

EGSM – The X-Files

Content Warnings

- Spoilers for all of The X Files (inc. films)
- Discussions of: fire & immolation, body horror, cannibalism, aliens, conspiracy thinking, death & murder, police, insects (bees, cockroaches, worms), the paranormal
- Mentions of: anxiety, guns, drugs

HELEN

And every time I say The X-Files, my brain plays the doo do do doo...

ALASDAIR

You too, huh?

RAFF

Yeah.

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

HELEN

Yes! Every single time!

(Laughter)

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusiasm. This is the Rusty Quill Podcast Show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers and today, we're talking about The X-Files and I am spookily excited to be joined by Alasdair, Nathan and Raff, as always, we are going to be introducing ourselves alphabetically, which means Alasdair, can you please give us your pronouns and tell us what you do?

ALASDAIR

Of course, thanks for so much for having me back, I love doing these.

HELEN

Yay!

ALASDAIR

Hello, everyone. My name is Alasdair. My pronouns are he/him. I co-own the Escape Artist Podcast Company with my partner and love of my life and just generally amazing human, Marguerite Kenner, and she also edits the Hugo

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Award nominated fanzine The Full Lid, which I write, and we do bunch of other stuff as well.

Also, I was in the Magnus Archives once as the unsung hero.

HELEN

(Laughter)

It really makes my soul filled with joy whenever someone describes someone as the love of their life.

ALASDAIR

Aw.

HELEN

It's just such an amazingly like evocative phrase and I am just such a romantic at heart, it's just lovely, it's very happy.

ALASDAIR

Aw.

HELEN

Next up, Nathan, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

NATHAN

Hey I'm Nathan. My pronouns are he/him and I write and do a bunch of different things for The Storage Papers, been having a lot of fun between seasons right now, so lots of writing lately.

HELEN

(Laughter)

What season are you on now?

NATHAN

We are in between season three and four.

HELEN

Ooo, that's very exciting. You're getting up to Magnus levels!

NATHAN

Working on it.

HELEN

(Laughter)

And Raff, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

RAFF

Hi, I'm Raff. My pronouns are both she/her and they/them and I am writing for both Trice Forgotten and Cry Havoc! Ask Questions Later, which are yet to come, so if they're bad hopefully by, if my episode's bad, hopefully by the time you listen to them, you'll have forgotten that I had anything to do with it.

HELEN

(Laughter)

I'm sure they won't be bad. I have utmost faith in you, although I have just realised that is a very anxiety inducing thing to say!

(Laughter)

So, I'll take it back!

(Laughter)

RAFF

Please don't have faith in me.

Please adjust your expectations.

HELEN

I have reasonable expectations for you.

(Laughter)

RAFF

There you go.

HELEN

So, as with many of these episodes we're going to start at the start, and the first question is, how did you all get into The X-Files? And every time I say The X-Files, my brain plays the doo do do doo...

ALASDAIR

You too, huh?

RAFF

Yeah.

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

HELEN

Yes! Every single time!

(Laughter)

Does anyone want to tell me how you started watching it?

ALASDAIR

It just kind of arrived. We have a very different way of interacting with and communicating with media in 2022 than we had in 1990(coughs), or you know, when The X-Files first launched. I think somehow my stupid Fortean sense meant that I would scour The Radio Times looking for things which weren't a costume drama, not that those are bad, I realise now, and I saw the listing for The X-Files and went, oh I'll give that a try and watched it, but the first one I have a very clear memory of was actually one of the worst episodes.

HELEN

Oh!

ALASDAIR

Fire, which is about an IRA pyrokinetic, was not shown in the initial run because it was too gory, and it was instead shown as part of BBC2's weird night.

(Laughter)

Or as it now becomes, from kind of several decades in the future, everything will look like this in two decades, get ready for it. My three abiding memories of weird night were, the overuse of Portishead's debut album was the incidental music, lots of stop motion video of radio telescopes doing spooky things, and this episode of The X-Files...

(Laughter)

Which wouldn't even make a lot of people's top 50. I mean it's competent, it's especially fun once you realise a tiny baby Mark Sheppard doing his best [speaking in an Irish accent] Irish accent, is the evil pyrokinetic in it, but it felt forbidden, it felt kind of ooh I shouldn't be watching this – but I'm going too! And that one really cemented for me.

HELEN

Can I just ask, why was it considered too gory, was it just too much fire?

ALASDAIR

Oh yeah, I mean you know the future Romo Lampkin sets fire to a whole bunch of people, faces get melted off, oh yeah.

HELEN

Oh, I see.

Yeah, faces getting melted off, I understand.

Raff, how about you, how did you start watching it?

RAFF

Well, I was too young for it when it was on TV, so I came to it a lot later, so I was vaguely aware of it being on TV when I was kid but also that it was a scary show, and I was a big wuss as a kid...

HELEN

Mm.

RAFF

So, I didn't want anything to do with it. Except, when I was in Year 5, so for international listeners would have been about ten. In the book corner of my classroom, they had a novelisation of...

HELEN

(Gasps!)

RAFF

Squeeze, the third episode of the show...

ALASDAIR

Oh my god.

HELEN

Oh!

RAFF

In my...the scariest episode of the show, for me. So, I read this is novelisation of that episode at the age of ten...

HELEN

Oh my god.

RAFF

Had absolute nightmares, and then many, many years later in my early twenties I think is when I finally I had some friends who were really into it and I went you know what this does look like the kind of thing that I would love, and I sit down to watch it and obviously I get to the third episode, and there's like...

(Laughter)

...my childhood nightmare has come back to haunt me, what's happening?!

(Laughter)

So, that's the long and the short of it, but fortunately, it didn't put me off watching the show and it was kind of beautiful to watch it later on, because I was like oh, this is the origin point of so many things that I love you can trace them back to this, and both in terms of the show and the kind of the meta thing of fandom as well I know is kind of it's one of... it was a very like formative, one of the first kind of internet fandoms and I had some friends who were slightly older who then starting hosting X-Files nights at their flat.

ALASDAIR

Ah, that's cool.

RAFF

Where we would kind of do like a themed batch of episodes.

HELEN

So, just to go back for a second, Squeeze is the episode with the person who can like, undo all of their joints and crawl through tubes and pipes and things right?

RAFF

Yeah.

ALASDAIR

Yes.

RAFF

It's the, yeah, it's what's his name, Tooms that's the name of the guy.

NATHAN

Yep.

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

HELEN

Does he eat livers? Or have I made that...

RAFF

Yes.

HELEN

Yeah.

RAFF

Yeah, he eats livers, and he comes out every thirty years to eat livers and line his nest with bile.

(Laughter)

And I was a very scared ten year old reading this, and I still have a memory of reading, again, the novelisation of the scene towards the end where Scully gets in the bath, but he's in her flat and...

HELEN

Oh no!

RAFF

And it's, I can tell you it's scary written, and it's scary on screen.

HELEN

Wow! It's a very memorable episode.

RAFF

And it's a third one, I'm always astonished that they came so hard out of the gate with that episode.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Nathan, what about you?

NATHAN

So, I got into the X-Files at kind of weird blurry time of my life, it wasn't while it was actually airing, it was afterwards and of course I was aware of its popularity and stuff I had just never taken the time to sit down and watch it. Then at some point my parents were buying a bunch of DVDs from Blockbuster going out of business, buying all of their DVDs and reselling them, and they had a stack of like 20 of The X-Files movie, the one that came out after the series, so I was like hey, I'll find out what this is about and as it turns out it was a terrible introduction to the series.

(Laughter)

But nonetheless, it wasn't long after watching that that I had a friend who was super into conspiracy theories like constantly going on and on about aliens and skin walkers and you know all these things, but he had never seen The X-Files, so I was like hey, let's watch this. As it turns out, there funny enough, wasn't enough conspiracy stuff right off the bat for him.

(Laughter)

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But I kept going with it and it actually came to kind of mean a lot to me personally, just because, not for the horror, even though that is in some ways formative, but just because there was a really rough time in my life and I would fall asleep every night watching X-Files, just letting it play on Netflix while I went to sleep and that, yeah, it was very helpful to me, and that's kind of a weird thing to say about The X-Files, but it was.

HELEN

I don't think that's a weird thing to say at all, we've had discussions on this show before about how horror can absolutely be a comfort medium...

ALASDAIR

Absolutely.

HELEN

Because, yeah, because you're still getting like the heart racing and like the anxiety of things but a) you know it's not real; and b) if you are really in deep with horror you kind of know what's coming and you're familiar with the trope so it's kind of a predictable anxiety thing, and then afterwards you can feel better.

NATHAN

Yeah.

HELEN

But yeah, point is don't feel weird.

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

HELEN

I've just been reminded that I came across a podcast a while ago, it was called something like, I think it was called Fox Mulder is a Maniac.

(Laughter)

And it is just a bunch of guys watching every episode of The X-Files and sort of writing down at which points if Mulder was like an ordinary person, at what point he would have been fired.

(Laughter)

And which points he makes ridiculous leaps of like... and assumptions, and how many times he pulls a gun out for no reason, but yeah, that was fun to listen to but it's a... I think it's a Patreon only thing.

I'm also trying to remember how I got into The X-Files, I think it was via a boyfriend, I think he was like "You've never seen The X-Files?!" and I said "No" and he said, "Let's watch all of The X-Files".

(Laughter)

But we broke up before we finished, which is actually a recurring theme in my relationships, but that's fine.

RAFF

Well, that is what I am doing to my partner, the love of my life...

HELEN

Aw!

RAFF

At the moment so I hope we won't, we're getting married in a couple of months – I hope we don't split up before we finish the end of...

(Laughter)

HELEN

I'm sure you'll do fine, I mean there's 11 seasons or so isn't there?

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

RAFF

We're not going to watch all 11 of them.

HELEN

Oh, okay.

(Laughter)

In fact, like, am I making this up or was there like a recent reboot?

RAFF

There was.

ALASDAIR

Yeah, there was a recent two season reboot and mm yeah it happened, definitely happened.

(Laughter)

RAFF

I think in the interest of this show's kind of, this show's interest in positivity, we should not talk about The X-Files reboot.

(Laughter)

HELEN

I see. I see.

ALASDAIR

Arguably the sole positive element is the way that Gillian Anderson went "Okay, I'm done – bye everybody!"

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(Laughter)

And the Fandom were like, are you coming back for season 12 and she was like
“NO!”

(Laughter)

RAFF

I slogged on for two more seasons after David pissed off somewhere else.

HELEN

Ah.

RAFF

She's done her time.

HELEN

Yes.

NATHAN

The things we do for the love a show.

ALASDAIR

Right.

(Laughter)

I actually really, really liked the two Mulder-less seasons.

NATHAN

Oh.

ALASDAIR

I liked them an awful lot, but I suspect that will come up in a bit.

HELEN

Okay, alright.

Well, Nathan since you just mentioned you know the dedication that one has to these shows, why do you think it's such a compelling TV show for so many people?

NATHAN

I mean first of all, it's really well done from every level, Chris Carter created something amazing with that and the interaction between Scully and Mulder was incredibly compelling but overall, I think it's great because, and this is something that I think also helped with the success of other shows and like the Magnus Archives for example, where you have monster of the week, but also there's the overarching story, so it's easy to get into from a random episode that's on TV but then as you keep watching you realise oh, this is a whole thing, and you really get sucked in. I think that's what made it a winning show overall, of course it wouldn't have been there without the amazing sound design, the

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acting, the whole production, but just as a concept, I think that's what made it amazing.

HELEN

So, it's just the core concept was just such a good idea?

NATHAN

Yeah, I mean how often was there something that was like that where it was just you could hop in and just sit down you know on a random night or random weekend, watch this and be satisfied with what you watched and then when you watch it again you realise you need to keep going.

(Laughter)

There's more to it.

HELEN

I do seem to recall that it was one of the first shows that sort of had that kind of genre thing going on, like it was one of the first sort of spooky sci-fi thing, and do you know I can't rem- when did it first come out? It was in the nineties right?

ALASDAIR

Late nineties, so it was just starting to hit millennium fever.

HELEN

Right.

ALASDAIR

And it almost feels like, if you kind of minority report it and put a block of X-Files here and a block of Buffy here – the connective tissue between the two is really strong. Buffy becomes almost the next stage of the equation, The X-Files tries to solve.

HELEN

Yes.

ALASDAIR

In that it's a show about trying to understand the world that a time where the world feels colossal and un-understandable.

HELEN

Mm.

RAFF

I think alongside maybe Twin Peaks is the third point of that triangle.

ALASDAIR

Yes! Good point.

RAFF

Of the world is full of strange things and they diverge where Twin Peaks goes, well we're just never going to understand everything are we.

(Laughter)

And The X-Files, no, the truth is out there! I can find answers!

ALASDAIR

And that's true about the sequel stuff as well that the sequel of X-Files shows us where you want two more seasons of the conspiracy – no, here you go! And the third season of Twin Peaks was very much no, really, you won't understand anything.

HELEN

(Laughter)

I have a suspicion I would really like Twin Peaks. All I know about it are from various screenshots and Tumblr posts, and it is completely incomprehensible to me, which makes me want to watch it.

(Laughter)

Absolutely. A guy goes to a town to investigate a murder or a disappearance of someone, and then the town is weird, is the gist, is what I've gotten from Twin Peaks.

(Laughter)

RAFF

Yeah, I have not watched all of it yet and that is partly because the very first episode of it is, sorry I know this is not a Twin Peaks podcast but here we are.

HELEN

That's okay.

RAFF

The very first episode I'd say is sort of scarier, there's nothing overtly you know, but the whole thing is so menacing.

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

RAFF

That it took me quite a long time to go back to it. I felt quite sort of shaken up at the end of that first episode, and that this does link back to my slightly vexed relationship with The X-Files because, I'm still to this day not a big horror fan, because I've got quite an overactive imagination.

HELEN

Mm.

RAFF

And I think that's one of the things that I love so much about The X-Files is the Scully approach, because I kind of see her role as to kind of crack the roof open and bring light into things, and there's this kind of irony in that you know like Mulder is obviously the one who talks about the truth all the time, but the Scully approach of, well if I can use the information that I have, if I can make deductions then I can kind of face down the dark and the incomprehensible that's in front of me, and that's an approach I find incredibly reassuring and helpful.

HELEN

Mm.

RAFF

And every time I come back to watch the show, Scully's character has aged better and better, and Mulder is more and more like, get out Mulder, shut up!

(Laughter)

HELEN

So, is that part of what makes The X-Files compelling to you then, that you relate to Scully and you find her character a big draw?

RAFF

Yeah, I can think of three main reasons, one of them is that. The second one is we're talking about genre, it's the way that it plays with its own genre so much like, I don't think I've ever watched another show that kind of satirises itself so

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much but so easily kind of flows into other genre, like there are episodes you can point to where you're like yes this is overt horror, but this is a comedy episode, but it's not bad in the way that most comedy episodes are, it's kind of in the way that it managed to make something that was so fluid, which is a creative risk for a show that kind of built itself on, this is the show about conspiracy theories and Area 51 and... but it's like now we're going to do something sort of kooky, and I love how unexpected that is and a kind of corollary of that is I've been rewatching it recently, is how beautifully directed so many of the episodes are like, one of my favourite episodes is Triangle, I was watching that the other day which is the one that is partly set in the forties and it does all those like Alfred Hitchcock one shots.

HELEN

Oh, is it, Bermuda Triangle?

RAFF

Bermuda Triangle, yeah that's the one.

HELEN

Yeah.

RAFF

And it's that kind of Wizard of Oz and you were there, and you were there thing because like Scully and Skinner and everyone had that kind of 1940s counterparts, and it is so beautifully directed and it all leads up to this shot where 1940's Scully and present day Scully kind of crossover in the corridor,

and it's just gorgeous, and it's like well, you didn't need to do that it's season six of the show by this point but you wanted to and you felt like you could, so you did.

HELEN

Mm.

RAFF

So, that's the second reason, it's just it feels like a show that was continually pushing itself into new areas, not always for its good, sometimes for its detriment, but and then the third reason I can, why it's so compelling to me is that at the bottom of all of it, it is a show about two people whose love language is saving each other's lives, and that is kind of the best show I can imagine.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Alasdair, how about you? Why do you think The X-Files are so compelling?

ALASDAIR

I think it's a couple of different reasons, like I say for me being a horribly traumatised, latent teenager arriving at the end of a millennium as this thing was happening, it kind of felt like a spikey, unpleasant partially unclassified life raft. Looking back on it, I actually have a bit more nuance to that, and the reason why it's stuck around in my head is at the time I really wanted to be

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Mulder. He was great. He was erratic and charming and knew weird stuff and just he was cool and he didn't have to feel awkward or terrified all the time; and now I see him and I go, yeah that's a man child.

(Laughter)

It's absolutely legit that I identified with him when I was 17. I'm 45 – he's kind of an asshole.

(Laughter)

The thing I wasn't expecting when I revisited it, well, there was a thing I was expecting and thing I wasn't, the thing I was expecting was at the time I was five years into being a catholic, my parents changed religion when I was 12 and I changed with them, and it was interesting, it actually helped at a time in my life where I really needed it. So, seeing Scully engaged with her faith and the collision between Sully's scientific training and the fact that two or three times in the season an angel pops up and goes "Hiya".

(Laughter)

Was really interesting, and that tied into a lot of kind of the architecture that was being laid into my brain at the time about whether it was possible to balance science and faith and all that kind of stuff, and it does, and I mean Helen, you'll know this because I've talked about this on other shows, the thing which really hit me when I revisited it was Skinner.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALASDAIR

Because Walter Skinner is big and bald and has glasses and is a point of absolute moral authority and he is there to help, and he was one of the two times in 1990s TV I looked at someone and went, oh, oh, he's one of mine. The other one is Dr Mark Green from ER. I started going bald when I was 19, as punishment from the vengeful gods for having a mullet and there are no photos – don't look! My mother burnt them!

HELEN

(Laughter)

Oh dear.

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

And Walter helped massively at a time in my life where I needed that. I needed to see someone who was built like me and who thought like me and it wasn't a show that, how can I put this... it wasn't a show that taught me how to be me, it was a show that taught me the tools I had and trusted me to help build them myself.

HELEN

That's really, really, that's like a really nice heartfelt thing to say.

I have also... I have just had a kind of like a flashback memory to Mulder's nickname being "Spooky".

(Laughter)

Am I correct?

ALASDAIR

Yes it was.

HELEN

And he says to Scully, "Do you think I'm spooky".

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

Not to go all fanfiction for a second, I refuse to believe anyone called him Spooky other than Mulder.

RAFF

(Laughter)

Are you trying to get it going at the Academy?

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

That was kind of spooky of me, right, back to the basement Fox – my god!

(Laughter)

HELEN

So, do you think Mulder made up a conspiracy theory that everyone called him Spooky and propagated it himself?

ALASDAIR

Yes.

HELEN

Okay.

RAFF

At a certain point that paranoias got to be self-sustaining.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Gosh, very enlightening today. I am so happy to always have such smart people on; and I think on that, we're going to take a break...

ALASDAIR

Cool.

HELEN

And we will be back after these ads.

[BREAK]

HELEN

And welcome back.

Okay, we're going to get into the meat of it now. I want to ask whether anyone has a favourite episode or monster in The X-Files, or even conspiracy in fact?

RAFF

I already mentioned one of mine which is Triangle, but the episode I watched the most is Bad Blood...

ALASDAIR

Good choice.

RAFF

Which is the...it's a great, great episode, it's the one, to recap, it's the one where sort of small town vampires, it starts with Mulder murdering a child.

(Laughter)

HELEN

What?!

RAFF

It starts with Mulder staking a teenager because he thinks it's a vampire and then Scully is like, he's wearing plastic teeth. So, the episode format is basically them essentially, they're getting their stories straight kind of, you see the events that went down first from Scully's perspective and then from Mulder's.

HELEN

Oooh.

RAFF

And it's just, it's really clever, it's really funny, it's got Luke Wilson giving a like very game performance in it...

(Laughter)

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As sort of like hick Sheriff like it's... and it's great because as well as being like just a beautifully kind of like sharp episode, it was the episode that according to, I think I've got this right, Chris Carter was like "This episode proves why they shouldn't be together romantically".

(Laughter)

And so much of the episode is about Mulder being jealous of Scully kind of fancying Luke Wilson. So, that's not the sole reason why it's great, but it's a strong contender why it's great and ultimately what it boils down to is, oh look, they're best at solving mysteries when they work together.

HELEN

Ah.

RAFF

And I think the counterpart episode to that is the one where the Shrooms episode, where they're high on the fungus and everything...

(Laughter)

...and they don't know what's real and what isn't real.

HELEN

Ooo.

RAFF

But they have to kind of see things from each other's perspective, in order to sort of snap out of what's going on in that one. So, yes, those are always my favourites are the ones that are kind of giving a bit of a twist on the format basically.

HELEN

Does Mulder ever get prosecuted for child murder...or?

(Laughter)

RAFF

No, it's alright because it turns out – SPOILER – he was actually a vampire.

HELEN

Oh, okay, well that's fine then, that's fine.

RAFF

So, it's all okay. Mulder didn't actually murder a child.

HELEN

(Laughter)

Nathan, do you have a favourite?

NATHAN

Oh, it's tough for me so, the one I've watched the most for sure, I don't know if I would call it my favourite necessarily, but the one I've watched the most is the Christmas episode where they go stake out the mansion, haunted mansion, mainly because I like watching Christmas themed episodes around Christmas time.

(Laughter)

And that's a great go to, but beyond that I'd say probably the Frankenstein's Monster episode.

HELEN

Oh?

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

RAFF

That's a great one.

NATHAN

Yeah, that was beautiful.

(Laughter)

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And literally it was a beautifully filmed episode, that's probably because it is the most different episode, in that it's filmed in black and white.

HELEN

Oh, is it?

NATHAN

Yeah, it always sticks out in my mind is, I mean aside from it being a fantastic episode in of itself, it's an easy one to immediately think of as a great one.

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

NATHAN

Because it sticks out.

RAFF

It's also like one of the best episode names of all of them, they're called The Post-Modern Prometheus.

ALASDAIR

Yes.

NATHAN

That's the one, yeah.

RAFF

And just hits on every level that title.

(Laughter)

HELEN

And Alasdair, what about you?

ALASDAIR

I actually want to pick up on something that both Raff and Nathan talked about, which was that the episodes that really pop are the ones which try weird things, and season nine, episode 13 is called Improbable, and it remains the oddest hours of TV I've ever seen. The start is not promising, the start is pretty bog standard lady murder, and the interesting thing about it from a critic's point of view is it's really an episode that starts a discussion about whether or not we are allowed to have crime fiction which doesn't start with, oh a dead lady – again! And the answer is we do and we have to, but the crux of it is that Burt Reynolds plays god.

HELEN

Oh!

ALASDAIR

And possibly Gaia, and the interesting side effect of having Burt, he's credited as Mr Burt in the episode, is if he hangs around long enough somewhere

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people spontaneously breakout into musical numbers and he runs into this serial killer and basically has this long conversation with him like, “Do you really want to do this?” and then Scully and Reyes begin investigating it and all of this culminates in the pair of them chasing the killer failing to catch him and being locked inside a parking garage with Burt Reynolds, who might be god...

(Laughter)

...and who really just wants to play board games with them, and this leads to what I would argue is the single best line delivery Gillian Anderson does in the entire series.

(Laughter)

Where Burt, who is of course wearing an inherently Burt Reynolds-ian Hawaiian shirt, pops up from behind a car and goes, “Hello, can I help?” and Gillian Anderson pulls her gun out and yells, “You’re under arrest!” “For what?” and there is this moment where you can see her rational brain just going, uh, and her delivery on, “I don’t know!”

(Laughter)

Without lowering the gun, makes me laugh every time, and it’s just, it’s a lovely profoundly weird hour of TV and it actually works beautifully as a standalone, it works beautifully as a piece of just weird post modernism; and a friend of mine who is one of the people who, he’s very, very fond of the conspiracy arc, loves it because it’s inherently reassuring because Mr Burt is

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some form of avatar of the planet, the reassurance he takes away from it is that yes the invasion will begin, but it won't go well because Earth has this weird thing attached to it which makes people breakout into mildly period romance musical numbers and that's okay, and it just embraces the weirdness at the core of the show so beautifully.

HELEN

We should talk about the main dynamic of the show, which is Mulder and Scully; and do you know what, it's the same formulae that makes BuzzFeed Unsolved so much fun.

(Laughter)

It's just inherently a good combo to have a sceptic and a believer doing stuff. Do they get together in the end?

ALASDAIR

Oh, yeah.

RAFF

(Laughter)

I wish there as a straight answer to that.

HELEN

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

(Laughter)

No one knows the conspiracy.

It's complicated with Mulder and Scully.

ALASDAIR

Yeah, they... there's a kid and it mm.

HELEN

Oh! The kid is an alien?!

ALASDAIR

It depends.

(Laughter)

HELEN

What do you mean it depends?

(Laughter)

RAFF

It's not our fault.

(Laughter)

Look, it's all very straightforward alright, they have a child but they're not together and maybe the child is Mulder's but also maybe also an alien.

(Laughter)

And also, they're in love but also, they can't stand each other, and also they are on the run from the law but also they can just walk into FBI offices with no problem, so it's all just, it's very clear. I don't know why anyone has a problem with it.

HELEN

Okay.

ALASDAIR

There is actually a legitimate somehow Palpatine has returned moment.

(Laughter)

Which I think is at the top of one of the two reboot seasons where after, they literally, as Raff has said, they literally go on the run for their lives against a hostile world which will eventually bring them down, and then however many years later they're relatively happy and living under their own names, and they just get a note from the FBI saying "All is forgiven" and they're like oh right, back to the day job.

(Laughter)

HELEN

That is such a trap!

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

“Please come in. You will definitely not be arrested. Love and hugs XOXO David, FBI” you know?

HELEN

Yeah.

(Laughter)

Oh dear, oh dear. Scully at least should be smart enough to figure that one out.

ALASDAIR

That’s why she left after season 11.

HELEN

Okay.

I’m just imaging Gillian Anderson being like, “You’ve made Scully stupid - I’m not having it.”

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

In all fairness, there is a lot to recommend in each one of the seasons, it's just the last two seasons are short, so there's less to recommend in them but there are genuinely a couple of really good episodes buried in there.

(Laughter)

RAFF

There really are.

Just going back to the relationship thing, I think it's summed up best for me by you can find this on YouTube there is an interview, I think you know while the show is on with David Duchovny and I think someone asks him about like, ah well this romantic tension is this ever going to be resolved, oh no, no, they like, "Okay well what would you say to Mulder?" and he goes, "Are you kidding me?! Kiss that girl! She's always looking at you with her mouth open!"

(Laughter)

NATHAN

They did kiss didn't they in the movie? Or is that a hazing moment for me?

RAFF

Well, in, I believe...

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(Laughter)

I think in the film, they definitely film the kiss and then I think it was cut...

HELEN

(Gasps)

RAFF

Because I think the version they go with, in the film is they're about to kiss and then a bee stings Scully's neck or something.

(Laughter)

NATHAN

That's what it was.

ALASDAIR

Helen, nothing Raff is saying is a lie, this is all on film, you have such a ride ahead of you.

RAFF

No, they do...

HELEN

This is...

RAFF

They do, there's a weird... there's a crossover episode with Millennium and it's New Year's Eve and they think the world's going to end and it doesn't end and they do kiss then at New Year's Eve, but also kind of hilariously the episode that Gillian Anderson wrote, starts with them in bed together, so there's this very like, it goes into this territory where they're like yeah look we're not going to do like big declarations, but you can assume from this point. You can assume it's happening we're not going to show it to you.

HELEN

What is, what's their ship name? Is it Smulder?

RAFF

It should be.

ALASDAIR

Damn well should be.

HELEN

(Laughter)

Or Sculder which sounds like a Pokémon.

(Laughter)

Nathan, thoughts?

NATHAN

I can't say I was rooting for them to be together. In general, I don't root for relationships in media, I don't know what that says about me but, I just think media is better if it doesn't become centred on that unless that's you know of course what the story's actually about. So, I was perfectly happy leaning on the won't they side of will they/won't they.

(Laughter)

But of course there are some things that can't be ignored like the about to kiss, like the waking up in bed together, which honestly I had completely forgotten about that kiss until started talking about that today, because honestly the only thing that I really remember, and I think this was from the movie maybe it was from an episode around that time again, all a blur, just the moment of either Mulder or Scully one of them of course, walking into a room flicking on lights and nothing happens, it's just completely dark and like you know gives it a few more flicks, nothing happening and you think just the power's out, the lights out whatever and then you look up and the light's completely covered in bees.

HELEN

(Gasps)

NATHAN

I thought that was a great moment and it's always stuck out to me.

HELEN

That is really urghhh, urgh, there's something about masses of insects that's really like visceral to me, I really don't like it.

(Laughter)

RAFF

There's quite a few insect episodes over the course of the show, it's a well they go to fairly often.

HELEN

It is just bees or do they branch out?

RAFF

They branch out, there's a cockroaches episode.

ALASDAIR

That's a good one.

RAFF

Yeah, there's the one with the little green glowy bugs, that's a very good episode. I'm sure there are others. There's the Flukeman, maybe he counts.

HELEN

What's the Flukeman?

RAFF

Okay, so...

(Laughter)

HELEN

This episode is just me saying, what is this? And everyone taking a big, deep breath.

(Laughter)

RAFF

I think it's like a season two episode where basically a fluke as in like a tapeworm, but it's like a guy who lives in the sewers who's evolved into a sort of part man, part tapeworm creature.

HELEN

Urgh.

RAFF

It's quite a gross show a lot of the time.

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

Oh yeah.

HELEN

I can respect that.

We are coming towards the end of the episode, but we've got time for one more question, how would you describe the show to someone who'd never seen it? Like, how would you pitch it to someone?

I think I would say, it's a sci-fi show about a sceptic and a believer figuring out whether conspiracies are real or not, and they always are, but not quite – any advances on that from anyone?

RAFF

I think I would maybe say, do you want to watch a show that somehow brilliantly exemplifies all of the worst things about the seventies to nineties conspiracy theories/satanic panic.

(Laughter)

Yet somehow is the most inventive show you've ever seen and also you would like the leads to have a little kiss sometimes.

ALASDAIR AND HELEN

Aw.

RAFF

I would.

HELEN

What do you reckon Alasdair?

ALASDAIR

I have a couple, the slightly facetious one is, Supernatural's older brother is a cop, and actually that's kind of awesome.

(Laughter)

And all joking aside, a whole bunch of the production staff from The X-Files ended up on Supernatural. I think they even shot a lot on the big spooky road, that's where it comes from the road that the car goes up and down in Kentucky that's also Kansas that's definitely, never Vancouver, it's originally The X-Files.

(Laughter)

So, that would be like the cheap one. I think the best analytical way I could describe it, is it is a fictional mapping of the impact of pre-millennial tension, actual millennial tension and post millennial tension on how we interact with the fantastic.

Also, there is occasionally kissing, but it's complicated.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Complex kissing, the best kind.

Nathan, how about you, how would you sell the show to someone?

NATHAN

Ooph, I think Alasdair really took that one away.

(Laughter)

I probably lean pretty close to what you said Helen, it's a sci-fi, horror, mystery show that at its core is about belief and...

ALASDAIR

Yeah.

NATHAN

What that means and why we believe.

HELEN

Yes, it's literally just hit me that it's basically an exploration of faith.

ALASDAIR

Oh yeah.

HELEN

On both of their parts. Oh, that's so interesting!

RAFF

Yeah, The X-Files walked so Damon Lindelof could run.

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

Oh, absolutely.

HELEN

So, we're coming towards the end of the episode, and I have one last sort of quick fire kind of question, and that question is do you relate more to Mulder or Scully; and why?

For me, I relate to Scully in that you know in my day-to-day life I do like to think about things properly and have evidence for things, but there's always there's a part of my soul that is Mulder where it's like ah, but what if? I like the possibility of things. Someone else have an opinion on that?

NATHAN

So, this one's kind of funny because, so for anyone who doesn't know Jeremy the creator of The Storage Papers, has also had podcasts where he does paranormal investigations big, you know believer in ghosts and the supernatural anything.

HELEN

Ah.

NATHAN

So, I am the opposite. I don't believe in anything supernatural. So, we have very much of a Mulder and Scully dynamic and that's a... right now on our Storage Papers discord that's my nickname on there is TSB Scully.

(Laughter)

So, yeah, I'd say I relate to Scully more.

HELEN

Excellent.

RAFF

Well, I think I said earlier that I find Scully's approach very weirdly comforting and useful to hold onto, but I don't think I really relate to either of them, which I think is kind of the beauty of the show, is for me is the absolute core of the show is their relationship, I don't mean their romantic relationship, I mean their whole relationship, because I love both of them, but I never love them apart so much as I love them together.

So, I think it's either neither or both because I've definitely got my share of kind of woo woo beliefs, but that makes me want to be more critical, and more analytical about documented paranormal things, because I do think that some kind of truth is out there, but there's so much stuff that comes up where I'm

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like well we need to debunk the nonsense because there is something beyond our perception that exists in the world.

HELEN

Alasdair, what do you think?

ALASDAIR

So, around the time the show blossomed, I somehow persuaded friends of mine to chip in on a paranormal VHS video mail order club.

HELEN

Ooo.

ALASDAIR

This lasted precisely one month.

HELEN

Ah.

ALASDAIR

And it lasted the time it took for us to order a copy of and watch once, UFO Secrets of the Third Reich. A video which is 25 minutes long. 23 minutes of which needed to not be there.

(Laughter)

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And which is roughly 85% less interesting than the name suggests. It is literally, look – aircraft - aliens – oooo.

(Laughter)

And the guy whose, and I would swear this on a copy of every holy book in existence, the single expert whose hair parting changes every single time they cut back to him, every time!

(Laughter)

So, it's fair to say at that point in my life I related very, very strongly to Mulder, and I still do, I mean anyone who's met myself and Marguerite would have no doubt of which one of these per trepid FBI agents is my avatar when I'm in a relationship, and it's not the conflicted ex-catholic.

I draw elements of tremendous comfort and relation from both of them and from Skinner, I think at the time of my life I'm at now, the one who I identify with most is Skinner, and it's partially because of the pragmatism and it's partially because of the feeling that I've grown into who I am and he has that tremendous serenity and self-knowledge, which this show explores in a couple of its best solo episodes; and when I was a teenager I wanted to be Mulder. I'm alright with the fact that on my good days, I'm pretty close to Walter these days.

HELEN

I'm just looking up Skinner now to check that he is who I thought he is, and he is. There's something very iconic about his look with those glasses and the bald head.

ALASDAIR

Well, one of the things which I really liked was when cost line became a thing, which my income briefly allowed me to do. I realised that if push comes to shove I could just buy a suit and a trench coat and write FBI on a post-it and shave my head a little bit, and I could go as him, it'd be great, you know?

HELEN

Yeah, you absolutely could.

RAFF

Yeah, I mean look shortly after I watched The X-Files for the first time, I cut my hair short and dyed it red, so...

(Laughter)

ALASDAIR

Yes!

HELEN

Fantastic.

On that, I think we are going to end the episode.

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Thanks so much, this has been weirdly a bit more chaotic than I thought it was going to be.

(Laughter)

I did not realise that The X-Files was so ridiculous, and in hindsight I'm like, why did you think it would make sense.

Thank you all so, so, so much for coming on this show, it's been great.

Listener, I will see you on the next episode, but for now, it's goodbye from me, goodbye; and it's goodbye from all of them, do you want to all want to say goodbye?

ALASDAIR

Goodbye world.

(Laughter)

EVERYONE

Goodbye!

HELEN

The truth is out there.

[Show Theme - Outro]

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license. It is directed by Helen Gould, produced by Lowri Ann Davies, with executive producers Alexander J Newall and April Sumner, and edited by Elizabeth Moffatt and Catherine Rinella. Thanks for listening.

[Show Theme – Outro Ends]

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Editing by Elizabeth Moffatt and Cathy Rinella

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