

X-Files Marks the Spotnitz

The series producer discusses the upcoming sequel.

US, April 16, 2008 - As a producer on eight of its nine seasons, Frank Spotnitz knows the truth about *The X-Files* even if he insists it's still out there for the rest of us. But if the upcoming movie sequel is any indication, the truth may be getting a little bit closer, even if we won't approach it until the opening day. Spotnitz spoke to IGN and a small group of online and international journalists, and offered a few insights into the forthcoming film. While he didn't divulge any actual details about the plot, or even much about the movie itself, Spotnitz spent several minutes reflecting on the legacy of the series and discussing what will help *The X-Files* find an audience long into the future.

IGN Movies: So what can you tell us about the plot? Give us some sense of the story so we're not writing in the total dark.

Frank Spotnitz: Boy. What can I say. Well, Mulder and Scully are drawn back into the world of the *X-Files* by a case. That's precious little I'm telling you, isn't it.

IGN: We learned a few things from the scene we watched being shot, but no one will tell us anything, and eventually we'll need to know to write something

Spotnitz: I mean, you guys are all here and we knew the scene would be shooting and you'd see certain things like that, but I'm still hoping that in your articles you'll say as little as you can. Because I really think people want to know but they don't want to know, and it's more fun to go and to be surprised. And you see the way we're shooting this, we're going to great trouble to shoot it so you don't even see the beard until it's revealed, and all that's spoiled if it's already read, and it's sort of pieces you've read about are falling into place, and there's nothing that replaces that surprise and the joy of seeing something for yourself for the first time. And so, I can, obviously tell you everything that happens, but it's spoiling something. So I'd rather not talk about the plot.

IGN: It's been a long time since you and Chris worked on these characters--was it easy or hard? Were you able to find them right away?

Spotnitz: That's a really good question. I was surprised how easy it was. I was surprised how alive they still were in our imaginations. I would say pretty quickly we arrived at what they'd be doing at this point in their lives. And what's happened to them the last six years. And then I was talking to somebody about this the other day. It's like, for eight years I wrote and produced this show, and I spent so many hours of my life thinking about Mulder and Scully, really, as many hours as I spent thinking about real people in my life, and so in some sense they're very real to me and they came right back.

IGN: What's at stake here for the *X-Files* franchise with this movie?

Spotnitz: Well, I think any time you do something creative you're putting your good name forward and your reputation, so you want to feel like you're doing something you're proud of, and that was very important to us because we do feel that there's a lot to be proud of in *The X-Files*, and so we wanted to move forward knowing we had a real story to tell and a reason to tell it, and I think we've done that. And so I think we all feel, speaking for David and Gillian, Chris and me, proud of what this movie is and what we're doing. Beyond that, there's a question of is it commercially successful, will it draw a big audience. And I think if that happens, then you have the ability to do more.

IGN: Who in your mind is the audience for the film? Are you making this for the *X-Files* fan? Are you trying to open it up so that non-*X-Files* fans can go?

Spotnitz: Yeah. I think the one thing this film has in common with the first film is that it's really designed for more than one audience. We want to reward people who watched the show and remembered it, but we'd like nothing better to introduce *The X-Files* to a new generation, people who were too young to watch the show when it was on originally, people who never checked it out the first time around.

IGN: You guys were originally going to go out in 2004. Is this the script you thought you would do next, or

has it changed?

Spotnitz: I'm trying to think. I think it was 2002 or early 2003 when Chris and I met for a couple of weeks to figure out what the X-File is that we would tell in this movie, and that has not changed, the X-File is the same X-File. But then it got tabled for all of those years, so when we came back we didn't go back to our story notes, we just kept the basic idea and built the story from scratch all over again, because honestly, emotionally where we are after all this time, and where the characters would be, had changed so much, and that's so much of what the movie is. It's about their relationship, where they are, who they are as people at this point in their lives, so we really couldn't have done that earlier. That part of the story remained, but the rest of it was done this year.

IGN: What changed?

Spotnitz: Just time, and you know, I think Chris and I have changed over the last six years, gotten older, had some distance on a lot of things, and you have different thoughts about life and what matters. You know, Mulder and Scully bear a lot of scars from their experiences, and you can't do a movie like this without recognizing that, and that's part of what the story is about.

IGN: As far as the series are concerned, are you satisfied with the way the series itself ended, or do you see this maybe as an opportunity to provide some closure or to do some things you didn't have the chance to do at the time?

Spotnitz: You like everything you do to be kind of novelistic, and that's got a perfect construction to it, you know, beginning, middle, and end. But television, it's not possible, at least it wasn't possible for us. We thought we were going to do five years, and then it became seven years and then it became nine years. I don't know how many people know, but the last three years of the show we had to write and shoot the finale not knowing if it was the end of the series. So you know, it was sort of a jumping forward those last three years. It was as perfect as we could make it under those circumstances, under the constraints of commercial television. It was as perfect as we knew how to do it, so I feel good about everything we could do that was possible. But I don't look at this as giving it closure, because I think we did sort of close that chapter as best we could when the series ended. I just think these are great characters, these are great stories, and there's something else to say, something new to say, or it wouldn't be very interesting, for us or for the audience.

IGN: What challenge is there in making the stories more cinematic?

Spotnitz: Well, it's interesting, because the show always tried to be cinematic every week. We always thought in terms of pictures and telling stories with pictures. And the first movie we really thought a lot about how can we take advantage of the bigger canvas and money and all that, and honestly, that was less of a concern this time. This is a more intimate film, it's more, as I said before, centered on the characters, so it is cinematic, it does have a lot of creepy, disturbing images as you'd expect, but that was not a difficult transition in this case.

IGN: Nine seasons of episodes cover a lot of ground. Was the plot of the film something during the series that you thought you wanted to do, or was this always an idea you wanted for the big screen?

Spotnitz: I think the reason this X-File came to us was because it was not anything that happened in the series, and it was challenging I have to say after 202 hours to find something that wasn't done. That isn't to say that there aren't elements--there are--in any supernatural story there are going to be elements where you can say well this is sort of like that and this is sort of like that, but the fundamental idea is different from anything that we did on the show. But what we also wanted was an X-File that, however fractured, could serve as a mirror to Mulder and Scully, and we were looking for a case that could expose things about them. And that's what this sort of story provided.

IGN: Are there things in this film that set up sequels, or is this a self-contained story?

Spotnitz: It's a self-contained story, and if this were the end of *The X-Files* it would be just fine. You're not going to be left--it's not like *Empire Strikes Back* - well wait a minute, what's next? But it certainly leaves open the possibility for more films.

IGN: If the franchise continues will it run into that 2012 date as the series finale?

Spotnitz: Yeah, I've thought about that too, and I hope we have that problem to deal with.

IGN: Could we see an alien invasion movie with Mulder and Scully?

Spotnitz: Anything is possible.

IGN: Would this movie have been very different if there had not been a writers' strike?

Spotnitz: No, it wouldn't. We rushed to finish the last set of revisions on the script, but like I said, they were pretty minor. But yeah, we turned in revisions like an hour before the strike began. But nothing has come up in the months that we were filming during the strike that we felt like damn, I wish the strike wasn't on, we'd change it. We really shot it pretty much as written.

IGN: Can you describe your working relationship with Chris?

Spotnitz: I have to say from the very beginning, we just had a really unusual connection, creative connection. And we just spent a lot of hours just talking about life. And from talking about life and our ideas, we'll come up with stories or things we want to talk about. And that's actually what happened with this movie. We spent days just talking, before we even tackled how we were going to attack the story. And the ideas we talked about the very first day we met over coffee at Peet's in Brentwood, California, ended up being the heart of what this film is. Because both of us want the movie to be--we're like teenage boys, in a way. We want that super popcorn experience of being entertained, grossed out, you know, freaked out. We want that really visceral entertainment experience that *The X-Files* is capable of providing, but then we also want it to be about something, and have an idea. And that's what makes all of that worth experiencing, and that's part of the fun of collaborating with him is we enjoy talking about these ideas and finding ways to make them entertaining and dramatizing.

IGN: A certain kind of visceral horror has become popular in recent years. With this story veering into supernatural, scary territory, how hard is it for you guys to top that?

Spotnitz: I don't think that's really our competition.

IGN: Not *The Hills Have Eyes*, but supernatural type stuff.

Spotnitz: That's an interesting question, but I have to say, honestly, we didn't really look at where *X-Files* fits versus *Hills Have Eyes* or *Saw* or any of the other scary or horror films that are out there. We really just approached it on its own terms, thinking this is what, these are who these characters are, these are the types of stories that they do, and how can we make it the best, most intense movie it can be? *X-Files* really was rarely horror. I'd say even an episode like "Home" was really not horror. It was shocking, but *The X-Files* was always [about] what you didn't see was scarier than what you did see. And I think this movie is true to that tradition.

IGN: Because it's a '90s series being made into a movie and that title, do you see it as skewing older, or do you think there will be a teen audience for this movie?

Spotnitz: I would hope and expect that there will be a teen audience for this movie because this is, these are the types of stories that young people tend to like. These are the types of movies I liked when I was a teenager, and I think that's why, when I came on *The X-Files*, I had an immediate connection to it. Because I grew up loving this type of thing. And I mean, obviously the studios hope, but my hope as well would be older people who saw the show when it was on originally, as well as younger people who were kids when it was on before [who] would be interested in this movie because it's both, as I was saying before, it works on a level of just being a scary popcorn movies, but it's also got, I think, some pretty rich, emotional and, I hate to use the word intellectual, but it's got some ideas that are interesting as well.

IGN: Frank, take us to the first day on set. What was it like to hear David and Gillian saying Mulder and Scully dialogue again?

Spotnitz: Well, it's funny, because Gillian didn't start [at the same time]. Actually, we started filming in

December and she wasn't in any of those scenes, it was just David. And we started with a lot of scenes that were action, no dialogue at all, so it was sort of, not the most fun stuff. It's, you know, tedious filming people jumping, running, climbing, it's like not the great stuff. To me the sort of chill down my spine was when I first saw David and Gillian, I think it was the beginning of November, they came to Chris's house in Malibu to read the script. We had a table read, and it was just the four of us. Other people were coming in and out who had worked on the show, but it was the four of us sitting around a table at Chris's house, and that was, that was just amazing to me because it had been six years, they were very different people, they were leading completely separate lives all this time, and yet there's this undeniable chemistry between the two of them and it was there, it had not gone away. And it was powerful, it was really powerful. And then a week later we did camera tests at Chris's house, and Gillian had the red hair, and David got his haircut back, his Mulder haircut, you know, he's been combing it differently all these years, and it was astonishing. It really was. It was like bringing back the dead. And they did some, they ad-libbed some talk that, will somehow end up, you'll end up seeing, it's be used by Fox somehow. But it was in character talk, and yeah, it was emotional, because you know, obviously, not surprisingly, I feel a very deep connection to these fictional people an there they were. That's such a rare thing, to have characters come back like that. And I feel very lucky.

IGN: Do you think in 2015 or 2020 we might see a new *X-Files* movie or series with a completely different writer/director and cast?

Spotnitz: I find that hard to imagine.

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