

Anderson Answers X-Files Queries

Anderson talks from the set of X-Files 2.

April 16, 2008 - As far as sci-fi heroines go, there aren't many more famous than Dana Scully. The longtime skeptic provided the perfect fulcrum for Fox Mulder's diehard believer, and formed the other half of one of TV's most famous and successful partnerships. Now, some 15 years after she was first created, Scully is back and -- thankfully -- with Gillian Anderson in tow.

Along with a small group of online and international journalists, IGN visited the set of the upcoming X-Files sequel and spoke to key members of the cast and crew, including Anderson. In addition to discussing her overdue return to the iconic role, Anderson talked about the legacy of the acclaimed sci-fi series and offered a few insights into the secrets of the new sequel.

IGN Movies: Why come back to this after all this time? There was an impression that you wanted to go off and have a different kind of career after X-Files.

Gillian Anderson: OK. Well, I did, and I did. But I think that I've always made it pretty clear, no matter what has been rumored at various times in the press, that were we to come together or were someone to get it together in order to do a film that I would be happy and willing and hopefully able to participate. And so I just assumed that it would be a matter of time [and] there were a few times there when it looked like it might not happen. But you know, there were many times when I thought, even when people were saying it was going to happen, I didn't believe it was going to happen. But I was always onboard no matter what else I was deciding to do in my life at the time.

IGN: Do you feel like David that X-Files could just go on now as a movie series?

Anderson: I don't know. I think that that's something that has been discussed for a long time -- something that we have all been interested in. If we are able to do one that can appeal to mass audience and it's successful in the right ways, that perhaps we might do another one after this. But that's [unknown right now].

IGN: So much has changed for you in your career and you've done so much since you left The X-Files. What's it like to come back to it? Is it familiar or seem strange?

Anderson: You know, I was really, I wasn't so much cocky about it, but I was really confident that it was going to be really easy on the first day. I wasn't afraid at all -- I'm usually terrified before I start something. And for the first couple of days really, it sucked. It was horrible; I had a really, really hard first couple of days. And I think part of that was I've spent such a long time trying not to do anything that even remotely resembled Scully, or at least, while I'm working, whether there's a gesture or a way -- you know, whether I'm successful or not, I don't know, but at least in my mind, thinking that I've just been pushing it away for such a long time, that when I was inviting it back again, my brain was going, "No, no, this isn't supposed to be happening." And also, we happened to start on the worst possible scene that we could have started with, probably one of my most difficult days. It was a confrontation scene, so I hadn't even been normal, flat-line Scully. Well, no... I didn't mean flat line. I didn't mean that, but that's funny. I hadn't even been normal Scully before I had to be upset Scully.

IGN: Has she changed a lot in the intervening years?

Anderson: I don't think she's... I think what's been important is to not have her change a lot. That it's been finding who she is again. I think it's important to show somebody who's recognizable to the audience who's used to that. But obviously there's a maturity that's taken place naturally, and... you know, to hold that and use that fact to inform how she might be in this present state.

IGN: Is there some references to what happened to her in the last five years?

Anderson: Not really. I mean I think it becomes a given that... there's something that's said at one point about the choices that she's made, which kind of covers that.

IGN: Gillian, what was behind your willingness to come back to this?

Anderson: It was a formidable experience for all of us, and even at the times which I... at various times was very outspoken about the challenges of it, it was still something that I wouldn't have changed. Well, no... that's not true. But in retrospect, certainly, I wouldn't have changed for the world. And I always was aware that this was something unique and valuable and precious and doesn't happen very often, and that we were all incredibly lucky. And even despite my frustration about the hours and the exhaustion and all of that stuff, I've always been grateful on some level. And the idea of us all coming back together again has always been exciting. I mean, even at the very end, I knew it would be at least a couple of years, and I had to trust that even after two years I'd think this is a good idea.

IGN: But you didn't want to be defined as Scully for your whole career.

Anderson: Well, I think in certain ways sometimes I still am. When people, producers or whatever see my work, sometimes they say, "Oh, well, she can act." There's nothing much I can do about that, but all I can do is continue to try and challenge myself and also continue to try and challenge the minds of people who want to try and put me in a box.

IGN: So much has changed in the world and for everybody since The X-Files was first on the air. Has time passed The X-Files by, or is there something it can say about where we're at? Or is that even a question?

Anderson: I think the things that are addressed are if one sees... if one is paying attention, the issues that are addressed are even bigger issues than current events.

IGN: So sort of universal themes about men and women?

Anderson: I guess there is some current stuff, but not... it's kind of the bigger picture in a certain respect, in terms of human beings. And I'm just going to leave it there.

IGN: What do you love about your character and why do you think she's resonated and become this touchstone for so many people?

Anderson: Well, we all know the history of Fox being dubious about hiring me and all that kind of stuff. It's almost like Scully's always been... at the beginning she was like this little engine that could. She was like this feisty, fiery, intelligent, you know buster of everything. And I think that that was kind of strangely appealing to people, that it was just so different than what people had seen at the time. And the show was appealing to so many different kinds of people on so many different levels. And I don't know whether that's still appealing. There's been so much that's tried to to copy that over time. We'll see with box office whether people care anymore, you know what I mean? These were great in the context of the series, but maybe next to, I mean, Julianne Moore, whatever, it's like, "Enh." I don't know; I have no idea.

IGN: Do you think that character was a role model?

Anderson: Oh yeah, absolutely. And I think that was primarily Chris, and he was determined at the beginning to keep Scully that way. There were times at the beginning where somewhere in my... I'd done so little work on camera before, I'd only done theater. So it was like I was almost at the beginning that I was in a rehearsal for a play, and the second day I came to work was kind of different. And so the second day I remember crying once when I was holding a gun, and I got this phone call from him [saying], "Scully wouldn't cry!" He didn't yell like that, but I had to be... I really had to be molded and reminded you know, just who this person is. And you know, eventually I got it and she developed and we all kind of grew together. But, yeah, I think that her resilience and her strength and her intelligence and her determination and everything was fortunately appealing for lots of young women. Apparently, there's a whole new group of people who are discovering the show in reruns for the first time, which is awesome because I don't really get letters. But if anything comes through to me, it's from grandmothers to 4 year olds, which is really cool. And I think over time it's easy talking to Chris or David to get very melancholy and wistful. And when I see stuff, when somebody sends me something, something somebody's put together, moments of Mulder and Scully... you know, I pulled up something on YouTube, and um, we kissed a lot in the series. I just remember everybody complaining that there was no... and there were millions of kisses, and I didn't remember kissing so much.

IGN: Do you have some in the movie?

Anderson: Like I'm gonna answer that question; do you have some in the movie!

IGN: Do you think the intimate relationship between Mulder and Scully is more essential in this movie than the scare/thrill fest being promised?

Anderson: Oh, I don't know. I mean I think that what is remarkable... I find it more remarkable today after working with many other actors just what kind of energy there is between... it just kind of happens. It's weird, and I don't know why this chemistry. It's cool now, once I've seen things in the past and gone, "Where the f--k did that come from?" And so it's still there and I think, of course, that's going to be appealing to people, and I now see what the appeal is. In the old days, I was like, "So what. Yeah, we get along. Yeah, there's chemistry." I was just using that word, and now I see there really was and there still is and I think that will always be there and that's really great.

IGN: What's it like working with David again?

Anderson: It's great. You know, it was great then too. It's like a sibling relationship, and I never had siblings. I had brothers and sisters that started when I was 13 and so I was out of the house and didn't have that experience. So there was always this natural love-hate... hate's too big of a word, but you know what I mean? There was always something. Whether it was us working together or us keeping our distance or whatever it is, it's just a natural relationship in the history, over a period of time. And I think now we've grown up and we're older and I think we're more appreciative of the relationship and the unique experience we had together and that we have an opportunity to continue that and foster it. We've always loved each other, and we're always going to be a battle sometimes.

IGN: Scully started out as the skeptic and later on became the believer to the new characters. Are you going back to the skeptic/believer relationship or have you moved so beyond that?

Anderson: I think we kind of have to. That's part of one of the big premises of the film and what makes the relationship work is this constant fight to be right in some ways. I think no matter what film or what episode, you have to maintain an element of that to make it interesting. I mean, this isn't a love story, though it can be and it is and there are elements of that in the intimacy of the relationship and everything. But that can't be in the forefront. What's in the forefront is these two people's minds and their passions, and naturally they're going to swing in the direction that they are built for and that's going to cause tension between them and issues.

IGN: David said he was not a fan of the déjà vu moments, but were there iconic things that, being back on an X-Files set kind of took you back?

Anderson: Well, I was actually looking around on the set for more things that were there at the beginning. I was actually surprised that more things weren't brought out of... I mean, somebody's got to have them. They've got to be in some storage space. I was amazed that even little -- I hate this word, but I'm going to use it -- tchotchkie that were in Mulder's house or Scully's house or whatever, that they're lying around. Or that he's got more stuff in his office in his house that he had back then, but there isn't. See, that's the kind of stuff that I like or I expect the audience members to go, "Oh, you know."

IGN: How do you see X-Files now in the context of the career where you've done remarkably versatile work?

Anderson: It's never really been my cup of tea. I'm just not a television watcher, and I don't even think -- were the show on -- I would have watched it while it was on. But I can see what it is and I can appreciate the appeal for people, and I can justify it in the context of my life, absolutely.

IGN: How comfortable are you now owning this role that's become such a cultural icon?

Anderson: I feel very fortunate, you know? I think my desire to distance myself stemmed maturitively from [the fact] I started when I was 24. I told him I was 27 to get hired, but I was 24. And at the time I was like... Somebody sent me an interview I did on some cheesy TV station, and I was so sure of myself and the way I

was talking and everything. I think I had to surround myself with so many survival mechanisms in order to just... as a 24 year old to be thrown into that so early when I'd done a little bit of theater, really, was intense. And people would say to me in interviews, "What a whirlwind life you've had." And I didn't even have enough of a perspective to stand back and go, "Yeah, man." You know? My response was like, "Yeah." And I just assumed that I should be able to deal with stuff; I should be able to just press on and buckle up. and But I think, yeah, I was just in it for such a long time that when it ended, there was part of me that didn't want to see a set for I don't know how long. I didn't even know if I was going to end up going back and being on any sets ever again by the time it was done. It just got really intense. And also, you know, I didn't do that much stuff when we were filming in my hiatuses. I did a couple of things, but not, you know, I didn't really go after that because between exhaustion and being a mom and stuff, I just wanted to do something different for f--k's sakes, for crying out loud. You know, so, I needed... I just really needed that. But I've found a place again of appropriate perspective and great appreciation and gratitude, for just being allowed and being invited into such an extraordinary experience. With such extraordinary people.

IGN: Have you gotten into this film now after those first couple of days when your brain was saying no?

Anderson: Yeah. I think so. Every once in a while something else comes out and I go wait, what was that, but, I mean, that's inevitable. Yeah, I think so, I hope so.

IGN: I don't know how much you can talk about the plot, but how much is this film based on a self-contained plot and how much is based on Scully's relationship with Mulder?

Anderson: Well, I should think that they've done a really good job of touching on all the elements that need to be important for this film to make sense to people and to stand alone. I think they've done a really good job in that respect. And there's enough of a balance between our determinations about the things that we're currently working on mixed with the dilemmas that we find ourselves in, you know, as the two characters, mixed with the history, mixed with everything. I think they've done a really good job.

IGN: Is it a relief to get away from the really complex mythology and keeping track of all those strands?

Anderson: Who kept track? I didn't... couldn't. The fans know so much more about the episodes than I did and what happened. I practically forgot I had a baby when we started this, which was really sad. I mean, I'm exaggerating a little bit, but it's kind of true.

IGN: What's the biggest difference between Scully now and the last time we saw her?

Anderson: When was the last time? What was she doing?

IGN: 2002. With Mulder, at the end of the series.

Anderson: Oh, the side of the cliff thing and look for the... right. You know, I think she's more relaxed; I think she's made some choices in her life that have allowed her to do what she most wants to do and that's mellowed her a bit. She hasn't lost any of her determination and passion about things, by any stretch, but she's, you know, she's mellowed a bit.

IGN: In the first movie, you got to stand naked in freezing water for a length of time. Are you going to do any fun stuff like that in this film?

Anderson: Fortunately, David gets to do all of that. I'm serious. I should feel really sorry for him. I do. I felt it quite a few times when I've come to set to do some dialogue scenes when he's been scaling cliffs and all that stuff. Was that too much? Did I say too much?

FONTE: <http://movies.ign.com/articles/866/866697p1.html>