

## = The X @-@ Files Mythology , Volume 2 ? Black Oil =

Volume 2 of The X @-@ Files Mythology collection is the second DVD release containing selected episodes from the third to the fifth seasons of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . The episodes collected in the release form the middle of the series ' mythology , and are centered on the discovery of a mind @-@ altering extraterrestrial " black oil " .

The collection contains five episodes from the third season , eight from the fourth season , and two from the fifth . The episodes follow the investigations of paranormal @-@ related cases , or X @-@ Files , by FBI Special Agents Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . Events covered in the episodes include the assassination of a secretive informant , Scully 's diagnosis with cancer and Mulder 's apparent suicide .

Production for many of the episode 's included in the collection required extensive effects . The titular black oil 's on @-@ screen appearance was achieved through visual effects ; the shimmering oil effect was digitally placed over the actors ' corneas in post @-@ production . Steven Williams , William B. Davis , Mitch Pileggi and Laurie Holden all play supporting roles in the collection . Released on August 2 , 2005 , the collection received mostly positive reviews from critics .

## = = Plot summary = =

The collection opens with the two @-@ part episodes " Nisei " and " 731 " . Investigating evidence of an alien autopsy , FBI special agent Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) infiltrates a secretive government train carriage carrying an alien @-@ human hybrid . Mulder is almost killed by a Syndicate operative guarding the hybrid , but is saved by his informant X ( Steven Williams ) . X had been tipped off about Mulder 's activities by the agent 's partner Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) . Scully , meanwhile , meets a group of women with abduction experiences similar to her own , and meets another member of the Syndicate known as the First Elder ( Don S. Williams ) , who claims during her abduction she was placed on a similar train car and experimented upon by the Japanese scientists .

The crew of a French salvage ship trying to raise a World War II ? era submarine from the sea floor are stricken with massive radiation burns ? except for one , who has been infected with a parasitic black oil discovered on the submarine . The oil , controlling the crewman 's body , passes into the crewman 's wife and travels to Hong Kong in pursuit of a middleman selling government secrets , who Mulder has also been pursuing . After Mulder catches Alex Krycek ( Nicholas Lea ) in Hong Kong , the oil passes itself to Krycek . Scully finds that the submarine had been involved in discovering the oil on the sea floor during World War II , under the guise of finding a sunken fighter plane . The infected Krycek makes his way to a missile silo used to hide a UFO , and the oil escapes his body to board the craft . Meanwhile , Scully has tracked down Luis Cardinal , the man responsible for killing her sister .

When the Syndicate suspect that one of their members is passing information to Mulder and Scully , they organise a canary trap to find the leak , using information about the safety of Mulder 's mother as bait . X 's role as an informant is discovered , and he is shot dead , although he is able to pass along the name of another informant who can be of use to Mulder ? Marita Covarrubias ( Laurie Holden ) , the Special Representative to the Secretary @-@ General of the United Nations . Covarrubias ' aid is sought when Mulder attempts to reach Tunguska in Russia to investigate the source of a further black oil contamination . Whilst there , Mulder is held in a gulag and used as a successful test subject for a black oil vaccine . He escapes and is able to return to America , having found that Krycek is working with the Russians .

Having been diagnosed with cancer , Scully is unsure of her future with the FBI . Mulder is convinced that her condition is a result of her earlier abduction , and is prepared to make a deal with the Syndicate to find a cure . He is dissuaded by Walter Skinner ( Mitch Pileggi ) , who secretly makes such a deal instead . While being pursued by an assassin responsible for a hoax alien corpse discovered on a mountaintop , Mulder fakes his own suicide , mutilating the assassin 's face

to provide a decoy body . He uses the distraction this offers to infiltrate The Pentagon to find a cure for Scully 's cancer , while Scully is able to uncover and reveal a Syndicate connection within the FBI .

= = Background = =

During the third season the black oil was introduced , an alien entity that invaded bodies and made them into living hosts . The black oil was able to enter through a victim 's mouth , eyes or nose ; it would leave a victim 's body to revert to its original form or find a new host . The oil is revealed to be a tool used by the Colonists , brought to Earth by meteorites to create hosts of the human population living there . The fourth season episodes " Tunguska " and " Terma " were conceived by the writers when they were trying to conceive a " big and fun canvas " to tell stories . They decided to create a story which had connections to the Russian gulags , which led to the " natural " idea that the Russians were experimenting separately from the Syndicate to create a vaccine for the black oil . Writer John Shiban felt it was natural creating an arms race @-@ like story between the United States and Russia , being that the Cold War had ended a few years earlier . The inspiration for the oil @-@ containing rocks was NASA 's announcement of possible evidence of extraterrestrial life in the Allan Hills 84001 meteorite ; while the gulag scenes were based on Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn 's books *The Gulag Archipelago* and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

The on @-@ screen appearance of the black oil was achieved through visual effects ; the shimmering oil effect was digitally placed over the actors ' corneas in post @-@ production . The crew went through various iterations to find the two " right " types of fluids . According to physical effects crewman David Gauthier , they used a mix of oil and acetone , which he believed gave the substance a more globular look . During the filming of " Apocrypha " , Nicholas Lea was fitted with a mask with tubes for the scene where the alien black oil leaves his body . Lea said filming the scene was horrible , and the scene ended up having to be filmed again a few days later . A similar scene from the start of the episode with the submarine captain was accomplished using a dummy head .

The decision to have the character of X killed off in " Herrenvolk " was made at the end of the third season . The writers felt that they could only do so much with the character and decided that they would either make him a bigger character in the series , or have him pay the price for collaborating with Mulder . The show 's producers decided to give Gillian Anderson 's character Dana Scully cancer early in the fourth season . Carter initially discussed giving Scully 's mother cancer but decided to have Scully suffer from it instead . Carter felt the move would give the show an interesting platform on which to discuss things such as faith , science , health care and a certain element of the paranormal . Some of the writing staff felt that the decision was a poor one to make , citing it as " a cheap TV thing " . However , Frank Spotnitz felt that , given the appearances of cancer @-@ stricken abductees in previous episodes , it was an " obligatory " move to have Scully follow suit .

= = Reception = =

Released on August 2 , 2005 , the collection has received generally positive reviews from critics . *Slant Magazine* 's Keith Uhlich rated it three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five , noting that there is " an unabashed confidence to these episodes " , although this " comes with something of a price as the thrill and surprise of season two mythology stories like " Colony " and " End Game " are replaced by a nagging suspicion that the writers are starting to tread water " . Uhlich singles out " Talitha Cumi " as the collection 's highlight , calling it " an overall mindblower " . Writing for *DVD Talk* , Jeffrey Robinson was impressed with the collection , calling it " highly recommended " . However , he felt that the cohesion between the episodes was lacking somewhat , and that the two @-@ part episodes " Tempus Fugit " and " Max " did not add much to the overall storyline . Exclaim ! 's Monica S. Kuebler , on the other hand , felt negatively about the collection . She too felt that the interrupted nature of the episodes caused a lack of " believable " pacing , and noted that the release " feels like a blatant cash grab by Fox to milk an old franchise while they still can " .

= = Episodes = =

= = Special features = =