

= Space ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Space " is the ninth episode of the first season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on November 12 , 1993 . It was written by series creator Chris Carter , directed by William Graham , and featured guest appearances by Ed Lauter and Susanna Thompson . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Space " earned a Nielsen household rating of 6 @.@ 5 , being watched by 6 @.@ 1 million households in its initial broadcast , and received negative reviews from critics .

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 . When investigating possible sabotage in NASA 's shuttle program , Mulder and Scully find that an astronaut who had been Mulder 's childhood hero may be possessed by an extraterrestrial spirit .

Series creator Chris Carter was inspired to write " Space " after reading about news of the " face on Mars " ? an instance of pareidolia wherein a mound in the Cydonia region of Mars was taken to resemble a human face . The episode was conceived as a low @-@ budget bottle episode , due to several earlier episodes having exceeded their budgets . Although the episode made use of a significant amount of inexpensive stock footage from NASA , the construction of the command center set was subject to cost overruns , eventually leading the episode to become the most expensive of the first season .

= = Plot = =

The episode opens with news footage from 1977 , showing the discovery of water on Mars and a face sculpted into the planet 's landscape . Lt. Col. Marcus Aurelius Belt ( Ed Lauter ) , the commander of the mission , is plagued by flashbacks of an encounter with the disembodied face during a spacewalk .

Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) are approached by Michelle Generoo ( Susanna Thompson ) , a communications commander for NASA 's Mission Control . Generoo believes that someone within NASA is sabotaging launch attempts . A recent space shuttle liftoff was aborted seconds before commencement , and Generoo fears the next launch will be similarly compromised . She also has a personal interest , as her fiancé will be aboard the next mission .

Mulder and Scully travel to NASA and meet Belt , a childhood hero of Mulder 's . Belt , who now manages the shuttle program , dismisses the agents ' concerns and states that nothing can possibly go wrong with the mission . He allows the agents to watch the launch from Mission Control . The launch is successful . As the agents are leaving however , Generoo informs them that contact is lost with the shuttle in orbit . While driving back to Mission Control , Generoo sees the face come at her through her windshield , causing her to crash her car .

The shuttle has moved into direct sunlight and Mission Control is unable to rotate it into a safe position , putting the astronauts ' lives in danger . Generoo believes that the uplink is being sabotaged . Belt orders the uplink to be cut , allowing the astronauts to rotate the craft manually . Over the objections of Generoo and the agents , Belt orders the mission to proceed and lies to the press about its progress . Belt tells Mulder that the shuttle program may be cancelled if the mission is not completed successfully .

Belt returns home and has another flashback , as he lies in bed in some agony an astral presence leaves his body and flies out the window , heading into the sky . The astronauts then report hearing a thump outside the shuttle and begin to experience an oxygen leak . Belt fixes the situation , but orders the mission to proceed . The payload is successfully deployed , but a crew member reports seeing a ghostlike entity outside the ship . Meanwhile the agents examine NASA records and find evidence that Belt played a role in other failed missions , including the Challenger disaster .

Belt begins to act irrationally then collapses screaming as he hears mention of the ghostlike entity from the astronauts . Paramedics are called to attend to him , and find him cowering under his desk

whimpering and begging for help . Before Belt it taken away , he tells the agents that the shuttle will not survive reentry due to sabotage by ' the face ' , which had lived inside his body and possessed him since his time in orbit . At his urging , they alert the shuttle to change its trajectory and are just able to land it successfully . In the hospital , Belt continues to wrestle with the presence , telling Mulder he wasn 't responsible but also couldn 't stop it , as " it came to me , it lives in me " . Eventually , in a last wrestle with the re @-@ possessing entity , he shouts " no more " as he leaps from the window to his death - experiencing a lengthy flashback to his last space mission as he falls . Mulder theorizes that , while Belt was compelled to sabotage the launches by the entity possessing him , he was also the one who sent Generoo the evidence of what was taking place . He lauds Belt 's final sacrifice , stating that in the end he gave his life for the mission , as befits a true astronaut .

= = Production = =

" Space " was conceived as a low @-@ budget bottle episode , due to several earlier episodes having exceeded their budgets . Series creator Chris Carter was inspired to write the episode after reading about news of the " face on Mars " ? an instance of pareidolia wherein a mound in the Cydonia region of Mars was taken to resemble a human face . Although the episode made use of a significant amount of inexpensive stock footage from NASA , the construction of the command center set was subject to cost overruns , eventually leading the episode to become the most expensive of the first season . Carter blames this on the infeasibility of showing the astronauts in the stricken shuttle , requiring additional exposition to explain their situation ? something he found he could not manage " on an eight @-@ day television budget " . Carter also claims that the episode suffered from being filmed shortly after the pilot episode was broadcast , with the crew overwhelmed by the input , noting that " everything was happening at once " .

Several scenes in the episode were filmed at a Canadian Airlines operations center in Richmond , British Columbia . The crew were given permission by the airline to use their flight simulators , leading to the production being delayed while everyone had a turn simulating flights over Canada . The problematic command center set was constructed and filmed at an amphitheater in Vancouver , whose sloping surfaces helped to suggest computer terminals without needing much construction , although false computer monitors were added for shots when they would be in view .

Guest star Ed Lauter had previously worked with the episode 's director , William A. Graham , on the film Guyana Tragedy : The Story of Jim Jones . On his role in the episode , Lauter has stated " I don 't really have a lot to say about that , except I thought I did a nice job , and that it was nice working up there in Vancouver with David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson " .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Space " premiered on the Fox network on November 12 , 1993 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on November 17 , 1994 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 6 @.@ 5 with an 11 share , meaning that roughly 6 @.@ 5 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 11 percent of households watching TV , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 6 @.@ 1 million households watched this episode during its original airing .

The episode ? reportedly Carter 's least favorite ? was very poorly received . Frank Lovece , in his books The X @-@ Files Declassified , called it " perhaps the series ' dullest , least suspenseful episode " , citing the spectral antagonist 's " highly unclear motivations " . Keith Phipps , writing for The A.V. Club , reviewed the episode negatively , rating it a D + . He felt that the episode 's special effects were " pretty decidedly unscary " , and that the episode 's premise was confusing and " a little tasteless " in its treatment of the Challenger disaster . In a retrospective of the first season in Entertainment Weekly the episode was similarly derided , being rated a D- and described as " one dead hour " . Matt Haigh , writing for Den of Geek , reviewed the episode negatively , feeling that it was " nothing much to write home about " , and that the episode 's antagonist was " distinctly unimpressive , lacking any true sense of menace or intrigue " .