

= The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus =

" The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " is the fifth episode of the fifth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files and originally aired on the Fox network on November 30 , 1997 . Written and directed by series creator Chris Carter , " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " episode , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the overarching mythology of The X @-@ Files . " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " earned a Nielsen household rating of 11 @. @ 5 , being watched by 18 @. @ 68 million viewers upon its initial broadcast . The episode was nominated for seven awards at the 1998 Emmys and won one . The entry generally received positive reviews ; some reviewers called it a classic , with others calling it the most striking stand @-@ alone episode of the show 's fifth season .

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 a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully was initially assigned to debunk his work . In this episode , Mulder and Scully investigate reports of a mysterious creature that has impregnated a middle @-@ aged woman . They find that the " monster " , nicknamed The Great Mutato , is the genetic creation of a Frankenstein @-@ like doctor . The Great Mutato is at first ostracized , but later accepted , by his community .

Carter 's story draws heavily on Mary Shelley 's Frankenstein and particularly on James Whale 's 1931 film version of the story . The script had been written specifically with singer Cher and actress Roseanne Barr in mind , but both were unavailable at the time of shooting . Talk @-@ show host Jerry Springer appeared as himself , and Chris Owens ? who appeared in later episodes as FBI agent Jeffrey Spender ? played The Great Mutato . The episode was filmed in black @-@ and @-@ white , with a sky backdrop created to imitate the style of old Frankenstein films . Owens wore makeup and prosthetics that took several hours to apply .

= = Plot = =

The episode begins in the guise of a comic book ; FBI special agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) receives a letter from Shaineh Berkowitz (Pattie Tierce) , a single mother who claims to have been mysteriously impregnated , while unconscious , by an unknown presence 18 years ago , resulting in the birth of her son , Izzy (Stewart Gale) . Now , following a similarly unexplained attack , she is pregnant again . She has heard about Mulder 's expertise in the paranormal from The Jerry Springer Show and wants him to investigate . Mulder and his partner , special agent Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) , travel to rural Albion , Indiana . They meet Shaineh and her son Izzy and learn that the description of the creature that attacked her , with a lumpy head and two mouths , is very similar to a comic book character invented by Izzy . His monstrous creation , called The Great Mutato , is inspired by a mysterious creature that has been seen by many of the locals . Izzy and his friends take the agents to a wooded area where they see Mutato (Chris Owens) from a distance .

They meet an old man who angrily tells them that there are no monsters and sends them to see his son , a geneticist named Francis Pollidori (John O 'Hurley) . Dr. Pollidori shows them his experiments studying the Hox gene using the fruit fly Drosophila . This presentation includes images of a fly with legs growing out of its mouth . He tells the agents that the same kind of experiment could , in theory , be performed on humans . Afterward , Mulder tells Scully that he believes that Dr. Pollidori , acting as a modern @-@ day Victor Frankenstein , has created The Great Mutato . Later , Dr. Pollidori 's wife Elizabeth (Miriam Smith) is knocked unconscious and is attacked in the same manner as Shaineh . At the crime scene , Mulder and Scully find a chemical residue from an agricultural agent used to anesthetize animals , which leads them to suspect Dr. Pollidori 's father , who is a farmer . Dr. Pollidori comes to his father 's house , angrily confronts him , and murders him . Later , Mutato , who lives with Pollidori Sr. , finds his dead body and tearfully buries it in a barn .

Mulder and Scully go looking for Pollidori Sr. and find a shallow grave and photographs of the dead man with Mutato . Meanwhile , Dr. Pollidori leads an angry mob of townspeople to his father 's

house , demanding that Mulder and Scully turn the alleged murderer over to them . The agents find Mutato hiding in the basement as the crowd gathers upstairs . Someone accidentally sets the barn alight and in the ensuing confusion , the mob realize that the agents are protecting the monster in the basement . Mutato speaks to the crowd and explains that he was created 25 years before , and that he is the result of a genetic experiment by Dr. Pollidori . Unbeknownst to his son , Pollidori Sr. rescued Mutato and cared for him , but was unable to provide a friend or a mate for the boy . The old man attempted to emulate his scientist son 's experiments , and tried to create hybrids from his farm animals . Mutato asks Dr. Pollidori to create a female companion for him , but the scientist says that he cannot ? that Mutato was a mistake . The townspeople realize that The Great Mutato is not a monster after all and Dr. Pollidori is arrested for the murder of his father . Mulder feels that it is unjust for Mutato not to get a mate and so he demands to see the writer : Izzy . In a fanciful , if not imagined , scene , Mulder and Scully take matters into their own hands and take Mutato , along with the townspeople , to a Cher concert . The episode ends with a shot of Mulder and Scully dancing , which slowly turns back into the comic book seen at the beginning of the episode .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

Going into the fifth season of The X @-@ Files , series creator Chris Carter noted , " we knew we were going to be hitting these very dramatic marks which were the mythology episodes , and we wanted to lighten , or leaven , the season with quirky episodes . " Carter wanted to write a Frankenstein @-@ inspired episode , but found it difficult to reconcile Mary Shelley 's unbelievable tale with the style of the show . To achieve his vision , he wrote a script that blurred the real world with the X @-@ Files reality and that had a distinct fantasy element . Carter combined elements of the original story with fairy tales and elements of folk tales . In order to make the episode " as moving " as possible , Carter sought to echo elements of James Whale 's 1931 film version of Frankenstein . He later noted that , by " using modern science , I took an old style , which is black and white , and an old approach , which is a kind of James Whale approach to science fiction , and came up with a story about a love @-@ lorn monster " .

The idea for the genetic engineering story was developed with the help of the series ' science adviser , Anne Simon . Carter visited a friend of Simon , a scientist at Indiana University in Bloomington , who had been able to genetically manipulate flies so that they grew legs from their eyes . After Carter had created the character of The Great Mutato , he discovered that cartoonist Matt Groening had already created a character with the same name ? although with different pronunciation ? for a comic book entry of The Simpsons . Carter contacted Groening , who gave Carter permission to use the name . Like two @-@ thirds of the episodes of the series , " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " episode , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the overarching mythology of The X @-@ Files .

= = = Casting = = =

Cher 's music plays a large role in " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " , Chris Carter having written the episode after spending a summer listening to Cher records and developing a fixation on the singer . Carter knew that Cher 's half @-@ sister Georganne LaPiere was a major X @-@ Files fan , and Carter learned through LaPiere that Cher herself was intrigued by the show and would be interested in making an X @-@ Files guest appearance . Sitcom star Roseanne Barr also expressed an interest in guesting on The X @-@ Files , and Carter wrote the part of Shaineh Berkowitz specifically for her . Barr , however , was unavailable at the time of shooting ? her projected role was filled by Pattie Tierce ? while Cher passed on the proffered cameo appearance performing as herself , a decision for which she later expressed regret : " I wanted them to ask me to come on and act ? then they just wanted me to come on and sing ... Just to come on and be myself

wasn't anything I'd want to do until I saw [the finished episode] " ? " Had I [foreseen] the quality of [it] I would have done it in a heartbeat . " Cher did authorize the use of three of her tracks on the episode 's soundtrack including " Walking in Memphis " heard at the episode 's conclusion while ostensibly performed onstage by celebrity impersonator Tracey Bell ? filmed in longshot or from the back or overheard ? as Cher . Although Bell was credited for the role , Cher 's fans responded to the episode 's premiere with online speculation as to whether the singer had pseudonymously appeared in the episode . Tabloid talk show host Jerry Springer appeared as himself . These casting choices went against a long @-@ standing tradition on The X @-@ Files of only casting actors who were not well @-@ known .

Seinfeld regular John O 'Hurley had auditioned for several roles on the show but Carter had not previously thought of him as " an X @-@ Files actor " . For the part of Dr. Pollidori , however , Carter considered him " the absolute perfect casting choice " . Stewart Gale , who played Izzy Berkowitz , was a non @-@ actor who was sitting on the back of a truck when Carter passed . Carter convinced Gale 's father ? who was initially suspicious of the director 's credentials ? to let Gale travel to Vancouver to take part in the episode . The characters of Izzy 's friends were also played by inexperienced actors . One was a snake handler on the set of The X @-@ Files feature film ? the shooting of which overlapped that of season five ? and the other worked at a Vancouver coffee shop that Carter frequented .

The Great Mutato was played by Chris Owens , unrecognizable in heavy makeup . Owens had played a younger version of The Smoking Man in two episodes of season four and was later cast as the recurring character of FBI special agent Jeffrey Spender . During his audition , Owens noted , " Chris said , ' Okay , did you ever see Elephant Man ? ... What I 'm looking for is dignity . He 's got dignity . But he 's definitely mutated ' " . After Owens heeded Carter 's instructions and attempted to bring dignity to the audition , Carter requested that he try it again " with less autism " .

= = = Filming = = =

The first five seasons of The X @-@ Files , including " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " , were filmed in Vancouver . It was the third episode of the program that Carter directed ; He decided to film the episode in black @-@ and @-@ white ? in homage to James Whale ? which brought more challenges than he expected . The director of photography , Joel Ransom , had to spend longer than usual lighting each scene because of the grayscale . The stormy skies in the episode , added to emulate the atmosphere of old Frankenstein movies , were a visual effect . Carter also used a wide @-@ angle camera lens throughout the episode , which forced the actors to act directly to the camera , rather than to each other . According to Carter , it also enabled him to give scenes in the episode a more surreal staging than was usual for the show .

The makeup for the character of The Great Mutato was designed and created by special effects supervisor Tony Lindala . The Mutato mask went through several design iterations on paper , including 10 ? 15 drawings and a color rendition . Constructed from latex , and containing an articulated second mouth , it cost \$ 40 @,@ 000 and took between five and seven hours to apply . In addition to the mask , Chris Owens wore contact lenses and dentures . Owens later recalled that " the makeup had taken seven hours , and then I had sat around for three or four . And now I was going to sit in the dark , and I could only see out of one eye . They put a big contact lens in . " Initial versions of the costume were deemed " too human looking " and so a newer design was chosen .

Lindala also created " Baby Mutato " costumes for the twin infants featured in the The Jerry Springer Show scene , but the production crew had difficulty keeping the costumes on the children . Lindala later said , " [t] he little babies kept tearing their hair off , we kept gluing it back on " . Lindala was happy that the episode was filmed in black and white because it helped " the prosthetic [because] it is difficult to work in a foam piece that long and not recognize it as a painted , opaque , false translucency . " Lindala later called the filming technique the " saving grace " of the episode . In addition , he later submitted his makeup for the episode to the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in an attempt to be nominated for an Emmy Award .

= = = Music and cultural references = = =

The episode was scored by series composer Mark Snow , and was , according to him , his best episode score of the fifth season . He described the main theme as " a very dark , macabre , insidious sort of nasty waltz " . The episode 's main theme is also greatly inspired by The Elephant Man 's theme song by John Morris . Three songs are heard in the versions sung by Cher during the episode : " The Sun Ain 't Gonna Shine Anymore " , " Gypsies , Tramps & Thieves " and " Walking in Memphis " . The latter is played at the end of the episode when the agents take The Great Mutato to a Cher concert . In the episode , the character watches Cher 's 1985 movie Mask , and derives comfort from the loving relationship between Cher 's character and her son , who has a disfiguring genetic bone disorder . At the end of the episode , Mulder and Scully take The Great Mutato from his small town to a Cher concert , where she picks him out of the crowd to dance .

The episode contains several cultural references . First , the episode 's title is a reference to both the subtitle for Shelley 's original novel , The Modern Prometheus , and to the postmodernist school of thought . Postmodernism has been described as a " style and concept in the arts , architecture , and criticism , [that] is characterized by the self @-@ conscious use of earlier styles and conventions , a mixing of different artistic styles and media , and a general distrust of theories . " Furthermore , the Frankenstein @-@ like doctor shares the name ? albeit with a slightly different spelling ? of Shelley 's contemporary , John William Polidori , who was present at the conception of her novel . Several lines in the episode come directly from James Whale 's 1931 movie Frankenstein .

= = Themes = =

" The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " is the most obvious reference to Frankenstein made by the series , although traces of the story are seen elsewhere in the first season episode " Young at Heart " and the sixth season episode " The Beginning " . In addition , the series ' overarching mythology revolves around shadowy Syndicate leaders who salvage alien spacecraft for their own technological use and create human @-@ alien hybrids . The episode contains themes relating to motherhood and sexuality . According to film studies writer Linda Badley , this episode , and season four 's " Home " , foreshadow Scully 's impending motherhood and her realization , in following episodes " Christmas Carol " and " Emily " , that she has been used to create a human @-@ alien hybrid , Emily . Diane Negra , in her book Off @-@ White Hollywood : American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom , points out that while The Great Mutato impregnates both Shaineh Berkowitz and Elizabeth Pollidori without their consent or knowledge , it is " an oversimplification " to label the monster as a rapist , because both Berkowitz and Pollidori " desire for children through unconventional means " . Thus , Mutato 's acts allow for the two women to get what they desperately desire in a moment of " magical resolution " .

Eric Bumpus and Tim Moranville , in their book Cease Fire , the War Is Over ! , propose that the episode ? and by extension , the series as a whole ? is a rejection of " modernity 's naturalism " and an acceptance of " post @-@ modernity 's mystic supernaturalism " . The two argue that , while in stereotypical " great science fiction " the monster created usually runs amok , in " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " , the creature is " a lovable success " . Furthermore , the Indiana townspeople represent " the religious nuts [who] in the end ... turn out to be right " . Bumpus and Moranville consider them the " secondary heroes " of the episode , right after The Great Mutato himself .

Despite her physical absence from the entry , Cher 's presence can be felt throughout the narrative . Negra argues that Cher 's " flamboyant and self @-@ authored body " is used as a metaphor for " the possibility of self @-@ transformation " . In addition , her voice , heard via songs like " Walking in Memphis " , is associated with the idea of " circumvent [ing] patriarchy " . Negra notes that Cher 's music is used in scenes during The Great Mutato 's sexual encounters with women . Negra asserts that " this juxtaposition of sound and image cues our perception that we have entered the realm of carnival where the normal order of things is inverted . " Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club reasons that the ending was not the actual conclusion of the episode , but rather the fanciful and

elaborate happy ending that was concocted by Izzy Berkowitz , the writer of the comic book , after talking to Mulder . In this manner , VanDerWeff notes , " the episode abandons logic and reality and , for lack of a better word , transcends . " Meghan Deans from Tor.com postulates that the entire episode never happened " [f] rom a canonical perspective " due to the entry 's comic book setting , the various meta @-@ references and the " happy ending " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " was first broadcast in the United States on November 30 , 1997 , on the Fox network , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on March 29 , 1998 , on Sky One . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 5 , with a 16 share , meaning that roughly 11 @.@ 5 percent of all television @-@ equipped households and 16 percent of households watching television were tuned in . Nielsen ratings are audience measurement systems that determine the audience size and composition of television programming in the United States . It was viewed by 18 @.@ 68 million viewers . " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " was the eleventh most watched television program for the week ending November 30 .

= = = Reviews = = =

" The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " received generally positive reviews from critics . Mike Duffy , a Knight Ridder correspondent , wrote a largely positive article on the episode , noting that although the episode was special , this did not make it feel like a gimmick . He wrote , " when most shows blow promotional smoke about ' a very special episode , ' it 's best to check the Hollywood Hype @-@ O @-@ Meter for wretched , excessive buzzing [but] what sounds like a gimmick ? ' a very special black @-@ and @-@ white episode ' loosely based on the horror movie classic Frankenstein actually turns out to be a ripping good ride on ' X @-@ Files ' creator Chris Carter 's wiggled @-@ out storytelling train . " A review from the Mobile Register wrote that " Like the very best X @-@ Files episodes , this one combines a generous amount of humor with its horror . " In a review of the entire fifth season , Michael Sauter of Entertainment Weekly said that " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " was the " most striking " of the season 's stand @-@ alone episodes . Todd VanDerWerff awarded the episode with an " A " grade , and , despite noting the silliness of the story and the fact that most of the characters function as stereotypes , wrote that " ' Prometheus ' just works " . In a 2000 review of season five for the New Straits Times , Francis Dass called " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " a " fun episode " .

Lionel Green of the Sand Mountain Reporter named the entry the greatest episode of the series and called the ending " one of the most uplifting finales in the series . " Writing for the Daily News , Eric Mink gave the episode a rating of four stars and praised it as an outstanding episode in a weak early fifth season of the show . He said that the two leads acted flawlessly and that Chris Owens ' performance as The Great Mutato was especially touching . He concluded that , " [w] ith Shelley 's classic as inspiration , Carter and company have created a classic of their own . " Elaine Linere from the Corpus Christi Caller @-@ Times called the episode " brilliantly written " and named it " a classic among many for this always @-@ intriguing , ever @-@ inventive series . " She particularly praised the " heart @-@ tugging , romantic " ending . Matthew Gilbert of The Boston Globe called the episode " a memorable X @-@ Files from start to finish " , due in part to its " extraordinary visual flair " and " atmospheric black and white " footage . Furthermore , Gilbert positively critiqued Carter 's writing and directing , saying he " keeps his balance between drama , low @-@ key humor , [and] allusive wit " . Margaret Lyons of New York called the entry " one of the great TV episodes of all time " . Nick De Semlyen and James White of Empire named it the fifth " greatest " episode of the series and wrote that " [Chris Carter] plays with style and form , turning the entire episode into a loving homage to Universal monster movies in general and James Whale 's 1931 Frankenstein in

particular " . In the 1999 FX Thanksgiving Marathon , containing fan @-@ selected episodes , " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " was presented as the " Best Stand @-@ Alone Episode " . Connie Ogle from The Miami Herald named The Great Mutato one of " the greatest monsters " that were featured on The X @-@ Files .

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 two stars out of five and criticized various elements of the episode 's direction . They wrote , " Chris Carter the writer has come up with something playful and light and charming . And Chris Carter the director has stamped all over it and made it so arch and obvious and dull that it kills it stone dead . " Shearman and Pearson praised the idea of " a town which feels like an X @-@ Files audience " , but derided the episode 's comic book setting and wrote that " this play on post @-@ modernism just doesn 't make any sense [in that format , because] a comic has action , a way of jumping from frame to frame ... this is languorous and self @-@ indulgent . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a moderately negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She wrote that the episode " falls flatter than the chemical pancakes used to anesthetize the victims of this episode " due to its " collection of situations and observances that bear little relation to each other . " Vitaris also criticized the scene wherein various characters are compared to animals , and commented , " the mean spiritedness of [the plot] is mind @-@ boggling " . Finally , she called the episode 's conclusion a " false ending " .

= = = Awards = = =

The episode was nominated for seven awards at the 1998 Emmys by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences , including Outstanding Directing and Outstanding Writing for Chris Carter . Graeme Murray , Greg Loewen and Shirley Inget won the award for Outstanding Art Direction . Carter was also nominated for an award for Outstanding Directing by the Directors Guild of America .