

= Field Trip (The X @-@ Files) =

" Field Trip " is the twenty @-@ first episode of the sixth season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on May 9 , 1999 in the United States and Canada , and subsequently aired in the United Kingdom on Sky1 on July 18 . The episode was written by John Shiban and Vince Gilligan , from a story by Frank Spotnitz , and was directed by Kim Manners . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Field Trip " earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @.@ 5 , being watched by 15 @.@ 40 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received largely positive reviews from television critics .

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 has been assigned to debunk his work . In the episode , the mysterious discovery of two skeletons leads Mulder and Scully to investigate . What they discover is a giant fungal growth that causes the agents to have two separate hallucinogenic episodes , which eventually merge into one shared hallucination . The two are saved thanks to an FBI rescue team led by Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) .

The episode was written to give the audience a chance to see Mulder and Scully 's separate viewpoints during their hallucinations . Members of the cast and crew , as well as reviewers , noted that the episode was a more serious version of the season five episode " Bad Blood " . In order to prepare for the episode , various information on mushrooms , fungi , human decomposition , and cave geology was researched by the series ' crew members . Furthermore , the episode has been critically examined due to its themes pertaining to alternate reality and its use of abductive reasoning .

= = Plot = =

In Boone , North Carolina , Wallace (David Denman) and Angela Schiff (Robyn Lively) return home after a day out hiking in the fields . Angela gets a headache and , whilst taking a shower , thinks that she sees images of a yellow substance running down the walls . Angela and Wallace head off to bed in one another 's arms but as the camera pans out the scene shifts to their skeletal remains in the same position in the middle of a field . FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) investigate and after closer examination of the bones , the two find a strange yellow substance covering the underside of the skeletons which was missed in the original examination . Mulder , believing that bodies are a result of the famous Brown Mountain Lights , heads out to the scene of the discovery while Scully stays behind with the coroner (Jim Beaver) to perform more tests .

As Mulder arrives in the fields , he inadvertently drives over a patch of mushrooms which releases a cloud of hallucinogenic spores . Mulder ? unbeknownst to the viewer ? begins to hallucinate . He soon discovers Wallace and Angela in a cave , and the two claim they were abducted by aliens , who covered up their disappearance with false skeletons . Later , Scully arrives at Mulder 's apartment and he explains to Scully what happened . He shows her an alien that he captured at Brown Mountain . Scully , however , accepts his reasoning without question and Mulder begins to doubt his surroundings . Eventually , after seeing the yellow substance , much like Angela saw , Mulder awakens in the cave he followed Wallace into earlier , covered in the yellow secretion , being digested alive .

Meanwhile , Scully has discovered that the yellow substance mainly consists of organic material found in digestive juices , although it appears plant @-@ like . Arriving at the field , Scully accidentally steps on another mushroom , and begins hallucinating . Scully and the coroner start to look for Mulder , only to find his skeletal remains . Back at the coroner 's office , Scully identifies Mulder 's remains from his dental records but finds no evidence of the secretion on the skeleton . Later , at Mulder 's wake Mulder shows up , clearly alive . Suddenly , the wake congregation disappears . As Mulder and Scully discuss what has happened , they both begin to realize that they

are still in the cave being digested by the substance while they are comatose ; somehow , they are sharing the same hallucination . As the realization occurs , they both awaken , deep in the cave and Mulder fights his way out of the ground dragging Scully behind him to safety .

Later , in Walter Skinner 's (Mitch Pileggi) office , Mulder begins to doubt once more that they are free at all , asking Scully to name any sort of drug that causes its effects to halt once the user knows they are hallucinating . Scully is in disbelief until Mulder proves his point by shooting Skinner in the chest ; the yellow substance oozes out of the bullet wounds . Once again , their surroundings melt away as they awaken underground again in the cave . Mulder manages to stick his hand through the earth ceiling as Skinner and a team of rescue staff manage to locate them and drag them out and haul them to the safety of an ambulance . Once inside the ambulance , Mulder and Scully weakly hold hands .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Field Trip " was written by executive producer Frank Spotnitz , who described the writing process as " an experience " . The script went through several phases ; originally , the script was supposed to feature Mulder trapped in a cave with a mysterious monster . Then , the script was changed so that both Mulder and Scully would be trapped in the cave . Finally , the story was altered so that both Mulder and Scully only believed that they two were trapped in a cave , with only Mulder beginning to realize what was actually going on .

Spotnitz noted that the episode 's conceit got many crew members excited : " We 'd never really done an X @-@ Files like this . We could explore Mulder 's and Scully 's differences by seeing the extremes of their two hallucinations ? a serious version of what we did comically last season in ' Bad Blood ' " . This presented an opportunity for Mulder to confront his partner with the fact that he is normally right , resulting in a response from Scully , affirming the fact .

Spotnitz called the episode a " wonderful mind game " but was worried that the convoluted story and pace would confuse the viewer . In order to placate these concerns , the teleplay was assigned to be finalized by John Shiban and Vince Gilligan . Once the script was finished , Spotnitz felt the story had become much more understandable ; he was particularly pleased with the way Shiban and Gilligan showed Mulder and Scully stepping on the mushrooms as a way to subtly cue their initial exposure to the hallucinogenic mushroom . Gilligan noted that " another really important thing we did was making sure that the audience didn 't think that Mulder and Scully weren 't really in jeopardy ? that it was all a dream , like that whole season of Dallas a few years back . That 's why we made sure they realized that the goo from the mushroom would kill them " .

= = = Research , filming , and effects = = =

Lee Smith , a researcher for the series , consulted with researchers at the body farm , a 30 @-@ acre facility operated by the University of Tennessee 's Department of Anthropology . The facility buried human body parts from donated cadavers and studied the different conditions in which human bodies decompose .

Special effects coordinator John Vulich was tasked with designing " spidery , eight @-@ foot tall " fiberglass mushrooms . Production designer Corey Kaplan wanted Vulich to design the mushrooms to look " organic and earthbound " as opposed to " alien " . Members of the art department consulted various geological text books to properly create the stalagmites and stalactites for the cave scenes . Once the pods and cave set were finished , they were moved to a sound stage on the Fox Studio lots . The opening to the cave was filmed at Bronson Canyon , most notable for being the location of Bruce Wayne 's Batcave in the Batman television series that aired in the 1960s .

In order to create the effect of Mulder and Scully " melting " , special effects producer Bill Millar captured video of Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny in three @-@ dimensional high @-@

definition video ? the two actors were scanned with a special laser at Glendale , California and the results were manipulated by a computer . Millar noted that , " when we looked at our first test , we realized we couldn 't melt Mulder and Scully without some degree of difficulty [...] They had to melt like movie stars [...] without turning Gillian into Margaret Thatcher and David into John Hurt as The Elephant Man " . In order to compensate for the difficulties , Millar used a " leading edge " melting effect that melted parts of the actors ' faces , keeping their facial features intact until the " goop " overtook them . For other shots , Anderson and Duchovny had to endure hours of being covered by a vegetable @-@ derived food thickener with yellow food coloring that stood in for the fungal secretion . In addition , Anderson and Duchovny were literally buried under the earth for the final scene : large pits were dug and scaffolding was constructed inside of them . The two actors then wore wet suits and were covered in the vegetable fluid and soil .

= = Themes = =

The idea of alternative realities had been explored in previous entries of The X @-@ Files in ways that M. Keith Booker called " relatively conservative [?] that allow for recuperation of the alternatives as a single ' real ' reality . " He cites the third season episode " Jose Chung 's From Outer Space " as an example of a faulty narrator , and the sixth season episode " How the Ghosts Stole Christmas " as an example of a comedic alternate reality .

Jerold J. Abrams and Elizabeth F. Cooke , in the book *The Philosophy of TV Noir* argue that the episode stresses abductive reasoning , a type of logic that goes from data or a description of something to a hypothesis that accounts for the reliable data and seeks to explain relevant evidence . Abductive reasoning follows the logic : a surprising fact , C , is observed (Result) ; If A , the hypothesis , were true , C would make perfect sense (Rule) ; Thus , there is reason to suspect that A is true (Case) . An example that has been given is : the lawn is wet . But if it is raining , then it would be unsurprising that the lawn is wet . Therefore , it is raining . This logical method is favored by Mulder throughout most of the show . In this episode , however , it is Scully who first uses the method . She takes three separate facts ? the massive size of some types of mushrooms , the hallucinogenic properties of some fungi , and the carnivorous nature of certain types of plants ? and formulates an abductive conclusion : she and Mulder are trapped underground , experiencing a hallucination , and slowly being digested .

Abductive logic has three parts . First , there is the surprising fact ? also called the result ? that both Mulder and Scully are hallucinating , despite not taking any drugs . Second , there is Scully 's hypothesis ? the rule ? that , if it were true the hallucination " would be a matter of course " . Third , there is the conclusion ? the case ? that " there is a reason to suspect [Scully 's hypothesis] as true . " This abduction , Abrams and Cooke point out , is an example of creative abduction , because Scully manages to pull three , separate ideas " creatively " together . Mulder , however , next makes an abductive conclusion . While discussing the events with Skinner , he states that he is not convinced , because drugs do not wear off only when one notices their effects . This abduction also has three parts . The result is the surprising fact that Mulder and Scully 's escape seems problematic . The rule is that Mulder and Scully only think that they have escaped , but they really are still underground and being digested . Finally , the case states that " there is reason to suspect that " Mulder and Scully have not escaped from the mushroom . This type of logic is an example of undercoded abduction , because it is the most plausible rule among many .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Field Trip " premiered on the Fox network on May 9 , 1999 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 9 @.@ 5 , with a 15 share , meaning that roughly 9 @.@ 5 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 15 percent of households watching television , were tuned into the episode . It was viewed by 15 @.@ 38 million viewers as well as 9 @.@ 4 million households . " Field Trip " was the nineteenth most @-@ watched television program for the week ending May 9 . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on July 18 , 1999 and received 0

@. @ 58 million viewers , ranking as the third most @-@ watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " It seduces your mind ... And feeds off your flesh . Tonight , Mulder and Scully stumble onto a plant with a taste for human flesh . " Dean Haglund 's name is misspelled in the opening credits as Dean Haglung .

The episode received praise from critics . Todd VanDerWerff from The A.V. Club called the episode one of the " 10 must @-@ see episodes " of the series and cited it as an example of the series ' subtle shift " from a collection of monster tales to something more akin to an attempt to explain the dark underbelly of America ' s obsession with pulp narratives . " He ultimately concluded that " Field Trip " showed " how the series would never be as good as its best seasons again , but could still be remarkably effective . " In a subsequent review , VanDerWerff awarded the episode an " A " and called it " one of my favorite episodes of The X @-@ Files ' sixth season " due to its analysis of what Mulder and Scully each desire from the world , and the fact that the episode argues that the " mysteries can only be solved if both of these people are working to solve them . " 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 five stars out of five . The two positively compared the episode to the episode " Bad Blood " , noting that the episode " [is] a retread of those ' Bad Blood ' themes " . Furthermore , however , Shearman and Pearson noted that , " [the episode is] not merely poking fun at the conventions of the long running sci @-@ fi show , but inviting its audience to question the truths around us we take for granted " .

Earl Cressey from DVD Talk called " Field Trip " one of the " highlights of season six " . Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examination : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files* wrote positively of the episode , saying " [Mulder and Scully 's relationship in the episode] goes far beyond love , respect or friendship and transcends even the touch of their hands which symbolizes their ultimate union at the end . [?] Their connection is so strong , so powerful they even share the same narcotic induced hallucinations . Soul mates indeed " . Kessenich later named the episode one of the " Top 25 Episodes of All Time " of The X @-@ Files , ranking it at number 25 . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a moderately positive review and awarded it two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . Despite noting that the episode " doesn 't do much with is [sic] reality / hallucination premise " , Vitaris praised Duchovny and Anderson 's acting , noting that their performances were " the prime pleasures " of the episode .

The episode 's main antagonist , the field mushroom , was met with mostly positive reviews from critics , with a few detractors . Connie Ogle from PopMatters ranked the " giant underground mushroom thingie " among the " best " monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week , describing it as " too crafty to end up on a pizza " . Timothy Sexton from Yahoo ! Voices named " The Giant Mushroom " as one of " The Best X @-@ Files Monsters of the Week " , writing , " In the X @-@ Files episode Field Trip things are simply not what they seem . [...] But when I claim that a giant mushroom is one of the most memorable X @-@ Files monsters of the week , you can bet I 'm being serious " . Not all reviews were so positive . Cyriaque Lamar from i09 called the mushroom one of " The 10 Most Ridiculous X @-@ Files Monsters " and wrote , " Mulder and Scully conquer this mycological nightmare by jointly fighting it during a drug trip ? some real astral plane shit , brah . Love the 1990s CGI " .