

= The Getaway (Dexter) =

" The Getaway " is the fourth season finale of the American television drama series Dexter , and the 48th overall episode of the series . It originally aired on Showtime on December 13 , 2009 . In the episode , Dexter goes to great lengths to stop Arthur , who now knows Dexter 's true identity . Meanwhile , Debra learns the truth about Dexter 's mother , the homicide division closes in on the Trinity Killer , and Rita reaffirms her support for Dexter , even as she acknowledges his hidden demons .

The teleplay was written by Wendy West and Melissa Rosenberg , based on a story by Rosenberg and Scott Reynolds . Directed by Steve Shill , " The Getaway " marked the conclusion of the Trinity Killer plotline , as well as the final regular appearance of guest star John Lithgow , who portrayed Arthur Mitchell . The episode also included the death of Rita Morgan , Dexter 's wife , who had been portrayed by Julie Benz , a regular cast member since the beginning of the series . To protect the twist ending of Rita 's death , Dexter producers imposed strict security measures , which included the distribution of fake alternate endings and forcing staff members to sign non @-@ disclosure agreements .

" The Getaway " received generally positive reviews , with several commentators calling the twist ending shocking , unexpected and likely to change the direction of the entire series . According to Nielsen ratings , the episode was watched by 2 @.@ 6 million households , making it the most @-@ watched original series episode in Showtime 's history .

= = Plot = =

Having learned the truth about Dexter 's identity , Arthur (John Lithgow) confronts Dexter (Michael C. Hall) at the police station , where nobody else knows Arthur is the Trinity Killer . He warns Dexter to leave him alone from now on . When he leaves , Dexter follows Arthur in his car , and accidentally strikes another car on his way . Dexter follows Arthur to a bank , where he sees Arthur bring a large envelope back to his van . Dexter attacks Arthur , knocking him out and dragging him into the van , and Dexter realizes the envelope is filled with cash . Dexter plans to take Arthur 's van away and kill Arthur , but he spots the driver of the car he struck earlier talking to police officers next to Dexter 's car . Dexter hides the envelope and confronts the driver , who acts very irritable . A frustrated Dexter attacks him and is detained by the police . By the time he is released , Arthur is gone , but Dexter recovers the envelope of money .

Meanwhile , Debra (Jennifer Carpenter) continues looking into the mysterious woman who had a secret affair with her and Dexter 's father , Harry (James Remar) . An old informant of Harry takes Debra to the woman 's house , which Debra recognizes as the house of Brian Moser . Moser was the Ice Truck Killer , the main villain from the first season who was engaged to Debra , then tried to kill her . The informant reveals the woman 's name was Laura Moser (Sage Kirkpatrick) , and while researching her , Debra learns Laura was Dexter 's mother , and that the Ice Truck Killer was Dexter 's brother . The police discovered the real identity of Trinity , and at Arthur 's house , Debra confronts Dexter , who feigns surprise and fears Debra is close to realizing his secret life as a serial killer . Instead , Debra says she believes the Ice Truck Killer used her to get to him , and she reasserts how much she loves her foster brother .

Inspired partially by Debra , and partially by his desire to be a better family man than Arthur , Dexter considers giving up killing people . After convincing his wife Rita (Julie Benz) to go safely out of town , Dexter searches for Arthur , eventually tracking him down and capturing him . Dexter insists he is not like Arthur , but Arthur insists they are both the same . Right before he is killed with a framing hammer , Arthur tells Dexter " It 's already over . " Disposing of Arthur 's body on his boat afterwards , Dexter comes to realize that his love for his family is starting to outweigh his need to kill , and he begins to hope for a future without killing . But upon returning home , he finds a message from Rita that she came home from the airport because she forgot her identification . Dexter returns her phone call , only to find that Rita 's cell phone and bags are in the house . Dexter hears Harrison crying in the bathroom and finds Rita dead in the bathtub . Harrison sits in a pool of Rita 's blood on

the bathroom floor , in the same manner that Dexter was left in a pool of his mother 's blood during his youth , which gave Dexter his murderous tendencies .

= = Production = =

" The Getaway " , the Dexter fourth season finale , was directed by Steve Shill . The teleplay was written by Wendy West and Melissa Rosenberg , based on a story by Rosenberg and Scott Reynolds . It was the final episode helmed by show runner and executive producer Clyde Phillips before his departure from the show to spend more time with his family . Filming on " The Getaway " ended on October 13 , 2009 , and the episode was originally aired on Showtime on December 13 . " The Getaway " marked the conclusion of a season @-@ long plotline regarding the Trinity Killer , which featured John Lithgow as a serial killer and the primary antagonist of the fourth season . The episode also included the death of Rita Morgan , who had been a regular character since the beginning of the series . Although her death is off @-@ screen and the killer is not specifically identified , it is strongly suggested she was killed by Arthur Mitchell , which Lithgow himself confirmed to be true in an interview that aired on Showtime immediately after the episode was originally broadcast . Clyde Phillips said the ramifications " The Getaway " would have on the future of the series had not yet been determined , as brainstorming for the fifth season was not set to begin until February 2010 .

Rita 's death was alluded to by Dexter producers , who told media outlets " The Getaway " included a series @-@ changing twist , leading to widespread speculation about the possibility of a character death , or the possibility of Debra Morgan learning the truth about her brother 's homicidal nature . Extra security precautions were taken to prevent the finale 's secrets from becoming exposed . Network staff members were forced to sign non @-@ disclosure agreements , and decoy scripts were drafted and disseminated to protect the twist ending . In one of the fake alternate endings , Dexter learned on the news about a child murderer escaping from prison , and the episode would end with Dexter trying to decide whether to join Rita on vacation or go after the escaped killer . Nobody but essential cast and staff were allowed on the set during filming of the episode , and the scripts and DVDs of the episode were watermarked before they were taken off the set .

Phillips claimed the Dexter staff did not know how the finale would conclude until late in the season , but Phillips said Rita 's death began to feel inevitable as the story evolved . However , Julie Benz said she had been told John Lithgow knew about it from the beginning of the season . Phillips said the staff felt obligated to do more than simply kill the Trinity Killer in the final episode , especially because he felt the death of the third season antagonist (played by Jimmy Smits) was not handled " as well as we could have " . The writers discussed the idea of having Debra find out about Dexter 's secret life , but it was decided they could not anticipate how drastically the series would be changed by that revelation . Benz heard rumors from David Zayas that her character would be killed in the episode , but she was not officially notified until late September , when the producers held a meeting with her the day before the season finale script was distributed to the cast . She said , " It was a tough meeting . In a bizarre way , it felt like a scene from *Defending Your Life* . " Benz was unhappy about the news but she handled it professionally . Benz described the death scene as " very poetic " .

Executive Producer Sara Colleton said it was difficult to kill off a long @-@ standing character , but they felt " this is where Dexter needed to be taken " . She also felt the motives for Arthur killing Rita were deliberately made to be open to various interpretations , including that Arthur may have killed her " in a bizarre way to trigger Dexter to deal with who he really is " . When asked whether Arthur told Rita about Dexter 's secret life before killing her , Phillips said the answer had not been determined because the fifth season was not yet planned , but he added , " I would think that he did not tell her " . Michael C. Hall called the ending a " really bold stroke " that would reset the stage of the series just as the Dexter Morgan character began to feel he could live with an emotional connection to his wife and family . Hall also said of the ending , " More than anything I felt for the audience . I think this is the kind of thing that 's really going to tie people in knots . "

Lithgow called Rita 's death a " fantastic choice " , which he said shed a completely different light on

the final scene between Dexter and Arthur , which appears to be somewhat sympathetic before the audience learned what Arthur had done . Lithgow said he knew that Arthur would be killed from the very beginning of the season . He said he particularly enjoyed working with Michael C. Hall in " The Getaway " , and particularly cited the opening scene in the police station , where he said Hall was " so great at working out the rhythms and finding the real meaning " of the moment where Dexter realizes Arthur has the advantage over him . Lithgow also said he enjoyed their final scene together , including the moment where he realized his daughter had committed suicide : " It 's very unusual for a character that despicable to have a moment like that , a moment of such pain . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Getaway " broke several records for the Showtime cable network . The finale episode was seen by 2 @. @ 6 million households , according to Nielsen ratings , making it the most @- @ watched original series episode in the network 's history . This rating surpassed the record that had been broken just a week prior by the Dexter episode , Hello , Dexter Morgan , which was seen by 2 @. @ 1 million households . The pair of Dexter episodes were the most watched Showtime telecast since the October 23 , 1999 broadcast of a boxing match between Mike Tyson and Orlin Norris . " The Getaway " was seen by 54 percent more viewers than the third season finale , " Do You Take Dexter Morgan ? " , which aired on December 14 , 2008 . The high ratings for " The Getaway " gave a boost to the third season finale of Californication , which aired immediately after the Dexter season finale . The Californication episode , Mia Culpa , was seen by 1 @. @ 1 million households , the highest ever viewership for the series .

= = = Critical reaction = = =

The episode received critical acclaim and has been cited by many critics as one of the best in the series , with several commentators calling the twist ending shocking , unexpected and likely to change the direction of the entire series . Entertainment Weekly television writer Ken Tucker praised the twist of the episode , which he said " sent the series spinning into a whole new direction for next season " . Tucker praised the Dexter writing staff , " for maintaining the suspense while creating a whole new world within the Dexter world : the awful universe of Trinity and his own trapped family . " Bill Harris of the Toronto Sun said the episode was good before the final scene , but that the twist shed a whole different light on several scenes . Harris said of the twist , " It 's nice to know TV can still be that impactful , isn 't it ? But my God , what a stunner . "

IGN reviewer Matt Fowler gave the episode an " Incredible " rating of 9 @. @ 6 / 10 , saying that : " I 'm sure we all loved Dexter 's final moments with Arthur , down in the toy train bomb shelter , but now looking back at the scene , knowing the final moments of the episode , it 's filled with so many more eerie easter eggs . Something was definitely up when Arthur said , " It 's already over . " We all thought so because we 've heard him say those words before . We also saw Dexter take a beat after the line , confused about its meaning . We could have chalked it up to the fact that Arthur was accepting his own death , but Dexter 's furrowed brow let us know that something more sinister was in play here . Of course , the real bitch here is that Dexter , having dispatched of Trinity officially , now can 't go back and do it with the spirit of vengeance . The scene stands quite beautifully on its own , but Dexter would certainly have not given Arthur an empathetic send off if he knew what that monster had done . We can all point fingers at certain missteps that Dexter took throughout the entire season - mistakes that led to Rita 's demise - but when you take it in as a whole it 's a rather satisfying and cleverly constructed story that actually made us all buy and believe , by the end , that Dexter truly wanted to be rid of his murderous spirit . His stubborn need to kill Trinity himself wound up circumventing the entire justice system , which would have wound up catching Arthur based solely on Deb 's tenacity and expert detective work . " Also , IGN listed Arthur Mitchell as 2nd on a

list of Dexter 's Top 10 Kills saying that " This was the murder that America was clamoring for . And it was effin ' great . " In his review of the entire fourth season , Fowler , giving the season an " Incredible " rating of 9 @. @ 5 , said of the finale that " It all just came off as a ton of creepy , guilty fun . I would bet that when we all saw the final scene of the season finale that we , simply due to the time we 've spent the characters over four years , felt a ton of emotions that we might not have even known were there . "

E ! writer Kristin Dos Santos called the ending " horrifying " , and said of Rita , " This death just might go down as one of the most shocking deaths ever on television . " Claire Zulkey said that the twist ending was intense , and the teleplay was woven to feature several moments that had led him to suspect different conclusions . He also praised what he expected to be a " re @-@ set " of the series with Rita 's death . Marcia White of The Express @-@ Times declared Dexter " one of the best cable dramas on TV " , and called the final scene between Dexter and Arthur particularly touching . Mark Dawidziak of The Plain Dealer said the episode was shocking and suspenseful , and called Dexter " a series that leaves you guessing as the psychological ambiguities run deeper and darker " .

= = = Awards = = =

The director of " The Getaway " , Steve Shill , won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series for this episode . In addition , Matthew V. Colonna was nominated for Outstanding Single @-@ Camera Picture Editing for a Drama Series .