

= Home (The X @-@ Files) =

" Home " is the second episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files , which originally aired on the Fox Broadcasting Company network on October 11 , 1996 . Directed by Kim Manners , it was written by Glen Morgan and James Wong . " Home " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story ? a stand @-@ alone plot unconnected to the overarching mythology of The X @-@ Files . Watched by 18 @. @ 85 million viewers , the initial broadcast had a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 9 . " Home " was the first episode of The X @-@ Files to receive a viewer discretion warning for graphic content and the only to have carried a TV @-@ MA rating upon broadcast . Critics were generally complimentary , and praised the disturbing nature of the plot ; several made comparisons to the work of director David Lynch . Some reviewers nevertheless felt that the violent subject matter was excessive .

The series 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 ; the skeptical Scully was initially assigned to debunk his work , but the two have developed a deep friendship . In this episode , Mulder and Scully investigate the death of an infant with severe birth defects . Traveling to the small isolated town of Home , Pennsylvania , the pair meet the Peacocks , a family of deformed farmers who have not left their house in a decade . Initially , Mulder suspects that the brothers kidnapped and raped a woman to father the child , but the investigation uncovers a long history of incest involving the Peacocks ' own mother .

" Home " marks the return of writers Morgan and Wong , who left the show following its second season . The duo attempted to make their first episode upon return as ambitious and shocking as possible . They were inspired by real @-@ life events , including a story from Charlie Chaplin 's autobiography about an encounter in an English tenement home . The graphic content of the script attracted controversy from early in the production process . Commentators have identified themes within the episode that satirize the American dream , address the concept of globalization , and explore the nature of motherhood . It has been cited as a seminal episode of The X @-@ Files by critics and crew members .

= = Plot = =

In the small town of Home , Pennsylvania , a woman gives birth to a deformed baby . Three similarly @-@ deformed men bury it near their dilapidated house during a rainstorm . Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are sent to investigate after the corpse is found by children during a sandlot ball game . While talking to Home 's sheriff Andy Taylor (Tucker Smallwood) , Mulder asks whether the Peacock brothers ? the inhabitants of the house nearest to the crime scene ? have been questioned about the baby . Taylor informs him that the house dates back to the American Civil War and is without electricity , running water , or heat . He also insinuates that the family has been inbreeding since the war . The three Peacock brothers watch the agents from their front porch .

During an autopsy , the agents discover that the baby suffocated by inhaling dirt ? meaning it was buried alive . Scully suggests that the baby 's defects could have been caused by inbreeding . Mulder insists this would be impossible , since the Peacocks seem to live in an all @-@ male household . Suspecting that the Peacocks have kidnapped and raped a woman , Mulder and Scully investigate their now @-@ abandoned residence and discover blood , scissors , and a shovel on a table . Arrest warrants are issued for the three brothers . In retaliation , the Peacocks break into Sheriff Taylor 's house during the night and murder him and his wife .

Laboratory tests indicate the baby 's parents were members of the Peacock family . When forensic evidence links the Peacocks to the Taylor murders , the agents and Deputy Barney Paster (Sebastian Spence) go to arrest the brothers . When Paster breaks down the front door of their residence , he is decapitated by a booby trap . Mulder and Scully release the Peacocks ' pigs to lure them out of the house before searching it . The agents find a quadruple amputee hidden under a bed . She is revealed to be Mrs. Peacock , the mother of the boys , who has been breeding with

them for years . The brothers realize Mulder and Scully are inside their house and attack . The two youngest sons withstand several gunshots before dying , one of them impaled on another booby trap . Afterwards , the agents discover that Mrs. Peacock and her eldest son have escaped in their car , planning to start a new family elsewhere .

= = Production = =

= = = Background = = =

" Home " marked the return of writers Glen Morgan and James Wong , who had left production of The X @-@ Files after the second season to work on other television projects . Before their departure , Morgan and Wong had written many episodes of the series and were instrumental in the success of its first season . The two developed Space : Above and Beyond , a science fiction television series canceled after one season . Subsequently , the two rejoined the staff of The X @-@ Files and became writers for the fourth season . To make an impact for their return , they decided to write an ambitious story and attempted to produce a script shocking enough to push the boundaries of television . Space : Above and Beyond co @-@ star Kristen Cloke advised them to study books about nature and evolution in preparation for their return in order to write about subjects like survivalism .

Many actors from Space : Above and Beyond appeared in the fourth season ; the first was Tucker Smallwood , who portrays Sheriff Andy Taylor in " Home " . When Morgan first pitched the episode to Chris Carter , he specifically described three actors from the show ? James Morrison , Rodney Rowland and Morgan Weisser ? as the trio of " big freak brothers " . The episode contained references to popular television , such as the use of the names Andy Taylor and Barney , and referring to Mayberry , which are references to characters and fictional town from The Andy Griffith Show .

= = = Writing = = =

Sources consulted by the writers included Brother 's Keeper (1992) , a documentary film depicting the story of the Wards , four " barely literate " brothers who lived on a farm that had been passed on through their family for generations . The brothers drew international attention following the alleged murder of William Ward by his brother Delbert . With an estimated IQ of 68 , Delbert escaped prosecution by claiming that the police had tricked him during interrogation . Wong chose to base the Peacock family on the Wards , incorporating their lifestyles into the script . The name " Peacock " came from the former neighbors of Morgan 's parents .

A further inspiration came from a story in Charlie Chaplin 's autobiography ; while touring with a British musical theatre , he stayed at a tenement home . After dinner , the family took him upstairs to meet their son , pulling him out from under a bed . The son was a quadruple amputee who " flopp [ed] around " while they sang and danced . Morgan used this incident within the screenplay , although at Wong 's suggestion they changed the character to the boy 's mother . It took some time for the concepts to come together into a story ; elements first appeared in the second season episode " Humbug " , written by Morgan 's brother Darin and featuring a cast of circus sideshow performers . The episode incorporated several themes that had an influence on " Home " , including the use of a " benign soul trapped in the body of a monster " .

When director Kim Manners read the script for " Home " , he called it " as classic a horror script [as] I 'm ever going to see . " The producers , on the other hand , felt the show had gone too far , and called it " tasteless " . William B. Davis , the actor who portrayed the series ' main antagonist The Smoking Man , argued that the screenplay read like Morgan and Wong deliberately wanted to go back to the stylistic origins of the series .

= = = Filming and post @-@ production = = =

Like the rest of the fourth season , " Home " was filmed in British Columbia . Most of the scenes depicting buildings were shot in the town of Surrey , British Columbia . As the town 's architecture comprised both old and new styles , careful reverse angles were employed to preserve the impression of " small @-@ town America " . The building used as the Peacock house had been previously utilized in the season two episode " Aubrey " . At that time , the producers noted that the house had been " untouched for years " and was " so good " that they had to return to film it again . The car that served as the Peacock family 's vehicle was found on a farm outside Vancouver . It was rented and restored for use in the episode . Cadillac later sent the producers a letter thanking them for including one of their cars in the show .

After the episode aired , Tucker Smallwood recalled that the filming was an unpleasant experience . He entered production of the episode with little knowledge of the nature of The X @-@ Files , and was surprised when he received the screenplay . During his first day on set , he asked other cast members if the series was always so violent . An unidentified crew member said , " this is awful even for us " , and commented that it was probably the most gruesome episode of the series run . During the sheriff 's death scene Smallwood insisted on performing his own stunts , until he hit his head attempting a dive . Another uncomfortable moment for the actor involved lying face down in a pool of fake blood for more than 90 minutes .

The episode incorporates the song " Wonderful ! Wonderful ! " by musician Johnny Mathis . Having read the screenplay Mathis refused to allow his version to be used , owing to the episode 's graphic content , and a cover version had to be created . Producer David Nutter , who had a background as a singer , intended to record the vocals but at the last minute another singer , who sounded more like Mathis , was used . Manners explained that he wanted to use the song because " certain songs have a creepy , icky quality that none of us have really openly acknowledged " .

" Home " was first submitted to the censors featuring audio of the baby screaming while being buried alive . Ten Thirteen Productions was asked by Fox executives to alter the audio so that the baby would sound sick ; they noted that the audio change was needed to show the child was diseased and that the Peacocks were not simply killing an innocent child . Manners called the shot , shown from the child 's perspective , of the baby 's burial as " the most awful shot of my career " . He said that he approached filming as seriously as he could because he felt the script was a classic . When production was finished , he said that he loved the episode and called it one of his favorites . Duchovny agreed with Manners , saying , " I really like that one . Although it didn 't scare me . " He explained that it " touched " him with its themes concerning the desire to " live and to propagate . "

= = Themes = =

" Home " presents a satirical view of traditional family values , showcasing the conflict between classic American values and more modern culture . It contains parallels to Sam Shepard 's play *Buried Child* , opening the narrative with the image of a child 's corpse being discovered in the family 's backyard . Writer Sarah Stegall viewed the opening as a commentary on the ideology of the American dream , using the death of a child to " speak to us of buried hopes and fears , and the dark secrets that can hold a family together . "

The town of Home encompasses the traditional values of the nuclear family ? only for it to be victimized by the Peacock family ? who represent the darker side of paradise . The town depicted in " Home " showcases the positive qualities of a world without globalization , but the Peacock family exhibit the negative aspects . The episode 's closing scene has been described as " quintessentially American " , featuring the final Peacock brother driving away in a white Cadillac with his mother " safely stowed in the trunk " , ready to explore a brand new life . M. Keith Booker , in *Blue @-@ Collar Pop Culture* , compared the brothers to the cannibalistic Leatherface family from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) . Booker also identified similarities between the brothers and the family from *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) , expressing the view that the brothers represented " pure evil " .

The concept of motherhood is also explored in the episode . According to Elyce Rae Helford , in her

book *Fantasy Girls : Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television* , Mrs. Peacock functions as a being who has been reduced " to all female functions " by her sons . She is " the grotesquely willing mother who has lost any sense of individual purpose " other than to do anything for her children . Sonia Saraiya of *The A.V. Club* writes that " Scully 's sympathy for a mother that she imagines to be persecuted is turned violently on its head , to reveal a monster whose priorities are not quite so straightforward . " The episode is also one of the first to explore Scully 's desire to become a mother . Booker states that the episode presents the dual nature of Scully 's " modern desire for motherhood " , as opposed to Mrs. Peacock 's " perverted notion of family " . Helford writes that the entry predicts " Scully 's fate as the mother of ' immaculately ' (technologically) conceived and monstrous progeny " . In the fifth season , Scully indeed learns that she is a mother , albeit accidentally , after her ova was harvested following her abduction in second season , and an alien / human hybrid named Emily is the result . With the revelation that Scully is pregnant at the end of the seventh season finale , " Requiem " , the concept revolving around Scully as a mother took center stage in seasons eight and nine with the birth of baby William .

The use of the up @-@ tempo " Wonderful ! Wonderful ! " during a violent murder sequence attracted attention for its ironic presentation . Jan Delasara in *X @-@ Files Confidential* called the murder of Sheriff Taylor and his wife the most " chilling moment in the series run " , highlighted by the use of a bouncy , classic pop song . It further establishes the episode 's subversion of nostalgia , by using a well @-@ known pop song during a death scene .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

= = Initial ratings and reception = =

" Home " originally aired on the Fox network on October 11 , 1996 . It had a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 9 , with a 21 share , meaning that roughly 11 @.@ 9 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 21 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was watched by approximately 18 @.@ 85 million viewers . " Home " was the first *X @-@ Files* episode to have a viewer discretion warning for graphic content and the only one to have carried a TV @-@ MA rating upon broadcast , with the opening scene being cited in particular due to its gruesomeness and its similarity to " stock horror film conventions " . The only other instance of an episode of *The X @-@ Files* earning a viewer discretion warning was in the season eight episode , " Via Negativa " . Owing to that content , the network would not repeat the episode , the only time in the history of the series that this happened . In 1997 , when the channel FX ran an all @-@ day marathon of the most popular *X @-@ Files* episodes , " Home " was the number one choice .

Upon its first broadcast , " Home " received several positive reviews from critics , although some were critical of its violence . *Entertainment Weekly* gave the episode an " A " , describing it as " one of TV 's most disturbing hours " and as " a cinematic feast for the eyes , packed with audacious wit " . Sarah Stegall awarded the episode three stars out of five , comparing it positively to the more gruesome work of directors David Lynch and Tobe Hooper . Stegall praised the atmosphere and commented that Morgan and Wong 's " long @-@ awaited return " to the series was " definitely disturbing , thought @-@ provoking , and nasty . "

Among less favorable reviews , author Phil Farrand called " Home " his least @-@ favorite episode of the first four seasons of the show in his book *The Nitpicker 's Guide to the X @-@ Files* , writing that he " just [did not] get this episode " because " Mulder and Scully seem reckless " and the Peacock brothers " are better suited for comic books " . Paul Cornell , Keith Topping , and Martin Day , in their book *X @-@ Treme Possibilities* , were critical of the violent content of the episode . Topping called the episode " sick " , Cornell felt that Mulder and Scully 's wisecracks made them come off as cruel , and Day felt that the violence went overboard . Day , however , offered a few complimentary observations , noting that " Home " did , indeed , have merit , and that the juxtaposition of " Wonderful ! Wonderful ! " with the violent antics of the Peacocks was something " David Lynch would be proud of " .

= = = Later reception = = =

" Home " has continued to receive positive reviews . In a 2011 review , Todd VanDerWerff from The A.V. Club gave the episode an " A " rating and wrote that , like many episodes of The X @-@ Files , the episode was a statement of its time and likely could not be produced in a post @-@ 9 / 11 climate . He praised the depiction of urban sensibilities and the frightening Peacock family , observing that it represented a " sad farewell to a weird America that was rapidly smoothing itself out . " Author Dean A. Kowalski , in The Philosophy of The X @-@ Files , cited " Home " , " Squeeze " , and " The Host " as the most notable " monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week " episodes .

" Home " has often been cited as one of the best X @-@ Files episodes . VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club placed it among the 10 best chapters of the series and called it one of the scariest hours of television he had seen . In 2009 , The Vancouver Sun named " Home " one of the best stand @-@ alone episodes of the series and wrote that , because of its horrific theme of incest , the episode " doesn 't pull any punches " . Den of Geek writer Nina Sordi placed the entry as the fourth best of the series in 2009 , viewing its bleak humor and " thought @-@ provoking moments " of dialogue as the factors that made it one of the most popular episodes . In 2008 , Starpulse gave the installment an honorable mention as one of the 10 best X @-@ Files episodes . In 2009 , Connie Ogle from PopMatters rated the Peacock family among the greatest monsters of the series and stated that it was a miracle that the program " slipped past " the censors .

Critics have also named " Home " one of the scariest installments of the series . Novelist Scott Heim in The Book of Lists : Horror rated it as the tenth most frightening television broadcast . Heim wrote that several aspects of the episode were creepy , including the gothic house and the family itself . Tom Kessenich , in his 2002 book Examination : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files , listed the program as the fifth best of the series . Kessenich reported that it was the pinnacle of the horror episodes featured on The X @-@ Files . William B. Davis said that " Home " was both well written and directed , but was so gruesome that it led to some fans questioning whether or not they wanted to continue watching the series . He argued that modern horror films were far more violent than anything depicted in " Home " but , at the time , " it was quite disturbing . "