra Spender to Fort Marlene in Maryland. After a decontaminating shower, Fowley apologizes to Mulder and Scully for the quarantine procedure, telling them that Cassandra has contracted a "highly contagious vectoring organism which produces a spontaneous breakdown and combustion" and is in full isolation. Before he leaves Fort Marlene, Mulder comes across the long-missing Marita Covarrubias (Laurie Holden), now a pathetic victim of Syndicate black-oil experiments. Marita tells him that the aliens will colonize immediately if they learn Cassandra is now a hybrid.

The problems of "Two Fathers" are repeated in "One Son." There's an alien invasion coming and Mulder just doesn't care. Who is this in Mulder's body and what have the writers done with the real Mulder? In this episode, it's Mulder who pales to Jeffrey Spender, amazingly enough.

There is little of the CSM/Spender interaction that gave "Two Fathers" some resonance, except at the end, when the CSM shoots his son. Poor Spender. He finally grows a spine and his reward is a bullet. The CSM is truly reprehensible. He sheds crocodile tears over the death of one's children ("impossible to imagine," he says in "Two Fathers") and then kills his son in cold blood. The CSM, who feels betrayed, is himself the betrayer. But the CSM's emotionless murder of his son loses its force, because the writers waffle. We hear the shot, but the action takes place off-screen. Yes, it's another X-FILES "did he or didn't he?" death. If the CSM didn't kill his son, then the scene has another meaning entirely, but for now it's all up in the air, and that means it has no meaning at all.

There is much running around in "One Son" but again, nothing much really happens. The biggest surprise in the two-parter is the return of Marita. This time Laurie Holden gets a chance to act. She is heart-breaking as the wretched woman who has become one of the Syndicate's guinea pigs. Unfortunately, she seems to have been brought back mainly as an information source for Mulder and Spender, and once she has served her function, she disappears.

Fowley, the X-FILES' Mata Hari, is also just a chess piece. There seems to be on her part some kind of weird attraction to the CSM, which is an X-file by itself. Mimi Rogers does a good job faking sincerity, but Fowley is a one-dimensional character.

Essentially, "One Son" is the producers' attempt to clean house by killing off the entire Syndicate. This group is a dramatic dead-end and no doubt the writers are bored to tears writing for them. Now the CSM and Krycek will be free to act without consulting this group of elderly white males, all of whom seem surgically attached to their club chairs. The big death scene is clumsily

Veronica Cartwright as Cassandra Spender, the key to the series' increasingly convoluted mythology, a Syndicate guinea pig in "One Son."



contrived, allowing the CSM and Fowley to escape not because it makes sense, but because the show needs them to return at some point.

The writers may want to position "Two Fathers" and "One Son" as the turning point in the battle with the aliens, but in the end, it's an unpleasant story about the thoroughly contemptible CSM, the thoroughly contemptible group he works for, the thoroughly contemptible aliens, two ineffectual protagonists named Mulder and Scully, and the murder of a young man who dies because he finally saw the truth and asserted himself. A lot of people worked many long hours to bring "Two Fathers" and "One Son" to the screen, and as always, the visuals are first-rate. But even a terrific director like Rob Bowman cannot inject energy into this inert and depressing story.

"It's a good thing I have a reputation; otherwise, how could it be impugned?"

—Arthur Dales

AGUA MALA

★★

2/21/99. Written by David Amann. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editors: Lynne Willingham and Heather MacDougall.

A hurricane is pounding Goodland, Florida. Sarah Shipley is frantically boarding up her house, not against the storm, but against something much more fearsome. But her efforts are in vain. Tentacles reach out from her washing machine and kill her and her teenage son. Retired agent Arthur Dales, now living in a Florida trailer park, calls his new pal Fox Mulder and demands he come down to Florida to find out what's happened to his neighbors, the Shipleys.

"Agua Mala" won't end up on anybody's "best of" list, but it's so silly that it's sort of fun. We've got a vicious sea creature with long, deadly tentacles; we've got Mulder's cockamamie theory about the creature (which of course turns out to be correct); we've got a disapproving Scully; and we've got a passel of stereotypical characters—the looter, the hick, overweight sheriff's deputy (with a Southern accent, of course), the paranoid wacko with the guns, the smart-mouthed pregnant Hispanic woman and her cowed boyfriend with the thick accents—all of whom are completely ludicrous and unbelievable. And then there is the great Darren McGavin as Arthur Dales, fueled not only by the liquor but the very notion of an X-file nearby—a lot more fun here than he was in "Travelers." McGavin plays him with gusto.

Darren McGavin as retired agent Arthur Dales in "Agua Mala," Carter's casting homage to X-FILES' inspiration THE NIGHT STALKER.



"Something went wrong on this day the first time around."

—Pam

MONDAY

★★★ 1/2

2/28/99. Written by Vince Gilligan & John Shiban. Directed by Kim Manners. Edited by Louise A. Innes.

Monday morning. Skinner rushes to the scene



Carol Burnett's daughter Carrie Hamilton as Pam, as the bank blows-up in "Monday," the X-FILES repetitive time loop take on GROUNDHOG DAY.

of a bank robbery/hostage-taking situation in Washington, D.C. He is approached by Pam (Carrie Hamilton), who addresses him by name, yelling to him he mustn't let this happen. Inside the bank, Scully holds Mulder, who has been shot and is bleeding to death. She tells the robber/shooter that he's in control—and he is, because he has a row of dynamite taped to his chest. A SWAT team swarms into the bank, and the robber flicks the switch on the bomb. The bank blows up.

It's Monday morning again. Mulder wakes to find a leak in his waterbed. And so it goes... acts two, three and four of "Monday" are variations on the theme of act one, with differences ranging from minor (Mulder trips over his sneakers at different times and in different ways, for instance, or the substance of Mulder and Scully's conversation changes when Mulder arrives late at the office) to major (we see more of Pam's life, we see Pam warning different people in each act). Suffice to say that the episode ends with Mulder, very much alive, looking at a front-page story in his Tuesday newspaper about the bank robbery. Something happens in act four to change the outcome and move time forward again.

Comparisons with GROUNDHOG DAY (and its forerunners the feature short 12:01 P.M., and the TV-movie 12:01, both based on a Richard Lupoff story) are inevitable, but irrelevant. "Monday" is ingenious and heart-wrenching. It pulls some of this season's best acting out of Duchovny and Anderson, and the two guest stars, Carrie Hamilton (daughter of Carol Burnett) and Darren Burrows as Bernard, Pam's boyfriend, are magnificent. "Monday" is an imaginative exploration of choice and free will, from the tiniest options (the words you use to greet your co-worker) to the biggest (Pam's fourth-act decision to enter the bank and endanger herself). To achieve each act's shifts of action and dialogue, director Kim Manners expertly employed different blocking and camera angles, and editor Louise A. Innes knit it all together so that no matter how many times we see the same scene, it always seems new.

"Wait a minute, you didn't let me carry you over the threshold."

—Mulder to Scully

ARCADIA

★★

3/7/99. Written by Daniel Arkin. Directed by Michael Watkins. Edited by Heather MacDougall.

If you ever wanted to see Mulder and Scully undercover as a married couple, this is the episode for you. Three couples have disappeared from the gated community of "The Falls at Arcadia." Skinner assigns Mulder and Scully to the case. They are to pose as a young couple named Rob and Laurie Petrie (!), who are moving into the house of the last two victims, the Klines. All the neighbors profess ignorance as to the fate of the Klines and two other missing couples; relatives brought their disappearances to the attention of the FBI. Mulder and Scully soon realize that the residents of The

Falls are paranoid about obeying the community's Covenants, Contracts and Restrictions, known as the CC and R', enforced by a huge, black and slimy subterranean monster.

As monsters go, the "Übermensch" is a poor example of the species. Dark lighting and editing can't hide the fact that he is a stuntman in a costume, although the CGI dissolution of the creature is effective. (As a creature of the underground, symbolizing the dark "underbelly"—that exists at the Falls—the Übermensch falls squarely in the X-FILES tradition of buried secrets inevitably rising to the surface.) But there's simply nothing frightening about the Übermensch, not only because it doesn't look scary, but because it represents the fears of a group of one-dimensional, unsympathetic people. (Watch FORBIDDEN PLANET for a far superior and subtler story about a monster that incarnates subconscious anxieties.)

Win (Tom Gallop) and Cami (Marnie McPhail), Gordy (Tim Bagley), the screeching Pat, even the Klines, who are dispatched in the teaser, are stereotypes of self-indulgent, insulated suburbanites. Furthermore, they are so lily-livered that they don't have the common sense to pack their bags and escape the garbage monster, nor will they stand up to a tinpot community dictator like Gene Gogolak (Peter White), an equally one-dimensional villain. Only Big Mike (Abraham Benrubi) comes off as something approaching a real human being.

The episode is most successful when it dwells on Mulder's bemused/annoyed reactions to the community, particularly in the scenes where he goads the neighbors with a pink flamingo, the trashing of the mailbox, basketball in the driveway and digging the yard for a reflecting pool. Everything in Mulder rebels against the rules and regulations of this Stepford-type community, and his actions, while humorous, contain an edge of anger and resentment that Duchovny gets across very well in his performance. If only Mulder's anger had been leveled against fully-drawn characters worthy of his ambivalent response to them.

Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny get domestic, undercover as a married couple investigating a sinister community in "Arcadia."



"Dog eats dogcatcher. It's all over the news this morning. It's sort of uplifting."

—Karin Berquist

ALPHA

★ 1/2

3/28/99. Written by Jeffrey Bell. Directed by Peter Markle. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

When a cargo ship bound from Hong Kong to San Pedro, California arrives in port, Dr. Ian Detweiler (Andrew Robinson), a cryptozoologist, is furious when he finds his rare Wanshang Dhole which he caught in China—an Asian canine once thought to be extinct—has vanished and two crewmen are also dead. Scully and Mulder meet Officer Jeffrey Cahn (named after X-FILES assistant editor Jeffrey Cahn), a Fish and Wildlife

Service agent investigating the disappearance of the dhole. Meanwhile, another animal-attack type death has occurred, this time a customs agent and his dog.

"Alpha" is a run-of-the-mill monster-of-the-week episode. Duchovny and Anderson have little energy and the various victims (wildlife officers, a vet) are the X-FILES equivalents of STAR TREK's red shirt characters—they're in the plot to be killed, nothing more. The opening teaser is a portrait of stupidity in action; two crewmen think they've killed a vicious animal simply because it slammed against its crate? And then lift the lid and expose themselves to whatever is in there?

Genre favorite Andrew Robinson (STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE) is wasted here as Dr. Detweiler. The bland doctor is a role that does not take advantage of Robinson's colorful, larger-than-life persona. We figure out quickly he's the murderous dhole, but we never see the anguish he must feel when he is in his human form. The one moment Detweiler comes to life is when he threatens Officer Cahn and tells him that if he kills the dhole, he (Detweiler) will kill Cahn; Robinson stares directly into the camera with blazing eyes. It's a startling moment.

The episode is particularly muddled with respect to dog breeder Karin Berquist, played by Melinda Culea, who previously worked with director Peter Markle on the TV-movie TARGET EARTH. A fine actress, she gives the alienated Berquist gravity and a sense of melancholy, but even she could not overcome the mixed signals of this script, which really have more to do with Scully than Berquist.

The writing for Scully is this episode's most serious flaw, in her attitude towards Berquist. Berquist talks about the dhole's need for territorial dominance, and the episode, in extremely unobvious form, has Scully marking out her territorial dominance of Mulder. Every time a woman shows even a flicker of interest in Mulder, Scully's response is hostility and a barely-hidden jealousy. One begins to wonder if the writers really think women regard each other only as potential rivals and "tricksters," as Scully labels Berquist. Since she and Mulder are not romantic partners, Scully has no reason to display this jealousy (yet alone feel it), but there it is.

On the positive side, Bill Roe's misty lighting and the numerous tracking shots from the dhole's point of view are atmospheric and chilling. The morph of the silhouette of Detweiler into wolf is a hair-raising moment, and the dhole's disguise as a harmless Saint Bernard is a genuine surprise.

"Alpha" wants to explore the areas where human and animal meet, but because of poor character writing, it fails to offer any insights or even just a good story. Go watch THE WOLFMAN with Lon Chaney, Jr., or any good episode of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST for much more compelling explorations of this theme.

Andrew Robinson as Dr. Ian Detweiler, a powerful performance as a shapeshifting cryptozoologist in "Alpha," the X-FILES take on THE WOLFMAN.



John Diehl as Pinker Rawls in "Trevor," a psychopathic convict with the ability to pass through walls, seeking custody of his titular son.

"There's something so nice about putting on a brand new pair of socks."

—Pinker Rawls

TREVOR

★ ★ 1/2

4/11/99. Written by Jim Guttridge & Ken Hawrylyk. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor: Lynne Willingham.

A tornado is bearing down on a prison in Jasper County, Mississippi, and the inmates are trying to board up the buildings before it arrives. One inmate, Pinker Rawls (John Diehl) takes offense to another convict's teasing, and hammers a nail into his hand. The warden punishes Rawls by throwing him into an isolation box—virtually a death sentence in tornado weather. Naturally the tornado destroys the box and Rawls has vanished. Things get weirder when the warden is found cut in two, each end of his torso carbonized. Mulder and Scully hear of this strange death and travel to the county morgue to examine the body.

Pinker Rawls is a dangerous man operating on instinct rather than rational thought. Guest star John Diehl (STARGATE) lets us see Rawls' lightning changes of temperament; this is a man who can speak softly to a child, then turn on a dime and beat a woman. It isn't Rawls' ability to pass through walls that is scary, but the threat of incipient violence he carries within him. Diehl underplays Rawls' rage, so when he does erupt, it is always shocking. He even gives Rawls a dry sense of humor; there's a malicious twinkle in his eyes. Also, Rawls' egoism makes credible his quest for the son he has never seen.

Catherine Dent and Tuesday Knight as sisters June and Jackie Gurwich are equally good. This episode proves that Hell hath no fury like a pair of Southern sisters bent on protecting a child. Rawls is reminiscent of Arnold Schwarzenegger's Terminator—nothing will stop him except death itself, and that it should come at the hands of the abused, terrified ex-girlfriend is a kind of justice, if not exactly the legal way to put Rawls away.

The X-File overall is a fragile one: Rawls is exposed to a tornado, and this gives him the power to emit electrical charges, walk through walls and change the physical composition of matter? The special effects are superb, particularly in the fake corpses department. The moment where Mulder pulls back a body to reveal the empty, ashy shell of his head is a real chiller. Production design is excellent and very detailed, most notably in a house after Rawls has trashed it. The lighting again is beautiful, especially in the scene where Rawls pursues Scully and Rawls son through backyards and rural pathways.

"To really write someone, I have to be in their head."

—Padgett

MILAGRO

★ 1/2

4/18/99. Story by Chris Carter. Teleplay by Frank Spotnitz & John Shibana. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor: Louise A. Innes.

A man sits alone in a sparsely furnished apartment, contemplating a typewriter and blank paper. The day passes and still he cannot write.

Finally he stands up, puts his hand inside his shirt—and brings forth his beating, bloody heart. The man is a writer named Phillip Padgett (John Hawkes), and he is Mulder's next door neighbor. He is obsessed with Scully and has moved into the apartment next to Mulder's because Scully's building was fully occupied.

X-FILES producer/writer Frank Spotnitz said in an interview in the show's official magazine that the writers identify with Mulder and love Scully. This strange statement reveals a lot about the way Scully has been portrayed the past two and a half years. For all the lip-service paid to Scully the strong FBI agent, the show has destroyed her as a human being and recreated her in the image of a romance novel female, with updating for our technological age. "Milagro" is another step in the process of exploiting Scully's femininity and sexuality for the sake of "character development." If the writers "love" Scully, then "Milagro" must be one of the most perverse valentines to a lead female character in television history.

It's a shame, because the idea behind "Milagro"—the relationship between writers and their characters—is basic to the art of writing, and the episodes captures very well the agony of writing and the joys of inspiration. In "Milagro," Phillip Padgett finds that what he writes, what he "imagines," becomes true in real life. Since this is THE X-FILES, of course Padgett's obsessions concern murder, specifically, murder by removal of the victim's heart. To fulfill Padgett's written desires, one of his characters, based on a deceased Brazilian "psychic surgeon" named Ken Nacimiento, leaps off the page and into a kind of non-corporeal reality to commit the murders. The X-FILES production team gives "Milagro" (Spanish for "miracle") an extra-creepy spin—Padgett's spooky, empty apartment, Mark Snow's solemn heartbeat music (this episode has a marvelous, evocative score), the stoneliness of the editing—the dissolves, the slow-motion, the camera held for an extra beat, and the throbbing, bloody, very realistic hearts.

In the episode's central scene, Padgett writes that Scully is compelled to visit him, and sure enough, she knocks on his door, chats with him a bit, then accepts his invitation to enter, even though, as she states during their conversation, every instinct in her tells her to flee. If Scully is acting under Padgett's authorial control, then the writers—Carter, Spotnitz, Shibana, and their character Padgett—have turned Scully into a puppet bereft of choice. On the other hand, if Scully is not under Padgett's control, then she is acting like an idiot, taking an interest in a man she knows is fixated on her, thinks he understands her and is stalking her. This does not reflect a real-world situation and here the show has completely lost touch with its hard reality base, the function of which was to give credibility to the fantastic things Mulder and Scully encounter.

Mulder also suffers character destruction,

John Hawkes as Phillip Padgett, holding his beating heart from the teaser to "Milagro," a perverse Valentine for Scully from her admirers.



Scully encounter.

Mulder also suffers character destruction, regressing back to the tuggish Mulder of "Emily." He steals Padgett's mail, breaks into Padgett's apartment with gun drawn, inserts a spy camera into Padgett's room without a warrant, and assaults an innocent cemetery employee. He stalks Padgett, much as Padgett stalks Scully. Is he acting on his own or as Padgett directs? Again, we don't know, so Mulder is either his puppet, or just a brute.

As Scully contemplates the milagro Padgett delivered anonymously to Mulder's office, the camera contemplates her in lingering slow motion, dwelling on her face with opened mouth, her hands, her "titan" hair. This is not just Padgett eroticizing Scully (he's not even in the room, although we hear his voiceover), this is the show doing it! THE X-FILES (up to now) has always been careful to maintain its distance from a character's occasional acknowledgement of Scully's good looks. Here that distance is eradicated and the camera becomes complicit with Padgett. The effect is extraordinarily unpleasant and creepy, and serves even further to erase Scully as a human being and present her as a mere object of desire.

John Hawkes, who appeared with David Duchovny in PLAYING GOD and also had a role in Vince Gilligan's recent feature HOME FRIES, is a compelling, intense presence as Padgett. Despite a Herculean effort from Hawkes, Padgett comes off only as a loathsome creep with no inner life except for his fantasies.

Scully used to be THE X-FILES' moral conscience. Now we can't tell what she's even thinking, thanks to the fuzziness of "Milagro's" narrative and authorial (Carter's, not Padgett's) point of view. All we can glean is that she is drawn to interact with a stalker and the stalker more or less orders her murder, then in an act of "sacrifice," becomes her savior. The character assassination of Dana Scully is complete.

"I don't want to be no famous man. I just want to be a man."
—Josh Exley

THE UNNATURAL

★★★★

4/25/99. Written and directed by David Duchovny. Editor: Lynne Willingham.

X-FILES star David Duchovny makes an auspicious writing and directing debut with "The Unnatural," a warm-hearted, moving story about the transforming effects of love—in this case, love for the game of baseball. It all begins back in 1947 Roswell, New Mexico, during a pick-up game between the Negro Leagues' Roswell Grays and a white team, the Southwest Stars. A group of mounted Klu Klux Klan thunder onto the field. They're looking for Grays' star Josh Exley (Jesse L. Martin), who the press has picked to be the next black baseball player to join the Major Leagues. The Southwest Stars bean several of the KKK with

M. Emmet Walsh fills in ably for the unavailable Darren McGavin as retired agent Arthur Dales, putting Mulder on the case in "The Unnatural."



X-FILES

LAURIE HOLDEN

The UNblonde on playing femme fatale Marita Covarrubias.

By David Hughes

Laurie Holden had barely appeared twice as the United Nation's sultry "special representative" Marita Covarrubias when she earned the nickname: "UNblonde"—both a reference to her government agency credentials and the fact that her platinum hair was fake.

"I think of her as a Mata Hari—you can't really read what she's saying or what her intentions are," 27-year-old Laurie Holden said of her on-screen alter ego, whose name means "yellow cave" and who could be classed as a classic femme fatale if only she hadn't turned from Mulder's link to the global conspiracy into a victim of ghastly government experiments.

"Laurie Holden is like a classic movie star," co-star David Duchovny enthused. "She's smoky, dangerous, sexy, and has so much in reserve. I'm hoping Mulder gets a little closer to [her]."

"I thought it was more interesting for Mulder's next contact to be a woman," Chris Carter—who had originally cast Deep Throat's replacement, "X," as a single girl—once said of Holden's character. "I wanted there to be some suspicion about whether Mulder would be involved with her romantically," he added, doubling the shock value of Covarrubias' recent tryst with Alex Krycek. Holden made her X-FILES debut in "Herrenvolk" and has since appeared further in seven episodes.

In "One Son," Covarrubias metamorphosed from the tough, icy career woman who leaked information to Mulder simply because she believed in him, to a desperate victim struggling to escape the fate which Smoking Man and his elderly cronies had in store for her. "I think that for myself—and I'm sure I speak for a lot of other [actors] on the show—that just when you think you've got it down, they're going to throw you a curve ball," said Holden. "Chris Carter's mind is so brilliant. A lot of people ask me if he makes up this stuff as he goes



Holden made her X-FILES debut in "Herrenvolk" and has appeared in seven other episodes, including "One Son."

along, and I don't think so. I think that when you watch the mythology, it is so specific, and the story is so precise, the way the different elements unfold in each new episode. I think that there is a 'master plan.'"

Holden claims no such thing for her own career, which effectively began in 1980 when her stepfather, British director Michael Anderson (AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS), cast her in the epic mini-series THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES when a child actress dropped out. "Everyone looked at me and said, 'Can she act?'" Holden recalled. "All of a sudden, I'm Rock Hudson's daughter." Holden developed a passion for acting in college. "I was always intrigued with it, but I thought it would be more of a hobby," she said.

Holden has appeared in the Michael Crichton thriller PHYSICAL EVIDENCE, TEKWAR: TEKLAB, and the Canadian-based series DUE SOUTH, which gave the young actress her first taste of cult television. Then, in 1996, the call came to audition for a part in THE X-FILES, which, she admitted, she had never seen, "although I'd heard wonderful things about it before." The show's trademark mysteries began even before she arrived at the audition.

"They faxed me three pages of sides," she recalled. "They wouldn't release a script, and the only information I had to go on was that I was a woman of intelligence and seriousness who worked for the United Nations. That was it. So I went in, and met with Chris Carter for just ten minutes, and by the time I got home, the ball was set in motion, and it was pretty much a done deal. I had no idea what I was getting into."

Since then, Holden has scarcely looked back. Now a firm fan of the series—like many X-FILES actors, she even watches the episodes she doesn't appear in—the actress believes that it is partly Chris Carter's attention to detail which makes the show work, even if it means costly reshoots. "If Chris Carter feels that a scene that has already been directed doesn't have the feeling that was intended, or if a certain nuance has been missed, he'll redo it," she revealed. "They reshoot stuff all the time, the second unit guys are on standby, 24/seven. So what you see on THE X-FILES is what Chris Carter wants you to see. He's a professional, and I love that about him."

In sixth season's "Two Fathers" and "One Son" two-part—the beautiful "UNblonde" becomes somewhat UNkempt, thanks to the lasting effect of infection by the black oil known as "purity." "[Marita] has evolved in a really interesting way in the three years that I've been involved with the show," Holden understates, "but I was just thrilled with 'One Son,' because with the exception of the kiss with Nic Lea, it was the first time you saw this cold, emotionless, private woman suddenly so vulnerable, exposed and raw. I loved the fragility and the vulnerability." Was she feeling fragile and vulnerable herself, having a Bad Hair and Bad Skin Day added to the discomfort of some serious contact lenses? "Well, I did a show called POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY, so I'd done some of that before," she said. "My



The 27 year-old actress at the People's Choice Awards. Her enigmatic persona turned tragic in the show's sixth season.

“If Chris Carter feels a scene doesn't have the feeling that was intended, or if a certain nuance has been missed he'll redo it. They reshoot all the time.”

—Laurie Holden, Actress—

spite her unpleasant connections with Cigarette Smoking Man and her apparent attraction to Krycek. "Marita had to do that—she had to kiss Krycek," she said, recalling her earlier description of Marita's resemblance to Mata Hari. "That was not a passionate moment for Marita—it was what she needed to do in order to carry out her mission." She paused. "Well, I may have enjoyed it a little bit..." She laughed guiltily. "Or as Nic Lea would say, 'that was a good day in the life of Krycek.' David actually teased me about that when we worked together on 'One Son,'" she revealed. "He said, 'What's going on? You're kissing Krycek now?' And I looked at him with my moldy teeth and my cracked lips, and I said, 'Hey, Mulder, now's your chance!'" □

eyes were red from the contacts, but then my eyes were pretty red from the makeup and from the state that I was in! I loved that, though," she added, clearly enjoying the opportunity to play down her natural beauty. "I was like, 'make me more tired! Make me uglier! I love this!'"

No one was more surprised at the sudden revelations about Marita than Holden herself, who had established a backstory of her own for her character in order to play her realistically. "Chris Carter told me that he wanted to keep her an enigma: 'I never want to see you feel, show empathy or compassion.' So I have never really had anything to go on, except what I brought to the playing field. I think I've always felt that Marita had a secret, and in 'One Son,' when we see Marita exposed for the first time, a lot of my inner work about who this woman was was revealed. I've never seen Marita as a horrible person," she added, "although I know that there are a lot of X-FILES fans who get a little bent out of shape when they think I'm going to come between Mulder and Scully."

In other words, Holden has always believed her character to be one of the good guys, de-

their balls and when their coach pulls the hood off the unconscious leader, they're all stunned to find an alien Gray.

In 1999, Mulder is at the office researching old newspaper archives and happens on a photo of a young Arthur Dales with Exley; and off to the side of the photo is a man Mulder knows as the alien Bounty Hunter (Brian Thompson). Mulder goes to Dales' decrepit apartment for an explanation, but finds his brother, also named Arthur Dales (M. Emmet Walsh) in residence.

If "The Unnatural" is any indication, David Duchovny proves he is a triple threat. Not only is he a fine actor, but he has the potential for a stand-out career as a writer and director. No doubt he received a great deal of assistance from the show's producers and editor Lynne Willingham, but "The Unnatural" has an unabashed emotionalism without false sentimentality and an understanding of human (and alien) foibles that gives it a unique stamp. Duchovny once said in an interview that he felt THE X-FILES was about the light, not the dark, and in "The Unnatural," he finds the light and the wonder of the paranormal, which on this show is usually manifested in darkness and cynicism.

"The Unnatural" also brings us another great X-FILES character in the person of the second Arthur Dales. Originally, the character was supposed to be Darren McGavin's Dales, but McGavin had to drop out at the last moment and so that other marvelous character actor, M. Emmet Walsh, took his place. Although the business about the family having two brothers (and a sister) named Arthur is a bit forced, it doesn't really matter. What matters is that brother Arthur is one of those larger-than-life characters who occasionally pop-up out of THE X-FILES' laidback landscape. He's eccentric, he's cantankerous, he's a mess, he drinks too much, but within him lie the sparks of his passion for baseball and the memory of his friend Exley. He's unforgettable, and M. Emmet Walsh brings him to exuberant life. One wonders what McGavin would have done with this role if he hadn't had to bow out, but it's hard to imagine he'd be any better than Walsh.

The writing for Mulder and Scully in their two scenes together is wonderful, too. Duchovny respects their specific personalities, but also delineates their bond in the playful way they tease each other and then come together through baseball at the end. This is Mulder and Scully at their most human.

And then there's Exley. Jesse L. Martin is superb, a charmer with an infectious smile—he gives Exley the star charisma of a great baseball player—but he is equally adept at showing Exley's serious side: his passion for baseball and need to exult in the things that baseball means. When Exley is mortally wounded, and his blood gushes forth red, it's one of those magic moments where the event may have no logical explanation, except that the longings of the heart find expression in physical transformation. Geppetto and Pinocchio would understand. And there are many more magical moments in "The Unnatural."

Exley shows his true self as a Gray alien in "The Unnatural," actor David Duchovny's writing and directing debut on one of the series' finest shows.



that explores several different themes and neatly ties them together. It is, of course, a hymn to the joys of baseball, as pure game and as a metaphor for life. It is a tribute to the Negro Leagues. It is about the need to connect, showing us how totally different people (and aliens!) can not only find something in common, but realize there is much to admire in each other. It is about racism, a subject Duchovny could have trod over like an elephant, but instead, gives it the light touch: Exley the alien doesn't become a black man in some heavy metaphor about African-Americans as aliens in a white-dominated society; he becomes a black man because playing in the Negro Leagues is the easiest way to play his beloved game and avoid attention. And because he loves who he becomes, he stands up for all the groups he has joined: African-Americans, baseball players, and humanity itself.

Above all, "The Unnatural" is about the power of story-telling. We don't really know if Dales' story is true or if it's the liquor-fueled ramblings of a broken-down man, but in the end, this is irrelevant. As pure story, it speaks the truth and that truth makes a difference, especially to Mulder, who feels the rare need to connect with humanity. And he makes that connection, as Exley did, through baseball. Let's hope that Duchovny writes and directs another episode for THE X-FILES' seventh (and final) season.

"Go brush your hair, Michael Bolton!"
—Jimmy the geek to Langly

THREE OF A KIND ★★ 1/2

5/2/99. Written by Vince Gilligan & John Shiban. Directed by Bryan Spicer. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

The Lone Gunmen pinch hit for Mulder, or to be more precise, David Duchovny, who was occupied with "The Unnatural" during the shooting of "Three of a Kind." "Three of a Kind" is a sequel to the previous Lone Gunmen episode, last season's "The Usual Suspects," and is a somewhat diverting entertainment, although it offers nothing new, other than a zonked-out-on-drugs Agent Scully. Our paranoid trio, Byers (Bruce Harwood), Langly (Dean Haglund) and Frohike (Tom Braidwood) venture out to the bright lights and glitz of the Las Vegas Strip. Their mission: wrest top-secret info from the government defense contractors at their annual Def-Con '99 convention. Byers has a second agenda—he's still looking for his lost love, government chemist Susanne Modeski (Signy Coleman).

If ever there were three fish out of water, they are the Lone Gunmen in Las Vegas. The episode, unfortunately, does not make much of the incongruity of dropping this socially awkward, politically paranoid trio into such a glittery and superficial setting. Except for a few scenes in the casino or on the street, most of the story could have taken place in Anywhere, U.S.A., since Las Vegas hotel rooms, hallways and conference

Want a light?—Scully is surrounded by her admirers in "Three of a Kind," a Mulderless show plotted to give Duchovny time to write and direct.



Mulder and Scully hallucinate intriguingly while being ingested by giant mushrooms in "Field Trip," a re-set button show with extra cheese.

spaces are as impersonal as those anywhere else. The story is by-the-numbers and predictable. Of course Susanne shows up and she and Byers separate at the end. The one surprise is minor, when Timmy the geek (John Billingsley) turns out to be Timmy the government agent, and that happens early on.

Bruce Harwood is the only Lone Gunman who has any opportunity for real acting and he brings a naive sweetness to the role of the lovestruck Byers, a man who can carry a torch for ten years. Signy Coleman repeats the role of Susanne Modeski with her usual cool layered over her more tumultuous emotions. The farewell between the two is as expected, and what should have been an emotional scene comes off as uninvolved. Able comic actor, Charles Rocket, is always a pleasure to watch, but Ellis, his government agent, is a cardboard character. Director Bryan Spicer, who has directed several genre television shows and two poorly-received features (McHALE'S NAVY and FOR RICHER OR POORER), does an adequate job, but all in all, this is a filler episode, more substitute than the real thing.

"Scully, in six years, how often have I been wrong?"
—Mulder

FIELD TRIP ★★ 1/2

5/9/99. Written by Vince Gilligan & John Shiban. Directed by Kim Manners. Editor: Louise A. Innes.

Mulder has come upon an intriguing case. The skeletons of a young couple, Angela and Wallace Schiff, have been discovered near Brown Mountain, North Carolina. The Schiffs had been missing for only three days and temperatures never rose above 70. What could account for the condition of the bodies?

There have been a plethora of never-really-happened episodes this season—we've had hallucinations, visions, a warp in the time-space continuum that can reverse time, etc., etc., and "Field Trip" falls neatly into this category. It might have had a greater impact if it didn't suffer from "reset button syndrome." And the basic premise has extra cheese (and mushrooms): Mulder and Scully are being devoured by a giant, man (and woman)-eating fungus! To paraphrase Mulder, sounds like crap when one says it.

But "Field Trip" is sort of fun. It delivers a decent mind-screw, although the writers tip their hand far too early in the game. We figure out pretty quickly that Mulder and Scully are hallucinating. "Field Trip" won't blow your mind with a profound or original exploration of the boundaries between reality and hallucination, because what's happening is quite obvious.

Although the episode doesn't do much with its reality/hallucination premise, it does offer a bit of a character study with the running theme of "Sounds like crap when you say it." This is Mulder's statement to Scully after his initial discussion of the Schiff case and she repeats his theory back to him in dubious Scully-speak. In "Field Trip," both Mulder and Scully have their exact words repeated

back to them, and they do sound like "crap" when they hear how they sound in the mouth of others.

Still, "Field Trip" offers many pleasurable moments, even if we know they're not real. The scene where Mulder shows Scully the alien is wondrous and Gillian Anderson is especially moving. She plays perfectly Scully's response to being proved completely wrong on everything. She is not angry; she is amazed and thrilled at what seems like a miracle. The moment when Mulder finds Wallace Schiff is a shock and their scenes in the cave are lit with a gorgeous dark aqua tint that contrasts startlingly against the bright lights of the unseen aliens' ship.

The wake in Mulder's apartment is extremely eerie, with its dreamy camerawork and Scully's growing realization that the world has turned topsy-turvy. Among the actors, Duchovny and Anderson are the prime pleasures; guest stars David Denman (Wallace Schiff), Robyn Lively (Angela Schiff) and the coroner (Jim Beaver) are quite good. If only some of this had happened for real.

"You're a liar...you're both liars."
—Scully to Skinner and Fowley

BIOGENESIS ★ 1/2

5/16/99. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Rob Bowman. Editor: Heather MacDougall.

Dr. Solomon Merkallen (Michael Chinyamurindi), a biologist at the Université Cote D'Ivoire, Ivory Coast, has found matching pieces of a strange artifact he believes of extra-terrestrial origin. When he holds them together, they suddenly fuse and fly across the room and lodge in a Bible at a passage from Genesis. Merkallen travels to the United States to meet Dr. Sandoz, a biologist at American University in Washington, D.C., but he quickly realizes the man he meets is an imposter. The imposter kills Dr. Merkallen. Skinner is advised of the murder and assigns the case to Mulder and Scully. Mulder has heard of both scientists and says they espouse Panspermia, a theory that life originated outside this solar system and began here when microbes were blasted onto Earth.

Imagine if someone took the script to "Anasazi"—one of the best X-FILES episodes



Scully on the beach in the Ivory Coast, looking at the barely submerged alien ship of "Biogenesis," a by-the-book season-ending finale cliffhanger.

ever—changed the plot a bit, and then stripped it of virtually all human interest. You'd end up with "Biogenesis," which features the usual season finale business of Mulder and Scully uncovering clues to Something Really, Really Big About Aliens, Mulder and Scully running around a lot trying to Figure It Out, Scully questioning Mulder's dogged pursuit of The Truth while she sticks stubbornly to Denying the Existence of Aliens, Krycek and other conspiracy types murdering People Who Know Important Stuff, the Cigarette Smoking Man puffing away, Mulder getting Really Sick, some Spiritual Stuff, and two—not just one, but two!—Monologues



X-FILES

MARTIN LANDAU

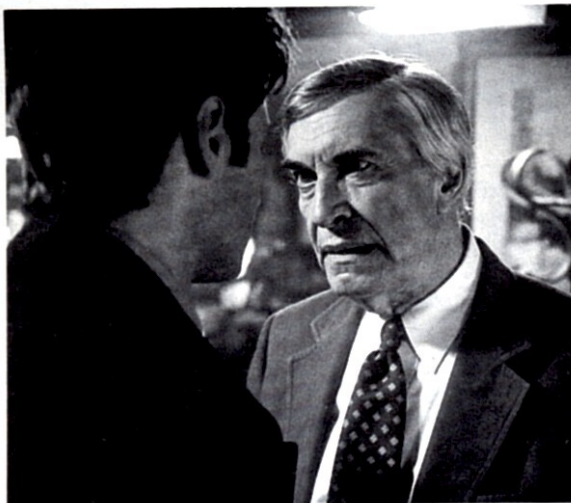
Still waiting in the series' wings?

By David Hughes

Having convinced Martin Landau to play persecuted conspiracy theorist Dr. Alvin Kurtzweil in *THE X-FILES MOVIE*, Chris Carter recut the film so that the character—who, in the original script, was murdered by the Well-Manicured Man (John Neville), might live to fight the future another day. At least, that's what Landau, who celebrated his 70th birthday the same week *THE X-FILES MOVIE* opened last summer, likes to think. "It's quite possible," the veteran actor said with a chuckle. "We do see the trunk [of the Well-Manicured Man's car] being closed, but we don't know for sure that I'm in it; we do see John Neville's character being blown up in that car, but Kurtzweil may not even be in the car when it happens. One never knows with Chris, so I don't know for sure whether I am deceased or not. When I saw the film, one of the first questions many people asked was, 'Did you die?' or 'Are you coming back?' and I can't answer that. And, you know, I'm not sure if Chris can answer that—I think maybe he has an idea that he hasn't shared with anybody yet."

Before the movie opened, Landau, like his co-stars, had been sworn to secrecy about the plot; indeed, since he had only read the pages his character appeared in, he probably wouldn't have been able to leak information if he had wanted to. "When I first got the script," he revealed, "it was printed on dark red paper, with my name emblazoned in dark letters and a number underneath my name on every page, so that it would be virtually impossible to Xerox. I read enough to know that it was a good script, and I appreciated Chris Carter and his team's desire for secrecy."

Landau said that his primary concern before accepting the role was whether or not the film would work for people who had never seen *THE X-FILES* on television. "My fears were allayed completely. It was a



Landau as conspiracy theorist Dr. Alvin Kurtzweil, dumping all that exposition on David Duchovny in *X-FILES: THE MOVIE*.

good movie unto itself." His next concern was, he added, the character of Kurtzweil himself. "When I read the script, I said, 'My God, there's reams of information this guy gives!' It's a lot of exposition, [and] exposition is not an actor's best friend. Every scene I have is one in which I talk about viruses, and subterfuge, and conspiracies, and very often it's what isn't said that creates your character. So there's not a lot of time to create too much mystery when you're doling out plot, and very complicated plot!"

"But when Chris talked to me, he said something that kind of challenged me and interested me: he said, 'The reason I'm asking you to do this is because I want the character to be crazy and credible at the same time.' And I said, 'Wait a minute, if you're crazy, you're not credible. And if you're credible, you're not crazy!' But he said, 'I know you can do that!' 'With this dialogue? Okay... let me think about this.' I found it an interesting challenge, and that's why I wanted to do it—because it wasn't easy. I also wanted to create a certain amount of sympathy for the guy. I wanted the audience to actually, somehow, feel sorry for him in the midst of all this madness, because even paranoids have real enemies!"

Concerning Profound Matters of Life and Death.

It's hard not to get cynical when an episode is so completely formulaic. None of the deaths matter in "Biogenesis." Once each guest character—Dr. Merkallen, Dr. Sandoz—has fulfilled his function in the plot, he is killed off (while he's on the phone, of course). The actors who play Sandoz and Merkallen are very good, and they bring a bit of humanity to each of these men, but nevertheless, the characters are cardboard.

Then there's all this alien business. Apparently the aliens who want to invade and colonize us have put their plans on hold since "Two Fathers" and "One Son." Most likely the writers will come up with something next season to explain why the aliens have decided not to invade and it will all fade away. For all the uncertainties of the alien invasion/alien artifacts storylines, they are generic plots. They could be from any science fiction story about humanity's contacts with aliens. None of this has the power of this series' original premise. Mulder and Scully searching for Samantha and the truth are far more compelling than Mulder and Scully fighting off an alien invasion.

And Mulder gets sick. In the original "Biogenesis" script, we learn the virus from the Tunguska experiments years ago is the cause, but that bit of continuity was cut out in favor of the suggestion the rubbing is to blame. Let's hope the Tunguska germ turns out to be the real culprit; otherwise, we need an explanation how a piece of paper can switch on abnormal activity in Mulder's brain. Supposedly Mulder's illness will have some greater meaning, but for now it's just a way to inject some tension into an otherwise by-the-numbers episode and also move it along; this illness seems to give Mulder the power to sense things and hear voices.

The final shot says it all—it looks great (nice spaceship!), but it's ridiculous. Scully goes to the Ivory Coast and with guidance from the local fisherman, finds a huge spaceship a few inches underwater, right out of the *X-FILES* feature film. You would have to have severe visual impairment not to see this ship. Why isn't the entire world flocking to this spot? Will Scully finally have that change of heart and admit there are aliens? Or will someone prove to her the ship is of Earthly origin? Find out next season.

Since there is only one season left of *THE X-FILES*, now is the time to say: Give Scully her own office before the series ends. It's been made very clear that Mulder's office is his office and no one else's (Mulder says so himself in "Biogenesis"). Where does Scully park her briefcase, her coat, her files, her computer, her mug with decaf coffee, her nameplate? What kind of posters does she put up on the wall? It's hard to imagine what the writers could do to make up for Scully's behavior in episodes like "Milagro" or "Alpha," or her questioning of Mulder in "Biogenesis," but giving her an office would be a beginning.

Michael Chinyamurindi as Dr. Solomon Merkallen, examining the alien artifact in "Biogenesis," invoking Biblical mythology as part of the SF mix.

