

= One Son =

" One Son " is the twelfth episode from the sixth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It first aired on February 14 , 1999 , on the Fox network . The episode was written by series creator Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz , and directed by Rob Bowman . It explores the series ' overarching mythology and concludes the Syndicate story arc .

The series centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) , who work on " X @-@ Files " ? cases deemed " unsolvable " by the FBI , usually dealing with the paranormal . Although Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , and the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work , the two have developed a deep friendship . While Cassandra Spender (Veronica Cartwright) reveals the truth about the alien conspiracy to take over the Earth to Mulder , her ex @-@ husband , the Smoking Man (William B. Davis) , does the same to her son , Jeffrey Spender (Chris Owens) , in an effort to convince him to work with the Syndicate . Even as Mulder is deceived by Diana Fowley (Mimi Rogers) , Scully stays true to the investigation , and the two find Spender to be a surprise ally . Meanwhile , the Syndicate reaches the climax of its plans , only to have its members systematically exterminated by the faceless alien rebels , who oppose colonization .

" One Son , " a direct continuation of the previous episode " Two Fathers , " was written , along with its predecessor , to eliminate the Syndicate and relaunch the series ' mythology in a different direction . Both the opening of the episode and the climactic scene featuring the demise of the Syndicate were filmed at the Marine Corps Air Station Tustin in Tustin , California . Spotnitz was particularly critical of some of the visual effects used in the episode , expressing a desire to one day revisit and redo them . The episode has also been analyzed for its thematic examination of family . " One Son " earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @.@ 1 , and its first broadcast was watched by 16 @.@ 57 million people . The episode was well received by critics , who applauded the way the Syndicate 's story arc was wrapped up , although others felt the resolution was too simplistic .

= = Plot = =

= = = Background = = =

For the first five seasons of the series , FBI federal agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) have unravelled a conspiracy that involves the mysterious Syndicate , and their plans to aid in the alien colonization of Earth . The fifth season episodes " Patient X " and " The Red and the Black " reveal that , counter to the colonization effort , there is a faction of alien rebels opposed to colonization . In the previous episode , " Two Fathers " , one of the rebels tried to infiltrate the Syndicate and form an alliance , only to be killed . Meanwhile , Mulder learned that The Smoking Man 's (William B. Davis) ex @-@ wife Cassandra Spender (Veronica Cartwright) had successfully become an alien @-@ human hybrid ? a signal to the aliens for them to begin colonizing the planet .

= = = Events = = =

Cassandra demands to be killed by Mulder but , before he can do anything , the group is quarantined by Diana Fowley (Mimi Rogers) . Mulder , Cassandra , and Scully are taken to a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) facility at Fort Marlene , where Fowley tells the agents Cassandra is carrying a contagious organism . Meanwhile , Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea) reports on Cassandra 's escape to the Syndicate , noting that the alien rebels want Cassandra kept alive . However , the Syndicate decides to turn Cassandra over to the colonists and save themselves by commencing colonization .

At Fort Marlene , Mulder runs into the sickly looking Marita Covarrubias (Laurie Holden) , who tells Mulder that she was subjected to experiments by the Syndicate to create a black oil vaccine and

that the colonists will begin colonization if they learn of Cassandra 's existence as an alien @-@ human hybrid . Scully , with help from the Lone Gunmen , looks into Fowley 's personal history and informs Mulder that Fowley has been collecting data on alien abductees and traveling to Tunisia every week , although there is no trace of her activities in FBI records . Although Mulder still trusts Fowley , he goes to her apartment to confront her .

Inside the apartment , Mulder 's search for clues is interrupted by the arrival of The Smoking Man , who tells Mulder that he has been betrayed by Jeffrey Spender (Chris Owens) , who is actually his son . The Smoking Man tells Mulder that , many years ago , the Syndicate agreed by majority vote , against Bill Mulder 's objections , to align with the alien colonists to be spared during colonization . The Syndicate was forced to give up family members to the colonists as collateral so that an alien fetus could be given to the Syndicate in order for them access alien DNA . Since Bill Mulder was slow to agree , Samantha Mulder was not taken until after the others . Using the fetus , the Syndicate worked on creating alien @-@ human hybrids who could survive colonization . The Smoking Man tells Mulder that colonization will begin once Cassandra is handed over and that Mulder will be able to see his sister again , providing him with an address to the hangar where the Syndicate members will be meeting the colonists .

Spender goes to the Syndicate 's headquarters , only to find Krycek , who tells him that the group 's members ? with the exception of The Smoking Man , who has gone to retrieve Cassandra ? are preparing to present the alien fetus to the aliens . Fowley returns to her apartment , where she finds Mulder . Fowley head to the hangar at El Rico Air Force Base , whereas Scully contacts Mulder and the two try and fail to stop the train car transporting Cassandra to El Rico . Spender arrives at Fort Marlene , where he runs into Covarrubias ; she tells him to go to El Rico Air Force Base to find his mother .

A Syndicate surgeon attempting to procure the alien fetus is killed by one of the alien rebels , who assumes his form . Krycek finds the dead surgeon and the fetus missing , and tells Spender that the rebels are now going to succeed in their goals to halt colonization . The Syndicate and its families gather at El Rico Air Force Base . Shortly after Fowley arrives , a white light appears around one end of the hangar . It is revealed to be the rebels , who surround and immolate the entire Syndicate ? except for The Smoking Man and Fowley ? who escape by car .

The next day , Mulder , Scully , Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) and Spender report to Assistant Director Alvin Kersh (James Pickens , Jr .) on the deaths of the Syndicate and Cassandra . Spender tells Kersh that Mulder and Scully could have prevented their demise , and recommends that they be reassigned to the X @-@ Files before abruptly leaving the room . Heading to the X @-@ Files office in the basement , Spender finds The Smoking Man , who first berates Spender for not being like Mulder and then shoots him in the head .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

" One Son " concluded the story that had begun in the preceding episode , " Two Fathers " , and wrapped up a large portion of the series ' mythology which had been centered around the Syndicate . The producers decided to pursue this route because the Syndicate 's story arc was creating a " narrative drag " on the series , and that many questions from the past five seasons were still unanswered . Another reason behind the resolution of the Syndicate arc was that series creator and episode co @-@ writer Chris Carter thought the series was going to be canceled by the spring of 2000 . Ultimately , " One Son " was written to resolve the show 's many arcs in preparation for a series finale . While promoting the episode , Carter said it would provide many long @-@ awaited answers , but create new questions for future episodes . The writing staff was also looking for ways to create a new story lines for the series , such as the " Super Soldiers " arc , which was created for the eighth and ninth seasons .

Carter also sought to rectify small issues that fans had with the 1998 feature film , The X @-@ Files

, explaining , " I think if there was any trouble with the movie , it was that we promised so much that we didn 't deliver all of it . I think we wanted to deliver a lot , and all at once , in these two episodes " . Episode co @-@ writer Frank Spotnitz agreed , saying that when The X @-@ Files film was being promoted with the tagline " The Truth is Revealed , " he realized that the answers presented in the movie would not be the answers that many of the fans were wanting to hear . Spotnitz also felt that writing " One Son " was difficult because the episodes that gave answers seemed to be less entertaining for viewers than episodes that presented new questions . Spotnitz , however , acknowledged that this episode was necessary to help explain the complex mythology of the show ; he called the episode the " biggest chapter we had time to explore in the nine years we were on the air " .

Part of the problem with creating " mytharc " for the writers was due to the fact that , because there were so few mythology episodes each season , they were often forced to put as much material as they could into each episode . Originally , a large portion of the episode was supposed to reveal the history of the Syndicate via flashback . Reportedly , these scenes would have featured younger versions of Bill Mulder (played by Peter Donat) , The Smoking Man , Dr. Openshaw , the Elders , and many others . However , this never panned out , and Carter and Spotnitz had to reframe the episode around narration courtesy of the Smoking Man , which was filmed and edited under extreme pressure near the end of production . While the previous episode , " Two Fathers " , was titled after the duality of Bill Mulder and The Smoking Man , this episode was titled " One Son " to reflect the fact that Mulder was the only remaining son of either of these fathers , after the shooting of Jeffrey Spender and the rejection of Alex Krycek .

Several of the plot elements are self @-@ referential to other episodes of the series . Fort Marlene 's presence is a reference to the first season finale " The Erlenmeyer Flask , " when the alien fetus was first introduced ; the term " purity control " is also a reference to this episode . The references to MUFON were purposely placed in the episode to connect to the story @-@ arc involving Scully 's cancer , which had been discovered during the show 's fourth season . The episode also references and mirrors elements of popular culture . Fowley 's apartment was purposely located in the Watergate complex , a hotel notorious as the location of the 1970s Watergate scandal . The scenes featuring Mulder and Scully being decontaminated were based on a similar scene in the 1962 James Bond film Dr. No , according to Spotnitz . He felt that the scene successfully played upon the sexual tension between the two lead characters .

= = = Casting and filming = = =

" One Son " would be the last episode of the series to feature Owens ' character , Jeffrey Spender , until the ninth season entry " William " . Owens first learned that he would be killed off when Carter called him and told him , " You 're going to go out a hero , of sorts " . Owens was slightly disappointed , noting that he had just been introduced in the series during the conclusion of the previous season . Davis was upset that Owens was leaving the series , and reportedly told Owens during their last scene together , " I don 't want to shoot you ! I enjoy working with you ! " Owens , however , jokingly noted that Davis had no problems slapping him when the script called for it . In the episode , Laurie Holden , who played Marita Covarrubias , returns . Spotnitz crafted the sequence in which she confronts Mulder to be a way of " taking away [her] beauty and making her [look] as horrifying as possible " . To accomplish this , she was given " terrible @-@ looking " contact lenses and her hair was unkempt .

While the first five seasons of the series were mainly filmed in Vancouver , British Columbia , production of the show 's sixth season was based in Los Angeles , California . The scenes taking place in the hangar were filmed at the Marine Corps Air Station Tustin in Tustin , California . The hangar , constructed in 1942 as an airship base , is one of the largest all @-@ wooden hangars in the United States . Bill Roe , director of photography , and Rob Bowman were tasked with lighting the entire structure for the episode 's teaser and climax , a job that Spotnitz later called " amazing " . He noted that , after the series ' move to Los Angeles , production costs had risen , forcing the show to cut down on its " astonishing production values " . However , he applauded the use of the hangar

, noting that it " was a way to try and create that cinematic scale and still keep [the show] affordable ". The episode also revisits trains as a setting , something that had previously been done in the third season episodes " 731 " and " Nisei " . However , for budgetary reasons , the scenes taking place on the trains did not take up much screen time . To give the effect that the train carrying Cassandra Spender is moving at a high speed , Manners utilized " sound effects , music , clever camera angles and quick cutting " . In reality , the train was never moving faster than eight miles an hour .

All of the sets in the episode were created by Corey Kaplan . Roe , meanwhile , was in charge of the cinematography . Spotnitz complimented Rob Bowman 's direction in this episode . However , he had a problem with the scene in which one of the Syndicate members changes into an alien rebel , reasoning that this was because the effect had been created on such short notice . He explained , " It was one of those cases where you just run out of time , sorry to say " . He later expressed a desire to one day go back and amend the effect .

The production staff originally wanted to show the alien rebels incinerating the Syndicate on screen . However , because they were filming in an all @-@ wooden hangar , the use of fire was not at all considered . The episode required extensive demands from makeup department head Cheri Montesanto @-@ Medcalf . She was required to create the illusion of the head surgeon 's head being frozen in liquid nitrogen , as well as to " de @-@ age " members of the Syndicate for the flashback sequences . To create the former , Montesanta @-@ Medcalf painted the actor 's face blue , then attached silicon icicles to his head .

= = Themes = =

The episode makes heavy use of the theme of family , which is notably reflected in its title . Meghan Deans of Tor.com highlighted the fact that the Syndicate hands over their family and loved ones to save the world as evidence of this permeating theme . She also highlighted the duality of fathers and sons . The Smoking Man is both a father to Mulder and Spender , but he favors Mulder . At the same time , both Spender and Krycek vie for the position of " son , " with the former falling from The Smoking Man 's grace , and the latter playing the role of " prodigal son " . However , both Spender and Krycek fail , leaving Mulder as the titular " one son " . Neal Justin of the Star Tribune also noted this theme , commenting that " it is interesting to note that the core of the story appears to be the relationship between parents and their children " . He compared the episode 's thematic mechanism to the same concern of the Star Wars films .

= = Reception = =

= = Ratings and accolades = = =

" One Son " originally aired in the United States on the Fox network on February 14 , 1999 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on Sky1 on May 23 , 1999 . In the U.S. , the episode was watched by 16 @.@ 57 million viewers . It earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @.@ 1 , with a 16 share . Nielsen ratings are audience measurement systems that determine the audience size and composition of television programming in the U.S. This means that roughly 10 @.@ 1 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 16 percent of households watching television , were watching the episode . In the U.K. , " One Son " was seen by 860 @,@ 000 viewers , making it the fourth most @-@ watched episode that week , behind ER , The Simpsons , and Friends . Dean Haglund 's name is misspelled as Dean Haglung in the opening credits .

Cartwright was nominated for an Emmy for " Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series " for her role in both this episode and " Two Fathers " . " One Son " was also nominated for " Outstanding Art Direction ? Series " , and " One Son " and " Two Fathers " were co @-@ nominated for " Outstanding Makeup ? Series " . The series won an Emmy for the latter . On November 5 , 2002 , the episode was released on DVD as part of the complete sixth season . The episode was later included on The X @-@ Files Mythology , Volume 3 ? Colonization , a DVD collection that features

episodes involved with the alien colonists ' plans to take over the Earth .

== Reviews ==

Because the episode was promoted with the promise of answering questions , it caused increased media speculation . With the conclusion of " One Son " , many critics applauded the way the series was able to wrap up the Syndicate arc . A.M. Jamison of the Dayton Daily News wrote that " ' One Son ' ends dramatically , drawing to a close one quest and opening a new set of challenges not only for Mulder but the Earth as well " . Noel Holston and Justin of the Star Tribune awarded the episode four stars out of five , noting that it answered even more questions than " Two Fathers " . They also applauded the familial bonds that held the episode together . However , some critics felt that the answers were slightly rushed . Manuel Mendoza of The Dallas Morning News wrote that " Mr. Carter and his co @-@ writer Frank Spotnitz have a wonderfully indirect way of setting up dramatic situations and an unbelievably shorthand way of resolving them " .

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 three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . The two enjoyed Davis ' performance , noting that he gave the role " real power " , and that he was " the emotional centre of the episode " . Shearman and Pearson were critical of the amount of attention Fowley 's allegiance received . However , they felt that the episode " reaches for both significance and closure , and mostly works " . Deans wrote that " One Son , " along with " Two Fathers , " is elevated above a " mytharc infodump " because of " its use of family , a theme woven deep and clear throughout " . She largely applauded the episode 's exploration of the various characters , and its central motif , noting that " the conspiracy [the Syndicate] is no longer the threat now . It 's the rebels and the colonists , fearful and unknown . Just like family " . Tom Kessenich , in his book Examination : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files wrote positively of the episode , saying " The ' Two Fathers ' / ' One Son ' was extremely powerful stuff . Tightly written , beautifully filmed and filled with more affirmations than revelations , but fascination looks at the characters in the drama " .

Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B " rating . He felt that the episode worked extremely well on a visual and character @-@ based level . Handlen felt that , because the show was " often scariest when it ? s implying , rather than flat out stating , " its " mythology only really works as something just out of sight " . For this reason , he felt that the episode mixed " the compelling with the absurd " with " mixed results " . Handlen concluded that the episode " has its moment , " but is ultimately hurt by the fact that it refuses " to come to any serious conclusions , " as well as " the inherent limitations of the [episode 's] form " . Not all reviews were glowing . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . Vitaris criticized the death scene of the Syndicate , noting that it was " clumsily contrived , allowing [The Smoking Man] and Fowley to escape , but not because it makes sense , but because the show needs them to return at some point " .

Since its airing , " One Son " has been called one of the best episodes of The X @-@ Files . Joyce Millman from Salon magazine said the episode , along with " Two Fathers , " was one " of the most coherent , [...] almost unbearably tense , hours in the series ' run " . She said that the episode gave some long @-@ waited answers , but created new questions , such as what has really happened to Samantha Mulder . Michigan Daily reviewer Melissa Runstrom said that " One Son , " along with " Two Fathers " and season finale " Biogenesis , " were the highlights of the sixth season . Earl Cressey from DVD Talk also named " One Son , " along with " Two Fathers , " as one of the " highlights of season six " .