

= Alone (The X @-@ Files) =

" Alone " is the nineteenth episode of the eight season and the 180th episode overall of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . The episode first aired in the United States on May 6 , 2001 on Fox , and subsequently aired in the United Kingdom on Sky1 on June 14 , 2001 . It was written and directed by executive producer Frank Spotnitz . " Alone " earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @. @ 5 and was viewed by 12 @. @ 7 million viewers . It received mixed to positive reviews from television critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents John Doggett (Robert Patrick) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) ? as well as ex @-@ FBI agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) ? who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Doggett is paired with an enthusiastic young agent named Leyla Harrison who knows everything about the X @-@ Files , when Scully goes on maternity leave . Harrison 's apotheosis of Mulder and Scully leads to Doggett learning a thing or two . But when Harrison and Doggett disappear , Mulder defies orders in an attempt to find them .

" Alone " marked the directorial debut of Spotnitz , who had been a writer on the show for several years . In addition , the episode would be the last Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week episode to feature an appearance by David Duchovny as Fox Mulder . The character of Leyla Harrison was named after an X @-@ Files fan who died of cancer in 2001 .

= = Plot = =

In Ellicott , New York , Arlen Sacks is killed by an unknown creature that sprays venom on its victims , and his son Gary goes missing . In the meantime , at the FBI headquarters , Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) , preparing for maternity leave , packs up her belongings at the X @-@ Files office . Scully finds a medallion commemorating the Apollo 11 space flight that was given to her for her birthday by Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) . Scully gives John Doggett (Robert Patrick) the medallion , explaining that it symbolizes teamwork . After Scully leaves , Special Agent Leyla Harrison arrives and tells Doggett that she is his new partner . The two are soon assigned to investigate Sacks ' bizarre murder .

At the crime scene , Doggett and Harrison search for clues . Doggett finds evidence of the venom , which is sent to an FBI lab for analysis . Harrison explains to Doggett that in her previous job she processed Mulder and Scully 's travel expenses during their time on the X @-@ Files , and has thus gained an encyclopedic knowledge of their investigations . Following a wooded trail from the crime scene , Doggett and Harrison stumble upon an upscale mansion and make their way inside . A strange creature clinging to the wall secretly observes their every move . Doggett discovers a study full of biology journals and a copy of the anthropologist Richard Leakey 's book The Sixth Extinction . Doggett pulls out his gun , sensing that something is amiss , and finds Harrison in the hallway . He then instructs Harrison to position herself outside while he tries to flush the creature out of the house . Moments after Doggett instructs Harrison to stand guard he hears gun shots being fired . Rushing outside , he cannot find Harrison anywhere in the yard . He walks farther to the edge and falls through a trap door at the edge of the front lawn .

During an autopsy , Scully correctly deduces that Arlen was blinded by reptile venom . Meanwhile , Doggett and Harrison , having fallen into old bootlegger tunnels below the mansion grounds , encounter the creature and are sprayed with venom , temporarily blinding them . The two find Gary Sacks in dire need of medical attention nearby . Noting Doggett and Harrison 's absence , Mulder searches the area around the mansion for clues and encounters the owner , Herman Stites , who identifies himself as a biologist . Mulder soon leaves the area as Stites notices Doggett about to escape the tunnels and knocks him back in . Mulder waits in his car in Stites ' driveway until dark , telling Scully that he found the Apollo medallion near Stites ' estate and is convinced Doggett is somewhere nearby . He spots the creature and chases it to the mansion where it climbs up to a second floor . Mulder follows the creature into the house and down into the tunnels , where he encounters Harrison and Doggett . With the creature approaching , Mulder tells the still @-@

blinded Doggett to open fire at him on his command . The blinded Doggett then shoots the creature as it leaps at Mulder ; the deceased creature then turns into Stites .

Later , Scully and Mulder meet Doggett , who has now fully recovered , at the hospital . He tells them that Harrison will make a full recovery as well but that she is transferring herself off of the X @-@ Files . Mulder attempts to give Doggett the Apollo medallion , but Doggett insists that it be given to Harrison instead . Mulder and Scully then present it to Harrison together , who accepts it in awe .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing and directing = = =

The episode was written by executive producer Frank Spotnitz , and marked his directorial debut . Because of his position as both the writer of the episode and the director , Spotnitz later noted that it was hard to achieve perfection when filming the episode . However , he did note that , as both the writer and director , he had more creative control than usual . Originally Spotnitz did not have plans to direct the episode but was encouraged to do so by David Duchovny ; Duchovny reminded Spotnitz that it would be the last Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week (stand alone) episode to feature his character , Fox Mulder . After production and shooting was finalized , the rough cut of " Alone " was nine minutes over time and in order to compensate for the time , various sections were cut during final editing . Robert Patrick was very pleased with Spotnitz 's work , stating , " You 're talking about some incredibly intelligent individuals , and they were very willing to let you , as an artist , discover what they were trying to do with the role . That 's a wonderful environment to work in . "

For the episode , Gillian Anderson 's character Dana Scully was written off as a member of The X @-@ Files office , since the next season would mark the creation of the " new " X @-@ Files with Robert Patrick and Annabeth Gish taking over for Duchovny and Anderson . Because of this change , Spotnitz called " Alone " the last of the " old " X @-@ Files stand @-@ alone episodes . As with many other episodes , Duchovny did not want his character to have all the answers , giving the reason that it looked too easy for him . Duchovny and Spotnitz later had a long discussion on how to remove the scenes or tweak them . Unfortunately , because the episode was the last stand @-@ alone episode to feature the character of Fox Mulder , Duchovny did not care as much as " usual " about creating a " mystery " for the episode .

= = = Casting = = =

Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) appeared in the episode only because Spotnitz did not want to miss the opportunity to direct an episode of The X @-@ Files that featured his character . However , because the episode was over time , Spotnitz ended up editing a large majority of his more " prominent " scenes out . In addition , another section that was scripted but ultimately cut was a scene between Anderson and Duchovny . Jolie Jenkins ' character , Leyla Harrison , was created and named in memory of a The X @-@ Files internet fan and prolific writer of fan fiction of the same name , who died of cancer on February 10 , 2001 . Jenkins ' characterization , according to Spotnitz , brought out the " Clint [Eastwood] " of Robert Patrick 's character John Doggett and her performance was called " near perfection " by Spotnitz during the audio commentary for this episode .

Due to Harrison 's extensive knowledge of the X @-@ Files , the episode contains several references to previous episodes . While looking through her desk drawer , Scully finds the merged coin from the sixth season entry " Dreamland " ; the Apollo 11 space flight medallion , which was given to her by Mulder in the fourth season episode " Tempus Fugit " ; and her dog Queequeg 's name tag , which she was given in the third season episode " Clyde Bruckman 's Final Repose " . While investigating , Harrison mentions a liver @-@ eating mutant that produced bile and died under

an escalator , a reference to Eugene Victor Tooms , who appeared in the first season episodes " Squeeze " and " Tooms " ; aliens that shed their skin and leave behind a residue similar to mucus , a reference to the alien from " The Beginning " ; and subterranean men in Florida who took people underground , as featured in " Detour " . While searching through Stites ' house , Doggett finds a book entitled The Sixth Extinction , a potential reference to the seventh season episode of the same name . In the episode 's final scene , Harrison asks Mulder how he and Scully managed to return to America after escaping from a spaceship in Antarctica , a reference to an event that took place at the end of the 1998 X @-@ Files feature film .

= = Reception = =

" Alone " debuted on Fox on May 6 , 2001 in the United States . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @.@ 5 , meaning that it was seen by 7 @.@ 5 % of the nation 's estimated households . The episode was viewed by 7 @.@ 56 million households , and 12 @.@ 7 million viewers . The episode ranked as the 35th most @-@ watched episode for the week ending May 6 . On June 14 , 2001 , the episode premiered in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 and received 480 @,@ 000 viewers making it the sixth most watched episode that week , behind Star Trek : Voyager and The Simpsons . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Don 't watch alone . "

The episode was met with mixed to positive reviews . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode an " A ? " , applauded Duchovny 's apparent energy to be acting on the series once again . However , he felt that the " overtness " of the episode resulted in many scenes coming off as too on @-@ the @-@ nose or strained . Television Without Pity gave the episode a B ? rating but slightly criticized the way Fox was using Duchovny , sardonically writing , " I don 't know if you 're aware of this , but David Duchovny stars in The X @-@ Files . Did you know that ? Because they 've really been keeping it under wraps at Fox . " John Keegan from Critical Myth gave the episode a 7 out of 10 rating . Keegan called the episode a " homage to fandom " and described the tone as " warm [and] fuzzy . " Because of this , he concluded that " [o] verall , this was an episode that dealt with the emotional needs of the audience in a way that was less effective than it might have been . "

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 and called it " an exercise in nostalgia " . The two called the episode " touching " and noted that many of the in @-@ jokes in the script , such as Harrison asking the agents how they got back from Antarctica , were " very funny " . Shearman and Pearson , however , did slightly critique the way the X @-@ Files were presented noting that the case was comparatively a " rather low @-@ key humdrum affair " . Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations , gave the episode a positive review , writing , " The future of The X @-@ Files is unsettled , but ' Alone ' served as a pleasant reminder of what has come before and why the journey to this point has , for the most part , been so wonderful . "

Not all reviews were positive . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a largely negative review and awarded it one star out of four . She derided the plot , writing " Why ? Who knows ? Who cares ? " Vitaris further criticized the episode incorporation of the fandom and suggested that some of the questions asked by Harrison were meant to be " making fun " of " fannish questions " .