

= The X @-@ Files ( season 4 ) =

The fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files commenced airing on the Fox network in the United States on October 4 , 1996 , concluding on the same channel on May 18 , 1997 , and contained 24 episodes . Following the filming and airing of the season , production began on The X @-@ Files feature film , which was released in 1998 following the show 's fifth season .

The fourth season of the series focuses heavily on FBI federal agents Fox Mulder 's ( David Duchovny ) and his partner Dana Scully 's ( Gillian Anderson ) investigation of an alien conspiracy , which is protected by the mysterious Syndicate . Midway through the season , Scully is diagnosed with terminal cancer , a result of her previous abduction , and Mulder begins to lose his faith in the idea of extraterrestrials . Debuting with high viewing figures and ranking as the twentieth most watched television series during the 1996 ? 97 television year in the United States , the season was a success , with figures averaging around 20 million viewers an episode . This made it , at the time , the highest rated season of The X @-@ Files to air . The season 's twelfth episode , " Leonard Betts " was chosen as the Fox lead @-@ out program following Super Bowl XXXI , and was viewed by 29 @.@ 1 million viewers , making it the highest @-@ rated episode in the series ' run . Critical reception from television critics was mostly positive .

= = Plot overview = =

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 the Syndicate suspect that one of their members is passing information to Mulder and Scully , they organize a canary trap to find the leak , using information about the safety of Mulder 's mother as bait . X 's ( Steven Williams ) role as an informant is discovered , and he is shot dead , although he is able to pass along the name of another informant who can be of use to Mulder ? Marita Covarrubias ( Laurie Holden ) , the Special Representative to the Secretary @-@ General of the United Nations . Covarrubias ' aid is sought when Mulder attempts to reach Tunguska in Russia to investigate the source of a further black oil contamination . Whilst there , Mulder is held in a gulag and used as a successful test subject for a black oil vaccine . He escapes and is able to return to America , having found that Alex Krycek ( Nicholas Lea ) is working with the Russians .

Having been diagnosed with cancer , Scully is unsure of her future with the FBI . Mulder is convinced that her condition is a result of her earlier abduction ( " Ascension " ) , and is prepared to make a deal with the Syndicate to find a cure . He is dissuaded by Walter Skinner ( Mitch Pileggi ) , who secretly makes such a deal instead . While being pursued by an assassin responsible for a hoax alien corpse discovered on a mountaintop , Mulder fakes his own suicide , mutilating the assassin 's face to provide a decoy body . He uses the distraction this offers to infiltrate The Pentagon to find a cure for Scully 's cancer , while Scully is able to uncover and reveal a Syndicate connection within the FBI .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The season saw drastic changes to the series ' alien mythology . In the premiere episode , " Herrenvolk " , Williams ? the actor who played Mulder 's informant X ? was written out of the show . He said that , " Carter called me up personally [ and said ] ' Got good news , got bad news . The good news is we 're gonna bring you up for another episode this week . The bad news is you 're gonna take a bullet . " The writers created a new character , Marita Covarrubias , to function as Mulder 's informant . Carter felt it would be " more interesting for Mulder 's next contact to be a woman " , noting that he " wanted there to be some suspicion about whether Mulder would become

involved with her romantically . " Herrenvolk " also introduced the killer bees , who would go on to play a larger part in the 1998 film . Carter described the fourth season as " maybe the most intense and difficult season of the show . "

The season is notable in that it introduced a story arc about Scully developing terminal cancer , which would not be resolved until the beginning of the fifth season . The show 's producers decided to give Gillian Anderson 's character Dana Scully cancer early in the season . Carter initially discussed giving Scully 's mother cancer but decided to have Scully suffer from it instead . Carter felt the move would give the show an interesting platform on which to discuss things such as faith , science , health care and a certain element of the paranormal . Some of the writing staff felt that the decision was a poor one to make , citing it as " a cheap TV thing " . However , Frank Spotnitz felt that , given the appearances of cancer @-@ stricken abductees in previous episodes , it was an " obligatory " move to have Scully follow suit .

Following the cancellation of the Fox television series Space : Above and Beyond , Carter called the series ' creators Glen Morgan and Wong ? who had previously been writers for the first two seasons of The X @-@ Files ? and asked if they wanted to rejoin the series . Morgan told Carter that the two of them would rejoin , but only for four episodes , and only if they could use members from the cast of Space : Above and Beyond , so that " the world can finally see them " . Carter accepted this condition , and the two dutifully provided four of the seasons episodes .

= = = Filming = = =

The season finale , " Gethsemane " , was notable in that an entire set created to emulated icy caverns was constructed inside a warehouse which had previously been used for cold storage ; and required the use of truckloads of lumber and 10 @,@ 000 square feet ( 930 m2 ) of Styrofoam . The set would become one of the most expensive and elaborate built during the series ' history . The set required a constant temperature of ? 21 ° F ( ? 29 ° C ) in order to maintain the real snow and ice used to decorate it . This refrigeration allowed the actors ' breath to visibly fog up , and allowed the cast to " have a place that feels real " to aid their acting . The outdoor scenes for the episode were filmed around Vancouver 's Mount Seymour , with weather conditions making shooting difficult enough to require an extra day of work .

Although the series ' 1998 movie would take place after the events of the fifth season , the movie was actually filmed in the hiatus between the show 's fourth and fifth season and re @-@ shoots were conducted during the filming of the show 's fifth season .

= = = Crew = = =

Series creator Chris Carter also served as executive producer and showrunner and wrote eight episodes . Howard Gordon continued as executive producer and wrote five episodes for his final season on the series . Spotnitz was promoted to co @-@ producer and wrote seven episodes . Vince Gilligan was promoted to co @-@ producer and wrote five episodes . Former X @-@ Files writers Glen Morgan and James Wong returned after a one season absence from the series as consulting producers and wrote three episodes together , with Morgan writing an additional episode solo that Wong directed . John Shiban was promoted to story editor and wrote four episodes . David Greenwalt joined mid @-@ season as co @-@ executive producer and wrote one episode for his only season on the series . Writing team Valerie and Vivian Mayhew wrote one freelance episode . Executive producer and frequent series director R. W. Goodwin wrote his first and only episode for the series . Other producers included producer Joseph Patrick Finn , co @-@ producer Paul Rabwin , and consulting producer Ken Horton , who joined the series with this season .

Producing @-@ directors for the show included Rob Bowman and Kim Manners , who directed the bulk of the episodes for the season . Manners directed eight episodes , while Bowman directed seven . Executive producer R. W. Goodwin again directed the season premiere and finale . James Charleston directed three episodes , while Tucker Gates , Michael Lange , Cliff Bole , and series writer James Wong each directed one episode .

== Cast ==

=== Main cast ===

David Duchovny as Special Agent Fox Mulder ( 24 episodes )  
Gillian Anderson as Special Agent Dana Scully ( 23 episodes ) a  
a ^ She does not appear in " Zero Sum " .

=== Recurring cast ===

==== Also starring ====

Mitch Pileggi as Assistant Director Walter Skinner ( 12 episodes )  
William B. Davis as Cigarette Smoking Man ( 6 episodes )

==== Guest starring ====

== Episodes ==

Episodes marked with a double dagger ( ) are episodes in the Mythology of The X @-@ Files Alien story arc .

== Reception ==

=== Ratings ===

The fourth season of The X @-@ Files debuted with " Herrenvolk " on October 4 , 1996 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 2 , with a 23 share , meaning that roughly 13 @.@ 2 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 23 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . The episode was viewed by 21 @.@ 11 million people , a marked increase from the third season 's finale , " Talitha Cumi " , which was viewed by 17 @.@ 86 million viewers . " Herrenvolk " was , at the time , the highest @-@ rated episode of The X @-@ Files to air , as well as the first episode of the series to be watched by over 20 million viewers . As the season continued , however , ratings began to drop slightly , stabilizing around approximately less than 20 million viewers @-@ per @-@ episode . The season hit a high with its twelfth episode , " Leonard Betts " , which had been chosen as the Fox lead @-@ out program following Super Bowl XXXI . The episode was viewed by 29 @.@ 1 million viewers , making it the highest @-@ rated episode in the series ' run . The season hit a low with the fifteenth and sixteenth episodes , " Kaddish " and " Unrequited " , respectively , which were both viewed by 16 @.@ 56 million viewers . The season finale , " Gethsemane " , earned a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 2 , with a 19 share , and was viewed by 19 @.@ 85 viewers , marking a 5 @.@ 9 percent drop in viewers when compared to the season premiere , but a 10 percent increase in viewers when compared to the previous season finale . The season ranked as the twelfth most watched television series during the 1996 ? 97 year , with an average of 19 @.@ 2 million viewers , making it , at the time , the highest @-@ rated season of The X @-@ Files to air .

=== Reviews ===

The fourth season of The X @-@ Files received largely positive reviews from television critics , although several critics noted that the season was not as good as its predecessors . The Contra Costa Times noted that The X @-@ Files during its fourth year was creatively good and " always fascinating even when it 's frustrating . " Rick Kushman Bee of the Sacramento Bee wrote that Fox ' Sunday block of The Simpsons , King of the Hill and The X @-@ Files was televisions " real ' Must See TV ' " . Matt Roush of USA Today wrote that the fourth season was not the series ' best year , but " when good , [ The X @-@ Files is ] still shockingly great " . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club gave an overall positive review of the season and wrote that many of the episodes dabbled in existentialism . However , he also contended that many of the mythology episodes ? especially the season finale ? began to have " a ring of familiarity to " them and that " the repetition is getting old " .

Episodic reviews were diverse . Some episodes were praised . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated the episodes " Home " , " Unruhe " , " Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " , " Paper Hearts " , and " Small Potatoes " five stars out of five . Paula Vitaris of Cinefantastique also awarded " Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " , " Paper Hearts " , and " Small Potatoes " perfect scores of four out of four . Tom Kessenich named " Memento Mori " the fourth best episode of the series , writing that it was the definitive example of Mulder and Scully 's devotion for each other . " . He also wrote highly of " Home " , " Paper Hearts " , Small Potatoes " , and " Never Again " , ranking them as the fifth , eleventh , sixteenth , and twenty @-@ fourth best episodes of The X @-@ Files , respectively . Other episodes were derided . Shearman and Pearson called " El Mundo Gira " an " aching unambitious take on Latin American culture " and " rubbish " . Vitaris summarized " Unrequited " as a " slight story that collapses under the weight of its message " .

" Gethsemane " created intense media speculation about whether or not Mulder was actually dead . An article in the Wall Street Journal discussed fan theories behind Mulder 's madness while a cartoon ran in The New Yorker a few weeks later surrounding Mulder 's " death " . Series creator Chris Carter noted that " the whole plot line of ' Gethsemane ' revolved around a hoax , but there are actually huge revelations in this show . And it 's an amazing thing that we could get people to believe that Mulder could actually kill himself because his belief system was stolen from him " . UGO Networks listed the episode at number 21 in a countdown of " TV 's Best Season Finales " , noting that it " rocked the core of the series ' entire mythology " .

= = = Accolades = = =

The fourth season earned the series twelve Primetime Emmy Award nominations , with three wins . Anderson won for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series , after being nominated the previous year . The episodes " Memento Mori " and " Tempus Fugit " won for Outstanding Art Direction for a Series and Outstanding Sound Editing for a Series , respectively . Notable nominations included its third consecutive nomination for Outstanding Drama Series , Duchovny 's first nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series , James Wong nominated for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series for " Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " , and Carter , Gilligan , Shiban , and Spotnitz being nominated for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series for " Memento Mori " . Other nominations were Jim Gross and Heather MacDougall each being nominated for Outstanding Editing for a Series ? Single Camera Production for the episodes " Tempus Fugit " and " Terma " , respectively ; Outstanding Makeup for a Series for " Leonard Betts " ; Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Drama Series for " Tempus Fugit " ; and Mark Snow being nominated for Outstanding Music Composition for a Series ( Dramatic Underscore ) for " Paper Hearts " . The series also won its second Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series ? Drama , while Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny won in the television series drama acting categories .

= = DVD release = =