

= Travelers (The X @-@ Files) =

" Travelers " is the fifteenth episode of the fifth season of American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files , and the 111th episode of the series overall . It was written by John Shiban and Frank Spotnitz , directed by William A. Graham and aired in the United States on March 29 , 1998 on the Fox network . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. @ 9 , being watched by 15 @. @ 06 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed 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 this flashback episode , a young Fox Mulder visits retired FBI Agent Arthur Dales (Darren McGavin) , who tells him about one of the first X @-@ Files , a case that Mulder 's father , Bill , was involved in .

" Travelers " was written as a tribute to Howard Dimsdale , a screenwriter who was victimized by Hollywood blacklist in the 1950s and explored the idea that " the witch @-@ hunt [of the 1950s] was actually a smoke screen to conceal something else " . Noted actor Darren McGavin appears as Arthur Dales . McGavin was requested for the part especially by Chris Carter and had been approached to play various characters on the series before . In order to create a " convincing period movie " , various special effects were used , including a special facial appliance that allowed the " alien spider " to crawl out of Skur 's mouth and into his victim , and a bleaching job for the final film to give it an aged feel .

= = Plot = =

In 1990 in Caledonia , Wisconsin , a man named Edward Skur is shot by a police officer during an eviction and the last word he speaks is " Mulder " . Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) , at this point working with the FBI 's Behavioral Science Unit , believes that the man may have had some connection to his father , Bill . Mulder discovers that Skur was reported to have died in 1952 . He seeks out Arthur Dales (Darren McGavin) , a retired FBI agent who investigated Skur in the 1950s . At first , Dales is reluctant to discuss the case and warns Mulder away . However , Mulder 's threat of a subpoena persuades Dales to tell his story .

In a flashback to the 1950s , Dales (Fredric Lane) and his partner Hayes Michel are sent to arrest Skur (Garret Dillahunt) for being a communist . When Dales is told that Skur hanged himself while in custody , he feels guilty and returns to Skur 's house to apologize to his wife . While there , he sees Skur alive and tries to recapture him . In the following struggle , an appendage emerges from Skur 's mouth . Skur is forced to flee when a neighbor interrupts the fight . Dales ' partner and Roy Cohn warn Dales to change his report about the attack . He does so , but feels guilty about it .

Later , Dales and Michel are called to investigate the death of a German doctor in Chevy Chase , Maryland . The local police deny calling them , and Dales finds a coaster for a bar with " come alone " written on the back . At the bar , Dales meets Bill Mulder , an agent from the State Department . Bill tells him that Skur was experimented on along with two other men , and those two men later killed themselves . Skur killed the German doctor in revenge for what was done to him , and he will kill Dales and Michel too because Skur believes they are part of the plot . Dales tries to warn Michel but he is too late and Skur kills him . Dales tries to investigate but Mr. Cohn covers it up .

A secretary at the FBI office , Dorothy Bahnsen (played by Jane Perry) , helps Dales find a file that mentions Gissing , one of the two men who committed suicide . (She explains that she files all the unsolved cases under X because there is more room under X than U.) Gissing 's body is still in the morgue and Dales convinces the technician to cut open the body where they find a strange creature has been sewn into Gissing 's chest . Dales goes to Skur 's wife and tells her what was done to her husband and that he wants to expose the experiments . Skur 's wife goes down into the backyard bomb shelter to tell Skur , but he is overcome by his parasite and kills her .

Cohn picks up Dales and takes him to the office of the Director who gives him a speech about

patriotism and convinces him to help bring in Skur . They take Dales back to the bar to meet Skur , who attacks Dales . Bill Mulder and the other agent wait outside until they think Dales is dead before rushing in to find that Dales has handcuffed Skur and is still alive .

Back in the present Fox Mulder is dismayed to hear what his father was involved in . He asks Dales how Skur escaped and Dales speculates that someone might have helped Skur escape hoping that the truth of what was done to him may one day be revealed . The episode ends with a final flashback of Bill Mulder driving down a road with Skur and giving Skur the keys to the car and walking away .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing and casting = = =

The episode was written as a tribute to Howard Dimsdale , a screenwriter who was victimized by Hollywood blacklist in the 1950s . Dimsdale wrote several movies under the pseudonym " Arthur Dales " , and thus , his name was the inspiration for the character of the same name in " Travelers " . For many years , Dimsdale had taught at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles ; two of his students were executive producer Frank Spotnitz and co @-@ producer John Shiban . The two decided to combine many of Dimsdale 's stories of " paranoia , treachery , and double @-@ dealing " with the idea that " the witch @-@ hunt was actually a smoke screen to conceal something else " . The writers soon realized that by setting the episode in the past , they would be able to " trace the roots of both Fox Mulder and the X @-@ Files " .

This episode does not feature Scully , as Gillian Anderson was busy still filming her final parts of Fight the Future . Noted actor Darren McGavin appears as Arthur Dales . He was requested for the part especially by Chris Carter . Casting director Rick Millikan noted , " McGavin was Chris 's inspiration for writing this series . He always had Darren in mind to use somewhere , and that was really his doing . He said ' I want Darren McGavin for this , ' and he happened to be available , and we got him . " McGavin had originally been casting directors ' first choice for the role of Senator Matheson for the second season opener " Little Green Men " . McGavin was later sought out to be Mulder 's dad , but he again eluded the staff . In the end , McGavin finally agreed to appear on the show playing Dales , the agent who originally founded the X @-@ Files .

= = = Filming = = =

Due to the time crunches of the fifth season , a " convincing period movie " was created in " less time than humanly possible " by members of The X @-@ Files 's production staff . Costume designer Jenni Gullet set about renting and creating vintage clothing from the fifties ; art director Gary Allen collected older copies of National Geographic to make J. Edgar Hoover 's office seem realistic to the period . Allen also constructed the bomb shelter , because his father was a contractor who had actually built several .

Special effects supervisor Toby Lindala created the " alien spider " as well as a special facial appliance that allowed the creature to crawl out of Skur 's mouth and into his victim . The final film was slightly bleached in post @-@ production to give it a " vintage appearance " . The production staff was pleased with the final product , noting that it does justice to both " the painful controversies of the 1950s " and The X @-@ Files as a " contemporary TV series " . The episode also contained several in @-@ jokes . The song playing in the German doctor 's house is a specially recorded cover of the popular song " Lili Marleen " ; the song 's record cover reads " Paula Rabwini " , a reference to one of the series ' producers , Paul Rabwin . Agent Hayes Michel was named after the fiancé of Mary Astadourian , one of series creator Chris Carter 's executive assistants .

= = = Continuity = = =

In several shots , Mulder can be seen wearing a wedding band . This was David Duchovny 's idea ; he explained " That was just me , you know , fooling around . I had recently gotten married , and I wanted to wear it . " He later described the situation as " so Mulder to never have mentioned that he was married " . Series creator Chris Carter later told Duchovny that the situation " creates a problem . If we ever do a show that takes place seven years ago , you 'll have to be married . " However , Duchovny reassured Carter by pointing out that there were not very many episodes , if any , that had been planned to take place seven years prior to the events in this episode . The inclusion of the detail caused an " Internet frenzy " and the minor detail was never resolved on screen .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Travelers " premiered in the US on the Fox network on March 19 , 1998 and in the United Kingdom on February 3 , 1999 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 9 , with a 15 share , meaning that roughly 9 @. @ 9 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 15 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 15 @. @ 06 million viewers .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Travelers " received mixed reviews from critics . In a 2000 review of season five for the New Straits Times , Francis Dass noted that the episode possessed a " nice retro feel throughout " . Dass was also complimentary towards the fact that " Mulder senior is shown in action " during the episode . Todd VanDerWerff from The A.V. Club gave the episode a B and wrote positively of it , noting that , although the entry was designed as a " stall " , it felt like a " weird backdoor pilots for [a show] that never happened . " He noted that the episode " isn ' t as good as it could have been " but argued that the story was " still a mostly fun " . In addition , VanDerWerff wrote positively of McGavin 's guest starring role and was complimentary towards the " alien spider thing " , describing it as " wonderfully gross " . 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 four stars out of five and called it " fresh and urgent " . The two wrote that , while the episode was a stopgap , it " cannot be better placed . " They argued that " Travlers " ' s use of the " Communist witch hunt " conceit and its idea that " serving " means being a patriot , whereas " resisting " means being a traitor ? a reference to the previous episode 's tagline ? themes were well @- @ played . Shearman and Pearson , furthermore , praised McGavin 's acting , noting that he was " the series ' spiritual father " .

Other reviews were more critical . John Keegan from Critical Myth awarded the episode 5 out of 10 and wrote , " Overall , this episode is an odd divergence from the normal series format , prompted by the production schedule for the feature film . [...] Acceptable as a stand @- @ alone episode , it simply doesn ' t fit within the overall scope of the series , and that makes it hard to judge objectively . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a largely negative review and awarded it one star out of four . She noted that the episode , much like the earlier season five entry " Unusual Suspects " was " filler " , but that , unlike the earlier episode , " Travelers " was " not particularly entertaining . " Vitaris criticized the character of Arthur Dales and wrote that he was " not an intriguing character " . However , she did praise the visuals , describing them as " outstanding " .