

= The Ghost Network =

" The Ghost Network " is the third episode of the first season of the American science fiction drama television series Fringe . The episode was written by co @-@ executive producer David H. Goodman and supervising producer J. R. Orci , and was directed by Frederick E. O. Towe . The episode follows the Fringe team 's investigation into a bus that was filled with amber , encasing the people inside . They discover a man named Roy (Zak Orth) who predicted it and other similar events , and Walter realizes Roy has connections to a past experiment he did over twenty years ago , called the " Ghost Network " .

The episode was important in the show 's evolution , as the writers noted that Roy was the first guest character the audience could get emotionally invested in . " The Ghost Network " also included their quest to explain seemingly impossible and weird phenomenon through a real scientific explanation from Walter 's past research .

It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 23 , 2008 . An estimated 9 @.@ 42 million viewers watched the episode on its first broadcast . It received mixed reviews , with many believing the show to be finally finding its legs , while others worried over the ongoing formulaic storylines featured in each episode .

= = Plot = =

A man named Roy McComb (Zak Orth) confesses to his priest that he sees visions of bad things , including a bus where everyone is going to die . Simultaneously with this scene , a man enters a bus , unleashes a canister emitting gaseous fumes , and steals a backpack before quickly getting off . The Fringe team arrives soon after , only to find the fumes have hardened into an amber @-@ like substance , trapping and killing those inside . Walter (John Noble) studies the substance and concludes it started out as a gas and then solidified , suffocating the passengers . While looking at a victim 's video footage , Olivia (Anna Torv) discovers a backpack is missing , and traces it back to one of the victims , a Federal employee with undercover connections to a drug cartel . They interview her " handler " , who comes to identify her body . The Fringe team finds out about Roy , and search through his apartment , believing he is behind the bus and other Pattern @-@ related terror attacks . They soon realize all of his drawings are dated before the incidents took place , despite the fact that several of them were never made public . In an interrogation , Roy tells Charlie (Kirk Acevedo) he 's been receiving his visions for nine months , roughly when they began seeing Pattern @-@ related attacks .

Meanwhile , they trace the substance to Massive Dynamic . Olivia interviews Massive Dynamic executive Nina Sharp (Blair Brown) , who tells her the substance has been seen in an attack before . Walter suspects Roy is psychic and runs tests on him before realizing Roy has some kind of magnetic compound in his blood . This leads Walter to recall he and his old lab partner William Bell had conducted research on creating a " Ghost Network " to secretly communicate messages from one person to another in an otherwise undetectable frequency range . During this research , Roy was one of his past test subjects . Walter further theorizes that someone else has perfected his research , and that Roy is overhearing secret messages from some of the people behind the terrorist attacks . Olivia and Peter (Joshua Jackson) arrive at his old house to find equipment needed to tap into Roy 's mind .

Using the equipment , they are able to intercept messages in Latin detailing an upcoming exchange at South Station in an hour . They realize the handler removed a small crystalline disk from the Federal agent 's hand when he identified her body , and that he is now going to exchange it for something else . Olivia intercepts the man , who is killed before she can talk to him . She chases another man involved in the exchange , who commits suicide in front of a bus after giving them a briefcase containing the disc . Phillip Broyles (Lance Reddick) secretly gives the disc to Nina for analysis , while Roy is sent home , as they believe he will no longer see visions because the Ghost Network has been compromised .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

Executive producer Jeff Pinkner decided he wanted fellow executive producer David H. Goodman and supervising producer J. R. Orci to collaborate in writing the episode ; Goodman wrote the first half , while Orci wrote the rest of the episode . The two later worked together on only one other episode , " The Equation " . Frederick E. O. Toye directed the episode , as he had worked previously with the writers on Alias . The writers had the idea for a couple of weeks of Olivia walking into an apartment and discovering walls covered with drawings of events that " no man could possibly have known about " . They wanted to take " urban myths or legends of strange events " and come up with a fringe science equivalent ; this led them to creating the story of Roy , a man with seemingly " psychic " abilities , which they then expanded by offering a real scientific explanation in the form of Walter 's past research . In the show 's early development , the producers were also unsure about how other aspects should be developed , such as Joshua Jackson 's character Peter . For instance , in " The Ghost Network " , they debated whether or not Peter would break into his childhood home before finally " stalling and just let him do it " ; Orci came up with Peter 's explanation to Olivia , that he used to live there so it wasn 't really breaking in .

= = = Casting = = =

The character Roy McComb was played by actor Zak Orth . Roy 's name was inspired from Richard Dreyfuss ' character Roy Neary in Close Encounters of the Third Kind . The writers noted in the audio commentary that Roy was the first guest character the audience could get emotionally invested in . They wanted the actor to shave off his head in preparation for the experimentation scene in Walter 's lab , but Orth successfully " begged " them to change their minds . When casting for the part of Grant , the writers looked for a man similar in appearance to previous character John Scott (Mark Valley) , as they wanted " to play into whatever Olivia 's feelings about how she was or was not betrayed by John " . Peter Hermann won the part .

= = = Filming = = =

Orci came up with the idea to start the episode in a church 's confessional , while the ambered scene on the bus was originally scripted to take place on a subway ; one of the writers felt the bus " let you see more of the city " . Early in the show 's creation the writers were trying to figure out what Fringe could be , and ultimately chose " big crazy event [s] " at the start of each episode that would catapult its plot and drive its characters . They felt the bus scene essentially achieved this . When creating the scene on the bus when the gas canister is released , the crew sat on a bus that was really driving through the streets of New York City ; director Frederick Toye called the shooting " Student film style , run and gun " . To shoot the three scenes of the bus in the tunnel , the crew looked at a variety of locations before choosing a tunnel near the United Nations headquarters on the east side of Manhattan . As it was a busy area , they had to shoot at night and then attempt to make it appear to be daytime , as the scenes were set during the day . They had a limited schedule to shoot all three scenes , and despite never having seen the tunnel before , the production crews had 8 @-@ 9 hours to quickly set up the massive set and leave enough time to shoot the scenes before dawn approached . To simulate being encased in amber , the actors had to pretend they were frozen .

The episode marked the first time composer Michael Giacchino worked with assistant Chad Seiter on a Fringe episode . Seiter would continue to score the rest of the season 's first half . Joshua Jackson 's character briefly plays the piano in a scene near the end of the episode , and it is really Jackson playing . The writers noted in the audio commentary that Jackson can actually play the piano , and that when he receives musical scenes , he learns the piece (s) beforehand to be able

to play it for the scene .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Ghost Network " first aired in the United States on September 23 , 2008 . The episode 's broadcast was watched by an estimated 9 @. @ 42 million viewers in the US .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received mixed reviews . A.V. Club 's Noel Murray graded the episode with a B , explaining that while he thought it was " much more fun " than the previous week 's episode and enjoyed Peter 's expanded presence , he was growing slightly wearied by the " hint @-@ dropping " of Peter 's past . Murray thought the climax was " so exciting " that he was willing " to forgive the fact that this is the third week in a row that Walter 's big idea has involved some kind of communication with the unconscious " . Jon Lachonis from UGO Networks compared it negatively to the pilot , as he thought " [' The Ghost Network '] struggled with the aspects that it really needed to prove itself in " . Lachonis also had problems with the villains ' logic , such as needing to kill a bus full of people to get at one person , rather than confront her alone later , though he understood they " just needed something weird to headline the show " . IGN 's Travis Fickett rated it 7 @. @ 5 / 10 , writing that he thought it was a solid episode because the " characters are coming together nicely , the story is better than last week 's ? but already it seems the show is hitting a formula " . Fickett expressed worry that Fringe would eventually become too formulaic , much like the first season of Smallville , and concluded his review by calling Fringe " a solid show , but [not] exceptional yet " .

Critics did however praise John Noble 's consistent performance as Walter Bishop , with Jon Lachonis calling it " still fantastically done " . Writing for Mania.com , Stephen Lackey thought that though the episode wasn 't perfect , Fringe had finally seemed to hit its stride , as its " mix of humor and darker storytelling ... is starting to come together nicely " . Lackey concluded his review by expressing his " excitement " at watching Fringe get better and better , and thought the show could become the best new series of the year if it continued to improve with each episode . Another UGO writer , Alex Zalben , compared " The Ghost Network " to the similarly @-@ plotted The X @-@ Files film The X @-@ Files : I Want to Believe . Zalben wrote , " Man , that X @-@ Files movie was just no good . Fringe wins . "