

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

" Brand X " is the eighteenth episode of the seventh season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network in the United States on April 16 , 2000 . It was written by Steven Maeda and Greg Walker and directed by Kim Manners . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Brand X " earned a Nielsen household rating of 6 @. @ 8 , being watched by 10 @. @ 81 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed reviews from 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 this episode , Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) is horrified when the witness who was due to testify against the Morley cigarette company dies mysteriously . After being called into assist , Mulder and Scully soon discover that a new brand of cigarette has a dangerous secret .

Inspired by the 1999 film The Insider , " Brand X " was written by Maeda and Walker to be an exploration of the corporate evil inside the cigarette industry . The scenes featuring shots of beetles crawling out of corpses were shot and filmed using real insects as well as real actors . In one particular scene , over 3 @, @ 000 live insects were used . Those scenes took up to a full day to film .

= = Plot = =

In Winston @-@ Salem , North Carolina , Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) is charged with guarding the life of Dr. James Scobie , a former researcher who is testifying against his former employer , the Morley tobacco corporation . Prior to his trial , Scobie develops a cough , but shrugs it off . In the morning , Skinner and Scobie 's wife find his body on the bathroom floor , with his face ripped away .

Morley has created a form of " super @-@ tobacco " , which is inhabited by a genetically engineered tobacco beetle whose eggs can survive the process of cigarette manufacturing and are released in the smoke of the cigarettes . The cigarettes were tested on a range of subjects by Scobie and his colleague , Dr. Peter Voss . Of the four human test subjects , chain smoker Darryl Weaver is the only surviving participant . Prior to his death , Scobie agreed to give Weaver an unlimited supply of cigarettes in exchange for his silence ; he subsequently pressures Voss into honoring his " arrangement " with Scobie .

A chain of victims soon succumb to the eggs contained in the toxic smoke , all of whom are found with their bodies covered in the tobacco beetles . While interviewing Weaver , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) is exposed to the smoke , later coughing up blood and needing his lungs invasively cleared as the beetles begin to hatch .

Voss , who had until now been hiding behind his legal advisor , has a change of heart upon hearing of Mulder ? s condition and tells Skinner of the aforementioned testing . Skinner goes to Weaver ? s apartment after getting his name from Dr. Voss and finds a man tied to a chair with a gag in his mouth . When Skinner removes the gauze wrapper around the man ? s mouth , the man chokes and beetles begin crawling from his mouth . At the hospital , Mulder is in grave danger due to the beetle eggs now hatching in his lungs , and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) attempts to find a way to save him , because he is now " too weak for thoracic surgery . "

Meanwhile , Darryl Weaver attempts to browbeat Skinner , threatening to light one of the toxic cigarettes . As Weaver attempts to leave the building , Skinner shoots Weaver 's shoulder and the pane of glass behind him , leaving him injured and covered in glass . He drops his cigarette to the floor and Skinner dramatically snuffs it out with his shoe . Back at the hospital , Scully realizes that nicotine might save Mulder ? s life . She is correct in her solution , noting that Weaver ? s nicotine tolerance didn ? t allow the tobacco beetles to develop in his lungs . Scully administers nicotine to Mulder , who in turn recovers , albeit with a sore throat , as well as a minor addiction to nicotine , which drove him to buy a pack of Morley cigarettes for himself . However , upon some chiding by

Scully , he throws them out , but then stares at them pensively after she leaves .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

Originally , the premise of the episode was supposed to be about " the horrifying aspects of over @-@ eating " . However , since an earlier episode , " Hungry " , had dealt with similar themes , the writing staff decided to take the conceit in a different direction and examine the " corporate evil that populates the cigarette industry " . The episode 's writers , Steven Maeda and Greg Walker , were both admitted fans of the *The Insider* , a 1999 film that examines the tobacco industry , and so the two decided to create an episode with a similar feel . Marc Shapiro , in his book *All Things : The Official Guide to the X @-@ Files Volume 6* , noted that the episode was " literally , torn from the headlines " ? a rare occurrence for an X @-@ Files episode .

Because both David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson were busy adding the finishing touches to their own episodes ? " *Hollywood A.D.* " and " *All Things* " , respectively ? the writers struggled with a way to create a convincing story , but not force Mulder and Scully to be in every scene . The two eventually decided that causing Mulder to get sick in acts three and four would free up Duchovny for his episode . Walker noted , " Mulder getting sick in Act Two and being in a hospital bed for Acts Three and Four was the direct result of his limited amount of time . It was easier to shoot a bunch of stuff of him in bed than having him have to be in a lot of different locations . "

= = = Filming = = =

In order to match the episode 's theme of smoking , production designer Corey Kaplan was tasked with creating an overall yellow and brown color scheme for the episode . In this manner , each scene was given " a perpetually smoky look " . Kaplan , who had worked together with episode director Kim Manners , had the idea to " enhance " Morley Cigarette 's corporate offices with " long hallways and sets heavy on texture and grit " in order to compliment the aforementioned color scheme .

The scenes featuring shots of beetles crawling out of corpses were shot and filmed using real insects as well as real actors . In particular , during the scene wherein the Complaining Man is discovered dead , over 3 @,@ 000 live bugs were shot crawling on the body of Mike Hungerford , the portraying actor . Producer Harry Bring noted that the bug scenes were tedious and hard to film because " bugs don 't take directions very well , so you pretty much have to wait until they decided to get it right . " Although the shots of the bugs were considerably brief in the final episode , the scenes required a full day of shooting to get perfect . The shots of bugs crawling out of Daniel Brimley 's mouth and the shots of the bugs being sucked out of Mulder were created via a combination of CGI and " dummy bugs " .

= = Reception = =

" *Brand X* " first aired in the United States on April 16 , 2000 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 6 @.@ 8 , with a 10 share , meaning that roughly 6 @.@ 8 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 10 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 10 @.@ 81 million viewers . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on July 16 , 2000 and received 0 @.@ 75 million viewers , making it the most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Tonight the terror is inside . Deep inside . "

Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examinations* , gave the episode a moderately positive review . He wrote that " this wasn 't the most riveting X @-@ File I 've ever seen and there wasn 't a tremendous amount of heart @-@ pounding tension from beginning to end [...] but that didn 't bother me .

Sometimes , just being entertained is enough . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a moderately positive review and awarded it two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . Vitaris concluded that the episode was " not the series ' most exciting episode , but a solid story with interesting characters used well in the service of the plot " Kenneth Silber from Space.com wrote positively of the episode , saying " ' Brand X ' benefits from a certain unpredictability in its plot and characters . The menace is unusual , and imaginatively conceived . The tobacco company and its employees display a degree of complexity , rather than merely serving as one @-@ dimensional villains in a public @-@ health morality play . " Gareth Wigmore of TV Zone gave the episode an 8 out of 10 rating . Wigmore noted that a " freshness surrounds the whole episode , presumably a result of the writing " .

Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " C " . He called it a " hodge @-@ podge of various elements that have worked in the past but feel beyond tired now " . He was largely critical of the episode 's story , which he felt was a rip @-@ off of The Insider , as well as the make @-@ up effects for the episode , which he called " fairly fake " looking . VanDerWerff , however , was complimentary towards Tobin Bell 's performance , calling him " charismatic and interesting " , as well as the fact that he plays " a great schemer " . Rich Rosell from DigitallyObsessed.com awarded the episode 3 out of 5 stars and wrote " Tobacco beetles , dismembered noses and some really bad second @-@ hand smoke permeate this installment , but it gets snuffed out with a lazy payoff . " 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 @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . Despite praising the plot , writing " it 's a great premise , with lots of gore and larvae " , the two lament its loss in direction : " halfway through , once the episode reveals what its concept is , the story is left with nowhere to go . "