

= Grotesque (The X @-@ Files) =

" Grotesque " is the fourteenth episode of the third season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files and the show 's 63rd episode overall . It premiered on the Fox network in the United States on February 2 , 1996 . It was written by Howard Gordon and directed by Kim Manners . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Grotesque " earned a Nielsen household rating of 11 @.@ 6 , being watched by 18 @.@ 32 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mostly positive 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 episode , Mulder and Scully investigate a serial killer who claims a gargoyle spirit committed the crimes . When Mulder joins the case , his obsession with solving it causes Scully to question his sanity .

Gordon was inspired to write the episode after walking down the streets of New York and seeing several stone gargoyles on the corner , staring at him . Gordon developed the concept with series creator Chris Carter , who suggested the addition of more psychological aspects to the episode . Originally , the teaser was planned to be filmed at a Catholic hospital , but the shot was relocated to the site of a historic post office after concerns were raised about attaching a fake gargoyle to the building .

= = Plot = =

At George Washington University , a group of artists sketch a nude male model . However , one of the artists , John Mostow (Levani Outchaneichvili) , draws a demonic creature in the model 's place ; while using a utility knife to sharpen his pencil he cuts his hand trying and smears the blood on his drawing . When the model reaches his car after the session , he is attacked and killed by an obscured assailant . The following morning , Mostow is arrested in his apartment by an FBI task force led by Agent Bill Patterson (Kurtwood Smith) , who finds the utility knife used in the murder covered in blood .

Mostow , an immigrant from Uzbekistan with a history of involuntary commitment , is charged with killing seven men by mutilating their faces . Agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) become involved in the investigation when Mostow insists that he was possessed during the killings ; his claims are given credence when another murder occurs after his arrest . Mostow draws a gargoyle and claims it made him kill . Mulder meets with Patterson , his former mentor , who has spent three years on the case . The relationship between the two is tense , and Patterson is skeptical of Mulder 's theories . Mulder and Scully go to Mostow 's studio and discover a hidden room full of gargoyle sculptures , finding corpses within them .

A glassblower is attacked and hospitalized . Nemhauser (Greg Thirloway) , another agent on the case , tells Scully that Patterson was responsible for getting Mulder assigned to the case and may admire him after all . Patterson finds Mulder in the library studying gargoyles ; he tells Mulder that he 's wasting his time and is a disappointment to him . Scully goes to Mulder 's apartment and finds it covered with gargoyle drawings . Mulder , having sculpted a gargoyle himself in Mostow 's studio before falling asleep , awakens to find a figure with a gargoyle @-@ like face standing over him ; he gives chase but is attacked , his face slashed with a utility knife . Mulder refuses to explain to Scully why he was in Mostow 's studio . Scully confronts Patterson , who tells her not to try and stop Mulder from doing what he 's doing , because she won 't be able to . Mulder goes to see Mostow again , but Mostow will not tell him how to find the creature that attacked him .

Scully finds a disassembled utility knife at the latest crime scene with Mulder 's prints on it and discovers that the murder weapon is missing from the evidence room . She meets with Assistant Director Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) , who is also worried about Mulder 's behavior . Mulder has a nightmare about being attacked by a gargoyle that is really himself . He wakes up and goes to Mostow 's studio again , finding a severed arm . Scully gets a message to call Nemhauser , but his

phone is answered by Mulder , who denies taking the knife . Mulder searches Mostow 's studio and finds Nemhauser 's body inside a new sculpture . Mulder is then confronted by Patterson , who is unaware of how he arrived at the studio . Mulder then deduces that Patterson is the killer , based on his three @-@ year obsession with Mostow and his request for Mulder to investigate the case . Mulder confronts him , but Patterson flees when Scully arrives . Mulder pursues him and they fight ; Patterson is shot and apprehended .

In the last scene , Patterson is pressed against the bars of his cell , screaming and pleading that he is innocent , while the camera focuses on a gargoyle drawn in blood on the wall of his cell . Earlier in the episode , Mulder told Scully that he and Patterson disagreed on the best way to investigate serial murders , and Patterson always tried to empathize with the suspect , imagining himself in the killer 's place . Mulder 's closing narration concludes that it was this that eventually drove Patterson insane .

= = Production = =

Writer Howard Gordon conceived the idea for the episode while he was walking down the streets of New York and noticed several stone gargoyles on the corner staring at him . Gordon developed the idea into an X @-@ File involving possession by a gargoyle spirit . He wrote a draft script for the episode but had to turn to series creator Chris Carter three days before production began in order to rework it . The two worked on the script over the weekend to add more psychological aspects to the episode . Gordon claimed to be very proud of the final product . Assistant Art Director Gary Allen drew the gargoyle sketches used in this episode .

The producers originally planned to film the teaser sequence at a Catholic hospital , but the hospital was reluctant to affix a faux gargoyle to the building . Thus , the shot was relocated to Heritage Hall , a noted filming location and former post office in Vancouver . Some last minute scrambling was required when city workmen tore up the sidewalk on the very spot where the producers planned to film the scene . The construction crew reassured the show that the construction would be finished in time for filming . Indeed , the work was finished two hours before shooting of the episode started . Additional exterior shots were filmed at an alley near Bonanza Meat Market . The walls were painted to match those of Heritage Hall , although after filming was completed , they were returned to their original state .

Kim Manners called " Grotesque " his favorite third season episode and praised David Duchovny 's performance on this episode , saying " Duchovny drove himself , and he was brilliant in that show . " Manners also said of the episode : " I think ' Grotesque ' is a frightening show . I think it is a disturbing show , and I think that 's why ? for me ? it 's such a good show . We pulled it off making the viewer feel uneasy . I even found it a difficult show to watch . Yeah , it was a pretty dark hour of television and I would like to do more of those . " In order to get a proper feel for the episode , Manners listened to the music from the 1990 film Jacob 's Ladder until his wife " finally asked , ' Do we have to listen to that (bleeping) CD again ? ' " Manners also theorized that the episode may have been the template for the show Millennium , which premiered on Fox the following television season .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Grotesque " premiered on the Fox network in the United States on February 2 , 1996 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 6 , with an 18 share , meaning that roughly 11 @.@ 6 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 18 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . This totaled 18 @.@ 32 million viewers . The episode had the third highest ratings of the third season .

== Reviews ==

" Grotesque " received mostly positive reviews from critics . Reviewer Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club gave the episode an A ? and noted that while the episode is " ponderous and pretentious " , this aspect of the entry turns it into " a benefit " . VanDerWerff wrote , " here 's the thing : ' Grotesque ' is absolutely [...] self @-@ serious , just as much as I feared it would be . It also , unquestionably , works . The reason it works is very simple : It 's pretty scary " . Critical Myth 's John Keegan gave the episode a largely positive review , awarding it an 8 out of 10 . He noted , " Overall , this is a solid effort by Howard Gordon . It ? s good to see some of the methods that earned Mulder his nickname , and the underlying dynamic between Mulder and Scully is very well played . The central premise is vague enough to fall within the confines of the unusual , if not necessarily paranormal , and the supporting cinematography and score rise to the occasion . " 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 five stars out of five , and praised the themes of the episode , writing that , " Because ' Grotesque ' certainly surprises , and shocks , and even appals ? this is the closest The X @-@ Files ever gets to staring into the face of insanity . " Furthermore , Shearman and Pearson praised Duchovny 's acting , calling it " his best performance yet seen in the series " . Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a positive review and awarded it three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She referred to the episode as " one of the [the show 's] darkest ever " and called it " a triumph for director Manners , cinematographer Bartley , and The X @-@ Files art department . " Vitaris , however , was critical of the episode 's closing monologue , noting that " [Mulder] spells out what the camera is saying a hundred times more effectively with its finale shot of a pairing of a gargoyle . " Jonathan Dunn , writing for *What Culture* , described " Grotesque " as a " deep , dark , twisted psychological moment for The X @-@ Files that I absolutely love " and included it in the " 5 Episodes [of The X @-@ Files] That Could Be Made Into Movies " list .

Not all reviews were positive . Author Phil Farrand was critical of the episode , rating it his fourth least favorite episode of the first four seasons in his book *The Nitpickers Guide to the X @-@ Files* . *Entertainment Weekly* gave " Grotesque " a D , labeling it as " ponderous , oblique , and featuring one of Mulder 's always annoying , easy @-@ way @-@ out soliloquy summations " .

== Awards ==

" Grotesque " earned an Emmy Award by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for Outstanding Cinematography - Series .