

= Roland (The X @-@ Files) =

" Roland " is the twenty @-@ third episode of the first season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on May 6 , 1994 . It was written by Chris Ruppenthal and directed by David Nutter . The episode featured guest appearances by ?eljko Ivanek , James Sloyan and Kerry Sandomirsky . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Roland " earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @. @ 9 , being watched by 7 @. @ 4 million households in its initial broadcast ; and received mixed reviews from critics , although Ivanek 's guest role was met with acclaim .

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 . When Mulder and Scully investigate a series of murders at an aerospace testing facility , they find that a mentally handicapped janitor may be responsible ? and that he is being telepathically controlled by one of the facility 's former researchers .

" Roland " was the first of two episodes of The X @-@ Files written by Chris Ruppenthal , who would go on to write the second season episode " 3 " , which was heavily rewritten by series regulars Glen Morgan and James Wong . " Roland " contains the series ' first mention of Fox Mulder 's father Bill , although the character would not actually make an appearance until the second season episode " Colony " .

= = Plot = =

At a research lab in Colson , Washington , intellectually disabled janitor Roland Fuller is scolded by scientist Dr. Keats for forgetting how to use the facility 's keycard locks . Keats walks in on his colleagues , Frank Nollette and Ronald Surnow , as they argue over a prototype jet engine they are developing . Nollette wants to push testing of the engine to break mach 15 , but Surnow is unwilling to risk damaging the prototype . After Keats and Nollette angrily leave , Surnow enters the facility 's wind tunnel to make adjustments . However , Roland activates the tunnel 's turbines , sending Surnow flying to his death .

Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are brought in to investigate Surnow 's death . Scully notes that another member of the research team , Arthur Grable , had mysteriously died several months earlier , and believes it to be a case of industrial espionage . Mulder examines the handwriting on the team 's whiteboard and concludes that it has been written by at least four different people , leading him to suspect that a fourth individual was present . Keats and Nollette both inform the agents that Roland Fuller was the only one left in the facility at the time of Surnow 's death , but do not believe him to be capable of murder .

Nevertheless , Mulder and Scully visit the care home where Roland lives . When they gently ask him about the night of the murder , he tells them he had not seen anything out of the ordinary . He also inadvertently reveals his mathematical prowess by rapidly counting the star designs visible on Scully 's blouse ; however , his handwriting does not match the fourth sample taken from the whiteboard . The discussion ends when Roland experiences a violent vision and has what seems to be a fit . Later that night , Roland has another vision in which he sees someone killing Keats . He appears at the lab and murders Keats by submerging his head in a tank of liquid nitrogen . Keats ' frozen body is left to shatter as Roland begins typing at one of the computers .

The next day , the agents notice that the computer had been used for five hours after Keats ' death . Attempting to open the file that was being worked on , Mulder realizes that the number Roland had written on an art project the previous day is the computer 's password . The file turns out to be the work of Arthur Grable , a scientist who had supposedly died several months earlier , and has been worked on constantly since his death .

Looking into Grable 's death , the agents find that it was he who had hired Roland . They begin to think that Grable faked his death and is killing his former colleagues , using Roland as a patsy . Grable 's body was never brought to the morgue , nor was a funeral ever held . However , Nollette

brings the agents to a neuropreservation facility where Grable 's remains are being stored . When a photo of Grable is found , the agents discover that he is Roland 's identical twin brother . Speaking to Roland again , Mulder becomes convinced that the janitor is being periodically controlled by Grable .

Meanwhile , Nollette sneaks into the cryogenic facility and tampers with Grable 's storage unit , thawing his remains . Roland returns to the lab and is in the process of pushing the prototype engine to mach 15 when Nollette enters . Nollette admits to stealing Grable 's work and prepares to shoot Roland , but is distracted by some equations . Roland strikes him with a computer keyboard and drags him into the wind tunnel . The agents arrive in time to convince Roland not to kill Nollette . At the same time , the rising temperatures in the storage unit kill Grable . Roland is removed from the care home , to be taken to a psychiatric institute for testing . However , as he leaves he stops to comb his hair in a style reminiscent of his brother , raising the question of whether he is actually free of Grable 's control .

= = Production = =

" Roland " was the first of two episodes of The X @-@ Files written by Chris Ruppenthal . He would return to write the second season episode " 3 " , which was heavily rewritten by series regulars Glen Morgan and James Wong . ?eljko Ivanek , who plays the episode 's title character , was the first actor to read for the part . Series creator Chris Carter felt that Ivanek 's audition " just blew [him] away " , deciding almost immediately to cast him . Garry Davey , who portrays scientist Dr. Keats , also appeared in several other episodes of the series , and was also at one time the artistic director of the William Davis Centre for Actors Study , working alongside William B. Davis , who plays the series ' villain The Smoking Man . Art director Graeme Murrury spent time scouting universities and research facilities in Vancouver to aid in creating the right look for the episode 's laboratory and wind tunnel sets .

" Roland " contains the series ' first mention of Fox Mulder 's father Bill , although the character would not actually make an appearance until the second season episode " Colony " . In the original draft of the script for " Roland " , however , Mulder 's mention of his father was instead meant to be his sister , Samantha . The scene depicting the aftermath of the Dr. Keats ' murder ? with the scattered pieces of his shattered frozen body marked off with multiple chalk outlines ? has been described as " truly inspired " . Chris Carter noted that " any shock and horror was eliminated by the laugh you got when you saw those little pieces on the floor " , also commenting that the actual murder takes place off @-@ screen , and is only heard .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Roland " premiered on the Fox network on May 6 , 1994 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on March 2 , 1995 . This episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @. @ 9 , with a 14 share , meaning that in the US , roughly 7 @. @ 9 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 14 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 7 @. @ 4 million households .

Director David Nutter felt that casting ?eljko Ivanek was the key to creating the episode , feeling that " Roland " was " probably the weakest script from start to finish " that the director had seen , but that once Ivanek had been cast , it became " important to push that as much as possible , to help outweigh the frailties in the script " . Chris Carter has also praised Ivanek 's involvement with the episode , calling the actor 's portrayal " just an amazing performance . This guy , Zeljko , should have won an award for this " . Glen Morgan , a regular writer for the series , felt that the episode " wasn 't completely effective " , but also added that it offered a " softer " outlook compared to the series ' other episodes so far , feeling that it was important to include several " episodes that demonstrate the paranormal isn 't always horrifying " .

In a retrospective of the first season in Entertainment Weekly , " Roland " was rated a B + , with guest star ?eljko Ivanek 's portrayal of the eponymous Roland being called " astonishing (and

convincing) " , and the episode 's " excellent death scenes " noted as highlights . Zack Handlen , writing for The A.V. Club , had mixed feelings about the episode , feeling that its plot was too similar to the previous episode " Born Again " , though rating Ivanek 's acting as " authentic " and " uncontrived " ; ultimately calling the episode " well @-@ built enough to be enjoyable despite its familiarity " . Matt Haigh , writing for Den of Geek , felt negatively about the episode , again finding it too similar to other episodes of the season , finding it to be " nothing incredibly exciting " , noting that it " follows pretty much the same template as many of the other episodes " .