

= The Unnatural ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" The Unnatural " is the 19th episode of the sixth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files , which first aired on April 25 , 1999 , on the Fox network . Written and directed by lead actor David Duchovny , the episode is unconnected to the wider mythology of The X @-@ Files , and functions as a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story . " The Unnatural " earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @. @ 1 , and its first broadcast was watched by 16 @. @ 88 million people . The episode received positive reviews from critics , and was well @-@ liked by members of the cast and crew , including series creator Chris Carter and co @-@ star Gillian Anderson .

The series centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder ( Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Anderson ) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called " X @-@ Files " . Mulder is a believer ; although the skeptical Scully was initially assigned to debunk his work , the two have developed a deep friendship . In this episode , Arthur Dales ( M. Emmet Walsh ) , the brother of a previously recurring retired FBI agent with the same name , tells Mulder the story of a black baseball player who played for the Roswell Grays in Roswell , New Mexico in 1947 under the pseudonym " Josh Exley " ( Jesse L. Martin ) . Exley was actually an alien with a love of baseball . Exley is later tracked down by the Alien Bounty Hunter ( Brian Thompson ) and executed for betraying his people .

Among other things , the episode was inspired by the history of baseball in Roswell , as well as the infamous 1947 Roswell Incident . Jesse Martin was offered the lead guest role as Exley after Duchovny noticed him in a production of the musical Rent and an episode of Ally McBeal . Originally , Darren McGavin was cast as Arthur Dales , but after he suffered a stroke , he was replaced by Walsh . Many of the outdoor baseball scenes were filmed at Jay Littleton Ballfield , an all @-@ wood stadium located in Ontario , California . The episode has been critically examined for its use of literary motifs , its fairy tale @-@ like structure , and its themes concerning racism and alienation .

= = Plot = =

In 1947 , a mixed group of black and white men play baseball in Roswell , New Mexico . Suddenly , a group of Ku Klux Klan ( KKK ) members arrive on horseback , seeking one of the players : Josh Exley ( Jesse L. Martin ) , a talented black baseball player . Men from the team fight back against the KKK , and when the mask of the clan 's leader is taken off , the leader is revealed to actually be an alien .

In 1999 , FBI agents Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) look through Roswell newspapers from the 1940s . Mulder spots an article showing a young Arthur Dales ( Frederic Lane ) ? the original investigator of the X @-@ Files division who had previously appeared in the fifth season episode " Travelers " and the sixth season episode " Agua Mala " ? Josh Exley , and the shape @-@ shifting Alien Bounty Hunter ( Brian Thompson ) who has assisted the show 's antagonists throughout the series . Mulder seeks out Dales in Washington D.C. but finds that he still lives in Florida . Instead , Mulder meets Dales 's brother ( M. Emmet Walsh ) , who is also named Arthur .

In flashback , Dales tells Mulder about first meeting Exley in 1947 . Dales ( portrayed as a young man by Frederic Lane ) , a member of the Roswell Police Department , has been assigned to protect a hesitant Exley . Dales travels with Exley and his teammates on their bus , and one night sees that the sleeping Exley is reflected in a window as an alien . The next day , during a game , Exley is hit by a pitch and starts making utterances in a strange language before returning to his senses . Afterwards , Dales notices that a mysterious green ooze appeared where Exley 's bleeding head had rested .

Dales decides to investigate Exley 's hometown of Macon , Georgia , and discovers that a boy with Exley 's name had vanished about five years previously . That night at the hotel , Dales hears noises from Exley 's hotel room and breaks in , only to find Exley in his true form as an alien . Exley tells Dales that he was forbidden from intermingling with the human race but fell in love with the game of baseball and remained on Earth . Meanwhile , the Alien Bounty Hunter , who has been pursuing the

renegade alien ever since he deserted his alien heritage , takes Exley 's form and murders a scientist who is investigating the green ooze that Dales found . After learning of the attack , Dales warns Exley that he is now wanted by the police , and Exley goes into hiding .

The narrative returns to the events at the start of the episode . The KKK leader is revealed as the Alien Bounty Hunter , who has arrived to assassinate Exley . The Bounty Hunter demands that Exley revert to his true form before he dies . Exley refuses and the Bounty Hunter then kills him . However , Exley miraculously bleeds red , human blood . Back in 1999 , Mulder invites Scully to hit baseballs with him on an empty field .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

" The Unnatural " was the first episode of the series that Duchovny wrote by himself . He had previously co -@-@ developed the stories for the second season episodes " Colony " and " Anasazi " - both with series creator Chris Carter , and received teleplay credits for the third season episodes " Avatar " and " Talitha Cumi " . As The X @-@ Files entered its sixth season , Duchovny decided that it was an appropriate time to try writing a full episode . Before then , he had felt that he did not have the skills necessary ; he said , " I didn 't have the surety , the confidence in my mind , that I could write a teleplay ... It took me to the sixth year of the show to actually sit down and write one of my ideas . " In late 1998 , Duchovny met with series creator Carter and they agreed that Duchovny would write a late @-@ season installment for the series .

While both Duchovny and Carter had wanted to write an episode about baseball for several years , Duchovny first conceived the basic premise for " The Unnatural " during the home run race in 1998 between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa when he read a newspaper report about Joe Bauman . Bauman was a baseball player who , despite hitting 72 home runs during the 1954 season ? at the time , a record for a professional player ? never made it to the Major Leagues . Duchovny immediately connected the story of Bauman , who played for the Roswell Rockets , with the 1947 Roswell Incident , saying " I just made the association ... What if this guy was an alien ? and I just started working on that idea . " Duchovny later said that " these happy chronological coincidences " facilitated the development of the story . Duchovny worked on his idea alone , later admitting that he was satisfied that he did not receive any help .

Duchovny decided to make the lead guest character black and set the story before the integration of the baseball leagues , inspired by Jackie Robinson , the first black player who was accepted into the Major Leagues in the 1940s . After Duchovny finished his first draft , Carter added additional plot points , such as the inclusion of the Alien Bounty Hunter and retired FBI agent Arthur Dales . The episode title is a play on the novel and movie The Natural . The tagline that appears in the opening credits for this episode is " In the Big Inning " , which serves as a pun on the phrase , " In the beginning " .

= = = Casting = = =

Jesse L. Martin was the first actor considered to play the part of Exley . Duchovny had first noticed Martin in a production of the musical Rent , and noticed him again during a guest appearance on the Fox legal comedy @-@ drama Ally McBeal . Watching the latter performance , Duchovny decided that Martin had the " right feel " for the lead role . Duchovny later noted that he had little involvement with the casting process since a majority of the characters in the episode were recurring .

Originally , Darren McGavin was set to reprise his role as Arthur Dales ; the character had previously appeared in the episodes " Travelers " and " Agua Mala " . Two days after filming began , McGavin suffered a stroke , forcing Duchovny and the producers to remove from the episode the few scenes he had shot , rewrite the script to explain his absence , and replace his character with M. Emmet Walsh . Because many of the scenes featuring a younger Dales had already been shot ,

Duchovny was forced to give Walsh 's character the same name as McGavin 's character ; this was justified in the episode as a quirk on behalf of the two brothers ' parents . The two scenes that were filmed with McGavin included the sequence in which Mulder asks Dales whether all great baseball players are aliens , and a scene in which Mulder asks Dales why he joined the FBI . McGavin , who eventually recovered , later allowed the scenes to be included on the sixth season DVD as bonus features . Executive producer Frank Spotnitz later called it a " great sorrow that " the show had to replace Darren McGavin because the series ' producers were " huge fans " of his role in the 1972 film *The Night Stalker* and television series of the same name .

Actor Frederic Lane had previously appeared in " *Travelers* , " playing the younger version of McGavin 's character . Since McGavin was written out of the episode , Lane played the younger version of Walsh 's character . Los Angeles Dodgers radio announcer Vin Scully , whose name was the original inspiration for Dana Scully 's name , played the baseball announcer in this episode . The announcer was initially unable to appear owing to budgetary issues , but later agreed to record his part for free . Daniel Duchovny , David 's brother , appeared in this episode in a minor role as a bench jockey .

= = = Filming and post @-@ production = = =

" *The Unnatural* " was the first entry of the series to be directed by Duchovny . While Duchovny was working on plot points with Carter , the two agreed that the episode would serve as Duchovny 's directorial debut . As the episode did not heavily feature his character , since it is framed as a flashback , Duchovny was able to focus on pre @-@ production . This narratological method also gave Anderson a minor respite from her work . While Duchovny later expressed gratitude that " *The Unnatural* " enabled him to get a feel for directing , he also experienced severe anxiety during the production process because of the stress of both writing and directing . However , when the episode was finished , Duchovny was pleased , calling the results " great . " He later noted that his stress was largely uncalled for because the episode would have been made even " if [ he ] just showed up and drooled for 24 hours a day . "

The first five seasons of the series were mainly filmed in Vancouver , British Columbia , but production of the show 's sixth season was based in Los Angeles , California . Jay Littleton Ballfield , an all @-@ wood stadium located in Ontario , California , was used as the setting for the Roswell Baseball Stadium . The show 's producers advertised in local newspapers and on local radio for fans to attend the game dressed in 1940s clothing . During filming , a raffle was held between takes , and signed copies of the *The X @-@ Files* movie , soundtrack , and film poster were given away . The scene featuring Mulder teaching Scully how to play baseball was filmed at Cheviot Hills Park in Los Angeles . The park was later used in the eighth season episode " *Three Words* " and the ninth season episode " *Lord of the Flies* " .

Costume designer Christine Peters crafted the episode 's baseball uniforms after visiting Sports Robe , a Hollywood costume house . Dena Green from the hair department gave extras haircuts so that they would be in the style of the 1940s . Car coordinator Kelly Padovich rented two 1947 model Flexible buses for the Roswell Greys on @-@ bus scenes , as well as various other 1930s- and 1940s @-@ era cars . Researcher Lee Smith worked with the Baseball Hall of Fame to ensure the accuracy of the statistics used in the episode . The props department developed from scratch the Peter Rosebud Bank that Dales shows Mulder ; it was one of the most expensive props of the season . The score by Mark Snow , the show 's composer , was recorded with musicians rather than synthesizers for the first time in the series ' history ; slide guitar player Nick Kirgo and harmonica performer Tommy Morgan assisted Snow with the music .

= = Themes = =

Near the beginning of the episode , Mulder uses one of William Blake 's " *Proverbs of Hell* " from his 18th century book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in an argument with Scully : " The road to excess leads to the palace of wisdom . " Sharon R. Yang , in her essay " *Weaving and Unweaving*

the Story , " writes that Mulder is using affluent literature to " justify his passionate dedication to questing for knowledge in arcane areas scorned by mainstream intellectual authority " . In addition , Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , argue that the episode functions as a fairy tale , and that its conclusion is an example of a happy ending ; Exley bleeds red blood as he lays dying , granting the alien his wish to become human . In addition , the two mused that the meta nature of the episode is similar to the way fans of the series reacted to new episodes of The X @-@ Files .

Ideas of racism and segregation also permeate the episode . Sara Gwenllian @-@ Jones in her book *Cult Television* argues that , throughout the entry , " the blacks are equated with aliens , " turning them into a certain type of " other " that is " never allowed to fit in or feel safe " . Gwenllian @-@ Jones highlights the scene in which Dales , late one night on the team bus , wakes to see Exley 's sleeping body being reflected as an alien in a window as an example of the racial comparison . She points out that , despite coming to Earth , Exley has moved from one segregated society ? that of the aliens ? into another . She points out that Exley , after revealing his true form to Dales , says that " my people guard their privacy zealously . They don 't want our people to intermingle with your people " . This quote expresses a similar sentiment to the segregated mentality of the 1940s .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Unnatural " originally aired in the United States on the Fox network on April 25 , 1999 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on Sky 1 on July 4 , 1999 . In the U.S. , the episode was watched by 16 @. @ 88 million viewers , and ranked as the 17th most @-@ watched episode of any series on network TV for the week ending April 25 . It earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @. @ 1 , with a 15 share . Nielsen ratings are audience measurement systems that determine the audience size and composition of television programming in the U.S. This means that roughly 10 @. @ 1 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 15 percent of households watching television , were watching the episode . In the U.K. , " The Unnatural " was seen by 870 @, @ 000 viewers , making it the channel 's second @-@ most watched program for that week after an episode of *The Simpsons* . On November 5 , 2002 , the episode was released on DVD as part of the complete sixth season .

= = = Reviews = = =

The cast and crew of the show were complimentary towards the finished episode . Carter said , " I think that David , a person who has a very intimate understanding of the show , made the best of his opportunity to tell a very different kind of X @-@ File , and expand the elastic show that it is . " Anderson was also pleased , saying , " I was proud of David for writing the script . I thought it was wonderful . He was kind and gentle and respectful and humble , and always tried to do his best . "

Initial reviews were positive . Eric Mink from the *New York Daily News* , in a pre @-@ premiere review , said that it " ingeniously grafts classic X @-@ Files story elements and wry , self @-@ mocking wit onto a delightfully fresh premise " . The *Lexington Herald @-@ Leader* 's review mostly positive , complimenting the clever writing and noting that the " show was full of visual delights " . Sarah Stegall awarded the episode five points out of five , praising Duchovny 's analysis of " bigotry from two angles " and his ability to tie the " ongoing X @-@ Files conspiracy arc ... into a comic tragedy like this " . Stegall also called Duchovny 's direction " innovative and interesting " , and applauded a transition scene , in which the camera apparently moves through a television screen , as " a wonderful visual metaphor for The X @-@ Files itself " .

Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a largely positive review , awarding it four stars out of four . Vitaris was complimentary towards the episode 's exposition , and wrote , " above all , '

The Unnatural ' is about the power of storytelling . We don 't really know if Dales ' story is true or if it 's the liquor @-@ fueled ramblings of a broken @-@ down man , but in the end , this is irrelevant . " Melissa Runstrom from Michigan Daily called it a " charming independent story , " but that it " seems to say more about the human condition than about any extraterrestrial plot " . Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files wrote , " In his entertaining debut as an X @-@ Files writer / director , Duchovny took us down a very familiar path this season : [ humor ] . But unlike some previous navigators , Duchovny stayed on course , made sure we saw all of the spectacular landmarks along the way and , when we reached our final destination , I found I thoroughly enjoyed the ride . "

Recent reviews have also applauded the episode . Shearman and Pearson rated the episode five stars out of five , describing it as " [ a ] delightful ... comic fable " . Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club awarded the episode an " A ? " and wrote that it " works because it takes this very silly idea and proceeds to take it seriously . " He criticized the program for its " corniness " and its reliance on the " magical black guy " stereotype , but concluded that " The Unnatural " was successful " because it embraces this side of the show ' s profile [ that ] could do something sweet and lovely and moving " . VanDerWerff also complimented Martin 's performance , calling his acting " terrific " . Cynthia Fuchs from PopMatters wrote that Duchovny 's directing debut was excellent .

Since its debut , the episode has been ranked as one of the best episodes of The X @-@ Files . Kessenich named it one of the " Top 25 Episode of All Time " of The X @-@ Files , ranking it at number six . The Vancouver Sun listed " The Unnatural " on their list of the best standalone episodes of the show , and said that the story was heartbreaking . In addition , the scene featuring Mulder teaching Scully to play baseball was well received by critics . Shearman and Pearson wrote that it " is especially delightful , and gives this sentimental episode an extra warm glow . " Jean Helms of The Mobile Register named it one of the " Top 10 X @-@ Files Clips We 'd Like to See in the Official Video of Bree Sharp 's ' David Duchovny ' " . Vitaris called the scene " one of the most charming finales in an X @-@ Files episode " due to its " utterly endearing " qualities and its " unspoken subtext " .