

= Orison (The X @-@ Files) =

" Orison " is the seventh episode of the seventh season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network in the United States on January 9 , 2000 . It was written by Chip Johannessen , directed by Rob Bowman , and featured guest appearances by Nick Chinlund . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . In addition , " Orison " serves as a sequel , and brings closure , to the second season episode " Irresistible " , with Chinlund reprising his role as Donnie Pfaster . " Orison " earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. @ 4 , being watched by 15 @. @ 63 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed reviews from critics , with several heavily criticizing the final scene featuring Scully killing Pfaster , calling it a betrayal of characterization .

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 , Reverend Orison releases Donnie Pfaster , Scully 's former kidnapper , from jail in the hopes of passing judgment on him . What he discovers instead is that he has released pure evil , and it ? s headed for Scully .

" Orison " was written by Johannessen , who had formerly been an executive producer on the television series Millennium . Johannessen 's first draft featured an escaped prisoner who could stop time . Executive producers Chris Carter , Frank Spotnitz , and John Shiban enjoyed the premise and decided to bring back Donnie Pfaster . However , instead of continuing in the style of " Irresistible " , the episode went in a " substantial new direction " .

= = Plot = =

At a prison in Saint Paul , Minnesota , a man gets his fingers chopped off during a workshop and all the other inmates move very slowly to help him , while one man walks out at regular speed . The man is revealed to be Donnie Pfaster (Nick Chinlund) , who kidnapped Scully five years earlier . Pfaster , who happens to be a " death fetishist " , is obsessed with cutting women 's hair and eating their fingers . After hearing that Pfaster escaped from prison , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) take the case and investigate . It turns out three men escaped from three prisons and all had contact with a prison chaplain named Reverend Orison (Scott Wilson) . Eventually , the US Marshals corner Pfaster and Orison at a diner , but Orison uses his power of persuasion to distract the Marshals , allowing the two to escape . Pfaster takes Orison 's car and runs Orison over . Meanwhile , Scully keeps hearing the same song , " Don 't Look Any Further " , everywhere she goes and soon begins to believe it is a sign . After finding him unconscious , Mulder and Scully question Orison and show him a photo of the remains of a prostitute Pfaster killed . They also find that Orison killed someone and spent 22 years in prison himself . Orison claims he is being spoken to by God and doing his work . After a medical exam , Mulder finds out that Orison has three times the bloodflow capacity of the brain and he drilled a hole in head , allowing him to perform mental tricks by hypnotizing people . He does this while repeating the phrase " Glory , Amen . "

Later , Orison hypnotizes the security guard in his room and escapes . Pfaster hires a prostitute , but soon realizes she is wearing a wig and attempts to attack her , but she gets away . Orison finds Pfaster and takes him at gunpoint while he digs a grave for him , but Pfaster morphs into a demonic beast and kills Orison , burying him in his own shallow grave . Pfaster then calls the police , tells them where Orison is buried , and goes to Scully 's house . He attacks Scully and Scully confesses to him that the only reason he was not given the death penalty was because she asked the judge for life . He overpowers her and locks her in her own closet . Mulder thinks something may be wrong when he hears the same song on his radio and calls Scully . After receiving no answer , he goes over to her house and stumbles upon Pfaster , promptly arresting him . Meanwhile , Scully escapes from the closet and shoots Pfaster , despite him being unarmed , killing him . Scully later confides in Mulder , telling him she 's scared because she 's not sure who 's in control of her , God or something else .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Orison " was written by Chip Johannessen , who had formerly been an executive producer on the Chris Carter @-@ created television series Millennium . In Johannessen 's first draft , the episode 's main antagonist was a prisoner with the ability to stop time . Executive producers Carter , Frank Spotnitz , and John Shiban found the episode 's premise promising . However , Carter enjoyed the story because it bore stylistic similarities to the first season episode " Beyond the Sea " .

After reading the first draft , Spotnitz and Carter decided to reintroduce Donnie Pfaster , a character from the second season episode " Irresistible " . Carter noted that , " we had talked about possibly revisiting some old monster this season , and this seemed like the perfect opportunity . " The writers and producers decided to take " Orison " in a " substantial new direction " . Although Donnie Pfaster was originally portrayed as a " death fetishist " , his nature was non @-@ supernatural . In " Orison " , however , it was decided to make Pfaster into a true demon . Shiban explained " we decided late in the process to turn him into this totally demonic character , essentially evil as an entity . " Spotnitz was very excited about bringing closure to the Pfaster @-@ Scully story . He explained , " For me , what really justified bringing Donnie back was the final act of the script when Donnie comes for Scully and she ends up shooting him full of holes . " The final scene , however , proved difficult to script . Director Rob Bowman noted , that the act " was a tough scene . Frank and I had spoken on the phone about the dialogue in the wrap @-@ up scene with Mulder and Scully . Even though she shot him in the heightened state , you couldn 't deny the fact that she killed Donnie Psaster [sic] in cold blood . How do we deal with that ? "

= = = Casting and filming = = =

Nick Chinlund returned to the series to reprise his role as Pfaster . Rick Millikan , the show 's casting director , eventually settled on Scott Wilson for the role of Orison believing that he could pull off the " dual nature " of the character better than anyone else . The episode featured several complex scenes , most notably the shot at the beginning , where time slows to a stop . Bowman used several different takes , all filmed at different film speeds in order to achieve the right effect . The final fight scene between Scully and Pfaster took a day and a half to film . Many of the episodes scenes were filmed in Downey , California . Make @-@ up for the episode was done by John Vulich , who sought to " pay homage " to the make @-@ up in the original episode . In order to do this , Vulich perused several fan sites and downloaded photos that he used as models .

= = = Music = = =

The song that Scully keeps hearing in the episode is " Don 't Look Any Further " , originally by former Temptations lead singer Dennis Edwards . The production staff went through several cover versions in order to find the right one for the episode . Unfortunately , according to Paul Rabwin , none of the songs " really worked . " Originally , Rabwin wanted Lyle Lovett to record a cover for the episode , but he was unavailable , so the staff asked singer @-@ songwriter John Hiatt . Rabwin later called Hiatt 's version " chilling , eerie , and soulful . " . Mark Snow , the show 's composer , used various musical effects for emphasis . He explained , " There 's a slo @-@ mo scene where Mulder comes in the room with Scully and guns are drawn . They 're looking around , and I do these big boom single hits with a lot of reverb . There 's nothing else but that . Sometimes , that is really effective . "

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Orison " first aired in the United States on January 9 , 2000 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 4 , with a 14 share , meaning that roughly 9 @. @ 4 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 14 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 15 @. @ 63 million viewers . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on April 30 , 2000 @. @ and received 0 @. @ 78 million viewers , making it the fourth most watched television episode of any program that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Five years ago , a demonic madman tried to murder Scully . Tonight he strikes again . "

The episode received mixed reviews from critics . Kenneth Silber from Space.com wrote positively of the episode , saying , " ' Orison ' rises above its origins in the depressing , hackneyed genre of serial @- @ killer dramas . The episode combines a fast pace with a richly gloomy mood , and even serves to blur the all @- @ too @- @ sharp distinction between standalone X @- @ Files stories and the series ' ' mythology arc . ' " Rich Rosell from Digitally Obsessed awarded the episode 4 @. @ 5 out of 5 stars and called the episode " creepy , dark and wonderful " . Rosell argued that the episode " adds fuel to the fiery argument that it is [Scully] , and not Mulder , that the real heart of the series was built on . " Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations , gave the episode a largely positive review , writing " [' Orison '] was a journey filled with horror , mystery , and self @- @ analysis . It was also one of the most exhilarating journeys the seventh season has produced thus far . " Furthermore , Kessenich defended Scully 's actions at the end of the episode writing that " what we saw at the end of ' Orison ' was a human being pushed beyond the breaking point by a man [...] it doesn 't make what she did right , but it certainly wasn 't a difficult thing to understand . " Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B " and felt that the episode , despite its faults , had elements that were particularly interesting . He noted that the titular chaplain was a " potentially fascinating figure " who was never explored to his full extent , and that the ending was effective in that it " helps transform the episode 's climax into something more than a simple regurgitation " . Finally , he positively compared the mood and thematic elements of the episode to Carter 's other series Millennium .

Not all reviews were positive . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @- @ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , were extremely critical of the episode and rated it one star out of five . Shearman and Pearson called the episode a " mess " , with the effect that " it cheapens ' Irresistible ' badly " . The two , however , point out the sequence wherein Scully murders Pfaster as the worst scene in the episode , arguing that the scene was " at worst a betrayal of characterization that has badly damaged the moral fibre of the series . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a largely negative review and awarded it one star out of four . Vitaris heavily criticized the episode as " a retread of ' Irresistible ' " . Furthermore , she derided the ending , noting that " nothing in the episode [indicated] that Scully [was] on the verge of losing her self @- @ control " .