

= The X @-@ Files (season 3) =

The third season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files commenced airing on Fox in the United States on September 22 , 1995 , concluded on the same channel on May 17 , 1996 , and contained 24 episodes . The season continues to follow the cases of FBI special agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully , portrayed by David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson respectively , who investigate paranormal or supernatural cases , known as X @-@ Files by the FBI .

The season features the conclusion of several plot @-@ lines introduced in season two , while also introducing several new plot elements . Major plot arcs include an elaborate conspiracy being discovered when a fake alien autopsy video is acquired by Mulder , Scully 's search for the killer of her sister , and the mystery surrounding X (Steven Williams) . Pivotal characters such as the First Elder (Don S. Williams) and the alien virus black oil were first introduced in this season . In addition , the season features a wide variety of " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " episodes , which feature stand @-@ alone stories not of influence to the wider mythology of the series .

The season attained higher ratings than season two , receiving the highest viewing audience the series had yet achieved . Season premiere " The Blessing Way " debuted with a Nielsen household rating of 19 @. @ 94 , which more than doubled the premiere of the last season . The ratings consistently stayed above 15 @. @ 0 , making it one of the most watched series of the 1995 ? 96 television line @-@ up . The season received generally positive reviews from television critics , winning five Primetime Emmy Awards . Many of the episodes written by writer Darin Morgan received critical acclaim , including the episodes " Clyde Bruckman 's Final Repose " and " Jose Chung 's From Outer Space " which are often cited as some of the best of the series . Morgan left the series following this season , due to an inability to keep up with the fast paced nature of the show .

= = 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 . Mulder is later found in the desert following the events of the second season finale and nursed back to health by Albert Hosteen (Floyd Red Crow Westerman) . Meanwhile , Scully investigates the possible involvement of the smallpox eradication program in human genetic experimentation , discovering that a Nazi scientist who defected during Operation Paperclip has been conducting human experimentation to create alien @-@ human hybrids . Her sister Melissa (Melinda McGraw) , however , is shot by assassins who mistake her for Dana , and dies in hospital that night .

Investigating evidence of an alien autopsy , Mulder infiltrates a secretive government train carriage carrying an alien @-@ human hybrid . Mulder is almost killed by a Syndicate operative guarding the hybrid , but is saved by his informant X (Steven Williams) . X had been tipped off about Mulder 's activities by the agent 's partner Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) . Scully , meanwhile , meets a group of women with abduction experiences similar to her own , and meets another member of the Syndicate known as the First Elder (Don S. Williams) , who claims during her abduction she was placed on a similar train car and experimented upon by the Japanese scientists .

The crew of a French salvage ship trying to raise a World War II @-@ era submarine from the sea floor are stricken with massive radiation burns ? except for one , who has been infected with a parasitic black oil discovered on the submarine . The oil is controlling the crewman 's body , and after passing through several hosts , has overtaken Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea) , whom Mulder has been pursuing . Scully finds that the submarine had been involved in discovering the oil on the sea floor during World War II , under the guise of finding a sunken fighter plane . The infected Krycek makes his way to a missile silo used to hide a UFO , and the oil escapes his body to board the craft . Meanwhile , Scully has tracked down Luis Cardinal , the man responsible for killing her sister .

= = Writing = =

Development of the first episode of the season , " The Blessing Way " , began with the second season finale " Anasazi " . Both of those episodes , along with " Paper Clip " , form a three part trilogy of episodes that began the third season . " Anasazi " was directed by R. W. Goodwin , who later directed the season finale " Talitha Cumi " , and " Paper Clip " was directed by Rob Bowman . Bowman directed a total of eight episodes for the season , followed by Kim Manners who directed seven . Series creator Chris Carter also served as executive producer and showrunner and wrote eight episodes , directing one .

Darin Morgan had a small involvement in the second season , and was asked to contribute more content for the third . He first appeared in " The Host " as the Flukeman , and was brought on by his brother Glen Morgan to help write the episode " Blood " . Morgan 's first sole credit as a writer came in the episode " Humbug " , which received a positive reception by the staff . David Duchovny expressed an enjoyment for working with Morgan , commenting " what I loved about his scripts was that he seemed to be trying to destroy the show . " Morgan wrote a total of three episodes , but later left the series because he could not keep up with the fast paced nature of network television . He also expressed a negative opinion of the way his teleplays were handled , despite a positive reception by both critics and the crew of his work . He also contributed to the script for the episode " Quagmire " . After writing one episode the previous season , Vince Gilligan returned to write another solo episode for the season , now credited as a creative consultant . Cast member David Duchovny collaborated with Howard Gordon and Chris Carter for two episodes receiving story credit .

New writers in the third season included story editor Jeffrey Vlamming who wrote two episodes , supervising producer Charles Grant Craig who wrote a single episode , Kim Newtown who wrote two episodes , and staff writer John Shibban who wrote two episodes . All new writers except Shibban did not return after this season . Series visual effects producer Mat Beck also wrote an episode . Other producers included production manager and producer Joseph Patrick Finn and co @-@ producer Paul Rabwin .

= = Themes = =

" Nisei " and " 731 " , show a darker side to the series , exploring the public 's distrust in the government . Other episodes dealing with the wider mythology of the series ? " Talitha Cumi " , " Piper Maru " and " Apocrypha " ? explore similar concepts , showcasing the shadow government plot line of the series . Episodes like " 2Shy " and " Pusher " feature sadistic villains , containing human beings capable of highly immoral acts despite their seemingly mundane appearances . Another episode with a serial killer antagonist , " Grotesque " , revolves around the way that evil can change and influence people . " Oubliette " offers a sentimental and emotional plot driven by the kidnapping of a young girl . The episode features parallels to the real life Polly Klaas case and provides commentary on both stockholm syndrome and trauma .

Aliens and serial killers are not the only antagonists in the season ; several episodes revolve around more traditional , B @-@ movie inspired monsters , taking influence from horror films . These episodes include " War of the Coprophages " and " Quagmire " , about killer cockroaches and a lake monster . Several episodes have satirical elements , including " D.P.O. " , " Syzygy " and " War of the Coprophages " , with the latter two showcasing how the public can create panic out of need . Both " Clyde Bruckman 's Final Repose " and " Jose Chung 's From Outer Space " play against tropes and the established formula of the series , subverting themes the series usually followed .

= = Cast = =

= = = Main cast = = =

David Duchovny as Special Agent Fox Mulder (24 episodes)

Gillian Anderson as Special Agent Dana Scully (24 episodes)

== = Recurring cast = = =

== = = Also starring = = = =

Mitch Pileggi as Deputy Director Walter Skinner (10 episodes)

== = = Guest starring = = = =

= = Episodes = =

Episodes marked with a double dagger () are episodes in the series ' Alien Mythology arc .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

The third season of The X @-@ Files debuted with " The Blessing Way " on September 22 , 1995 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 12 @.@ 3 , with a 22 share , meaning that roughly 12 @.@ 3 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 22 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . The episode was viewed by 19 @.@ 94 million viewers . " The Blessing Way " was , at the time , the highest @-@ rated episode of The X @-@ Files to air ; the previous record belonged to the season two entry " Fresh Bones " , which only scored an 11 @.@ 3 rating with a 19 share . As the season continued , however , ratings dropped slightly and stabilized . After the season premiere , the highest @-@ rated episode the season was the finale , " Talitha Cumi " , which was viewed by 17 @.@ 86 million viewers . The season hit a low with the twenty @-@ third and penultimate episode of the season , " Wetwired " , which was viewed by only 14 @.@ 48 million viewers .

The series was ranked as number 55 during the 1995 ? 96 television season , and was viewed by an average of 15 @.@ 40 million viewers , an increase in almost seven percent when compared to the second season , which was viewed by 14 @.@ 50 . In its third season , The X @-@ Files became Fox 's top @-@ rated program in the 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ old demographic . The third season of the show was the last to be aired on Friday nights ; for its fourth season , the show was moved to Sunday .

= = = Reviews = = =

Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club called the third season The X @-@ Files ' " best season and maybe one of the greatest TV seasons of all time " , noting it was consistent and " [swung] from strength to strength " between mythology and stand @-@ alone episodes . However , he thought it " starts out kind of terribly " with " The Blessing Way " . Zack Handlen , VanDerWerff 's colleague , wrote that the third season was " one of the show 's strongest , with the conspiracy arc still keeping tension high instead of just vamping for time . By this point , the sometimes awkward effects work of the early years is gone , and the overall direction is highly polished , giving even the season 's weakest entries a cinematic feel " . He also stated that Morgan 's " Clyde Bruckman 's Final Repose " and " Jose Chung 's From Outer Space " were " The X @-@ Files 's two greatest hours " . The writing credits provided by Morgan was widely cited as a highlight of the season . " War of the Coprophages " written by him received positive reviews , and Entertainment Weekly gave " War of the Coprophages " an A ? , who praised the absurdity and entertainment value of the episode .

Another episode , " Quagmire " containing some writing credits by Morgan received positive reviews , with the 10 @-@ minute dialogue sequence featuring Mulder and Scully receiving highly positive reviews .

Gilligan 's episode " Pusher " was also cited as one of the best episodes of the series by both IGN and Den of Geek , and Tom Kessenich , in his book Examination : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files , named the episode the third best episode of The X @-@ Files and called it the " best MOTW [" monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week "] in the series history " Duchovny considers his performance in " Oubliette " as his favorite of the season , an episode that also received mostly positive reviews . Writing for DVD Talk , Earl Cressey rated the season overall four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five , finding that the series ' increased budget meant that its production values and the quality of its guest appearances were better than previous seasons .

= = = Accolades = = =

The third season earned the series eight Primetime Emmy Award nominations . It received its second consecutive nomination for Outstanding Drama Series , Gillian Anderson received her first nomination for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series , and the episode " Jose Chung 's From Outer Space " was nominated for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Art Direction for a Series . The series won five awards , including Outstanding Individual Achievement in Writing for a Drama Series , for the episode " Clyde Bruckman 's Final Repose " written by Darin Morgan ; Peter Boyle won for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series for his performance in that same episode . The episode " Nisei " won for both Outstanding Individual Achievement in Sound Editing for a Series and Outstanding Individual Achievement in Sound Mixing for a Drama Series . John S. Bartley won for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Cinematography for a Series due to the episode " Grotesque " . Duchovny and Anderson were each nominated for a Golden Globe Award for their performances .

= = DVD release = =