

= Kill Switch (The X @-@ Files) =

" Kill Switch " is the eleventh episode of the fifth season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered in the United States on the Fox network on February 15 , 1998 . It was written by William Gibson and Tom Maddox and directed by Rob Bowman . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Kill Switch " earned a Nielsen household rating of 11 @.@ 1 , being watched by 18 @.@ 04 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mostly positive reviews from television critics , with several complimenting Mulder 's virtual experience .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . In this episode , Mulder and Scully become targets of a rogue AI capable of the worst kind of torture while investigating the strange circumstances of the death of a reclusive computer genius rumored to have been researching artificial intelligence .

" Kill Switch " was co @-@ written by cyberpunk pioneers William Gibson and Tom Maddox . The two eventually wrote another episode for the show : season seven 's " First Person Shooter " . " Kill Switch " was written after Gibson and Maddox approached the series , offering to write an episode . Reminiscent of the " dark visions " of filmmaker David Cronenberg , the episode contained " many obvious pokes and prods at high @-@ end academic cyberculture . " In addition , " Kill Switch " contained several scenes featuring elaborate explosives and digital effects , including one wherein a computer @-@ animated Scully fights nurses in a virtual hospital . " Kill Switch " deals with various " Gibsonian " themes , including : alienation , paranoia , artificial intelligence , and transferring one 's consciousness into cyberspace , among others .

= = Plot = =

At a diner in Washington , D.C. , a man tries to access files on a laptop computer , but is repeatedly denied . Meanwhile , several drug dealers receive anonymous phone calls about the whereabouts of their competitors ; they are told that they are at the same diner . Two U.S. Marshals receive a similar phone call about an escaped prisoner . The drug dealers arrive in pairs as the man attempts to gain access to the files . Just as he does , the two Marshals appear and order everyone onto the floor , causing a shootout .

Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) arrive and identify the bodies of the drug dealers . Mulder also identifies the man with the laptop as Donald Gelman , " a Silicon Valley folk hero " who aspired to create an artificial intelligence . Mulder takes Gelman 's laptop and finds a CD inside . When he puts it into the car stereo , it plays " Twilight Time " by The Platters . However , the agents take it to the Lone Gunmen , who discover that the disc contains a large quantity of encrypted data . The trio , however , are unable to decipher it . Upon Scully 's suggestion , they access Gelman 's e @-@ mail account and find a message sent by someone named Invisigoth , saying that someone named David is missing .

The message contains a BIC code for an intermodal shipping container , which Mulder and Scully locate . When they approach it , a woman attempts to flee but is captured by Scully . The container turns out to be full of state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art computer equipment . The woman , the " Invisigoth " (Kristin Lehman) they 've been looking for , warns the agents that a laser @-@ armed Defense Department satellite has pinpointed their location . They quickly leave the area as the container is destroyed . Invisigoth , whose real name turns out to be Esther Nairn , tells the agents that Gelman succeeded in creating an artificial intelligence . She reveals that once the AI locates an enemy , it destroys them using the satellite . According to Esther , Gelman was creating " Kill Switch " , a virus that could destroy the AI . However , the AI learned of Gelman 's plans and killed him by luring the drug dealers and the police to the diner . The only way to destroy the AI is to find the computer on which it is stored . It turns out that David is Esther 's friend , and also worked with Gelman .

Mulder uses a government source to find a secret T3 line in Fairfax County , Virginia , one that the AI uses to access the Internet . He also finds the trailer that is connected to the T3 line . Meanwhile , Esther forces Scully to drive to David 's house . However , they find that the house has been destroyed . Esther admits that she and David had been planning to transfer their consciousness into cyberspace to enter the AI . Gelman , however , thought the idea was too dangerous . Esther also admits that she and David were in love , and were having an affair behind Gelman 's back . Meanwhile , Mulder finds much computer hardware inside the trailer . He also finds David 's dead body , with a virtual reality helmet on his head . Suddenly , Mulder is constrained by moving cables and wires , and experiences a strange vision in which he is in a hospital where nurses threaten to amputate his limbs unless he reveals Kill Switch 's location . Meanwhile , the AI locates Scully and Esther driving near a swing bridge . They become trapped on the bridge after the AI manipulates its drawing mechanism , causing Scully to persuade Esther to throw the laptop into the water . Just as it hits the water it is destroyed by the defense satellite 's laser strike .

Scully and Esther find the trailer in which Mulder is trapped . Esther reveals that she still has the CD on which the Kill Switch is stored . Scully puts it into the drive into the AI , which then releases Mulder . She gets him out of the trailer , but Esther stays inside . She uses the satellite to locate the trailer 's position , causing the missile to destroy the trailer , killing her . Mulder tells Scully that Esther 's consciousness probably joined the AI . Later , the Lone Gunmen get a strange message on their computer reading , " Bite me " . Just before the credits , we see a trailer in North Platte , Nebraska similar to the one where the AI lived , with automatic security cameras monitoring a boy who approaches the trailer to retrieve a football .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The episode was written by acclaimed cyberpunk novelist William Gibson , together with fellow science fiction author Tom Maddox . The authors and long @-@ time friends had discussed various collaborations before and approached the production company with an offer to write an episode . The result was " Kill Switch " , which first aired on February 15 , 1998 . The episode made frequent appearances in reruns and its success encouraged Gibson to continue working in television , resulting in his writing of a second episode " First Person Shooter " ? again in collaboration with Maddox ? which aired on FOX two years later on February 27 , 2000 . " Kill Switch " deals with recurrent Gibsonian themes : alienation , paranoia , the will to survive , emergent technology , the evolution of artificial intelligence , virtual reality , and transferring one 's consciousness into cyberspace . The Vancouver Sun author Alex Strachan later compared many of the episode 's themes to that of Gibson 's books , most notably in his novels Neuromancer , Mona Lisa Overdrive , and Virtual Light .

" Kill Switch " was written outside the mytharc of the series as a standalone story , which Gibson intended to be reminiscent of the " dark visions " of filmmaker David Cronenberg and to contain " many obvious pokes and prods at high @-@ end academic cyberculture . " Gibson 's initial idea for the episode eventually evolved into the episode 's final act . This was later combined with Maddox 's idea of a deserted house with shuttered windows , surrounded by a chain @-@ link fence . The episode involved the merging of human and artificial intelligence on the World Wide Web , a concept that had been floating around cyber @-@ futuristic circles at the time . The episode 's rewriting and revision process took a significant amount of time and it was over a year before the episode was completed due to other priorities that series creator Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz had . When they were finally available , they made some revisions to the script , including upping Esther 's attitude and Mulder and Scully 's reactions to her . A scene involving Scully trying on a fake nose ring was deleted from the script . Gibson originally started watching the series on the suggestion of his daughter , 15 years old at the time . During filming , Gibson spent a majority of his time on the set only " because [his] daughter insisted on being there . "

== Filming and effects ==

According to executive producer Frank Spotnitz , " Kill Switch " was the single most expensive episode that was filmed in Vancouver . In addition , the episode took a total of 22 days to film . The episode 's bridge scenes were filmed at the Westham Island Bridge , which spans Canoe Pass , British Columbia . The location had been discovered by Carter during a technical survey for the prior fifth season episode " Schizogeny " . Because the bridge was the sole means to access part of the Fraser River farming community in the area , filming was heavily restricted . Logistical issues with the bridge itself , such as restrictions on how many people could stand on the bridge at a time , also posed troubles for filming . Permission to film the scene wherein Esther throws the laptop into the river and it is subsequently vaporized by a laser strike from an orbiting weapons platform satellite required thirty days to obtain . The abandoned house that Mulder discovers was filmed at a historical landmark known locally as " Read House " .

The episode contained several scenes featuring elaborate explosives . The scene featuring a missile destroying a shipping container was originally scheduled to be filmed at one of Vancouver 's waterfront facilities . After permission for detonating explosive had been cleared by the city , the port rescinded its permission , claiming that the shot was not in its " best interests " . The special effects crew for The X @-@ Files decided to ship in as many containers as they could to a recycling center in the adjacent city of Burnaby , where filming went off " without a hitch " . The destruction of the trailer was filmed adjacent to the Boundary Bay Airport . After the explosion , the series received several complaints from people living as far as ten miles away from " ground zero " , complaining about the explosion and shockwave . The robot that attacked Mulder was inspired by the NASA Mars Rover . It was battery powered and cost \$ 23 @,@ 000 to create and operate . The producers contracted with SPOT , a French @-@ owned commercial satellite surveillance company to obtain the satellite photos of the Washington D.C. area used in the episode .

A freelance computer artist created a 3 @-@ D image of Scully for the scene where she is fighting the nurses in the virtual hospital . Gillian Anderson was very pleased with the scene . She later noted that " I happened to be in good shape at the time and was just raring [sic] to get in there and be taking those half @-@ naked nurses out with some karate chops . " David Duchovny was not as exuberant ; when showed the script and directed to " be impressed with [Scully 's] karate skills " , he responded that " But I have no arms . I 've lost my arms . Why would I care about Scully 's karate ? " Dean Haglund later called the sequence " one of the great fight scenes , ever " .

== Reception ==

== Ratings ==

" Kill Switch " premiered on the Fox network on February 15 , 1998 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 1 , with a 16 share , meaning that roughly 11 @.@ 1 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 16 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 18 @.@ 04 million viewers .

== Reviews ==

" Kill Switch " received largely positive reviews from critics . Francis Dass of New Straits Times was positive toward the episode , calling it " excellent " . John Keegan of Critical Myth gave the episode an 8 out of 10 , and wrote " Overall , this episode puts Gibson ? s genre credibility to good use by taking standard concepts of cyberpunk and applying them to the series . " He did note that there are " a few minor characterization issues " , and that " not all of the concepts are pulled together as tightly as they could be " , but other than those points , he concluded that it was " solid and [...] enjoyable " . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical

Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated the episode four stars out of five . The two wrote that its themes were " fresh and new " and that the plot had " real heart to it " . Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club gave the episode a B + and wrote that , while " William Gibson 's cyberpunk milieu wouldn 't necessarily seem to be the best fit for The X @-@ Files " , the episode " weirdly benefits from the lack of staff oversight . " He noted that it featured many elements to its plot , but was " a rare example of an X @-@ Files episode that works , [despite the fact that] it tries to do too much . " VanDerWerff was complimentary towards the story and called it " propulsive " ; he was particularly praise @-@ worthy of the fact that Scully was featured heavily in the episode . He cited the scene wherein a virtual Scully roundhouse kicks a group of nurses as one of the best shots in the episode , and called it a " hysterical moment " . Brett Love of TV Squad stated that it is his favorite episode of The X @-@ Files , considering it a " great story " and describing it as a " tough one to beat " . Paula Vitaris of Cinefantastique gave the episode a positive review and awarded it three stars out of four . Vitaris praised the episode 's directing and noted that the entry was " a great improvement over The X @-@ Files 's earlier A.I. episode , first season 's " Ghost in the Machine " . Vitaris cited " Mulder 's virtual experience " as the " highlight of the episode " .

= = = Awards = = =

" Kill Switch " earned an Emmy Award by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for Outstanding Picture Editing - Series .