

On Set Interview: Gillian Anderson Returns as Agent Scully!



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The IESB sat down with Gillian Anderson on the set of The X-Files in Vancouver earlier this year to talk about returning to the role that changed her life and what she has planned for the future.

Anderson made redheads all the rage in the '90's as straight-faced Agent Scully and has returned to the role with a renewed sense of purpose and excitement.

Read Gillian's on set interview with the IESB and the visiting group of journalists below,

Q: A friend of mine is a big fan...

Gillian Anderson: A friend of yours!? What was your question?

Q: She followed the whole show and she said, "I thought Gillian wanted to go off and do these things in England and have this whole different career and wanted to leave The X-Files behind."

GA: Well, I did. And I did. But I think I've made it pretty clear that no matter what has been rumored various times in the press that were we to come together, or somebody to get it together, in order to do a film that I'd be happy and willing and totally able to participate. So I just assumed it would be a matter of time. Then there were a few times there where it looked like it might not happen. But there are 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 on board no matter what. I was deciding to do with my life at the time.

Q: So much has changed personally for you and in your career and you've had some amazing things since The X-Files. What's it like to come back to it? Is it familiar or does it seem strange?

GA: You know, I was really, not so much cocky about it, but I was really confident that it was going to be really easy, you know, on the first day and I wasn't afraid at all. I'm usually terrified before I start something for the first couple of days. And, it sucked...it was horrible. I had a really, really hard first couple of days. And I think part of that was that I've spent such a long time trying not to do anything that even remotely resembled Scully. Or at least while I'm working, if there's something, 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, "Nooooo! This wasn't supposed to be happening." And also we happened to start on the worse possible scene we could've started with. It was probably one of my most difficult days. It was a confrontation scene so it wasn't even normal, flat line Scully. I hadn't even been normal Scully before I had to be upset Scully.

Q: Do you see her differently now, five years later? Do you see the character as having changed a lot?

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

Q: What was behind your willingness to come back to this? Was it that you didn't want to be the one who said no and the whole thing fell apart?

GA: No, if it wasn't enough a period of time...you know it was a formidable experience for all of us. And even at the times, the various times, I was outspoken about the challenges of it, it was still something I wouldn't have changed even at the time...well, that's not true, but in retrospect certainly I wouldn't have changed it for the world. I was always 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 frustrations, the hours and the exhaustion, all that kind of stuff, I've always been grateful on some level. The idea of us 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 even after two years this was still a good idea.

Q: You didn't want to be defined as Scully for your whole post X-Files career?

GA: I think sometimes I still am. When people, producers or whatever, see my work, sometimes they go "Oh! What...no, she can act!" There's nothing much I can do about that. But all I can do is to continue to challenge myself and also continue to try to challenge the minds of people who want to put me in a box.

Q: Has time passed The X-Files by? Or is there still something The X-Files could say about where we're at?

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



Q: How much easier is it working with David [Duchovny] again now that you're not on top of one another 16 hours a day? (laughter)

GA: 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. So I was out of the house and didn't have that experience. But it's always this natural love/hate, wait, no hate is too big of a word. You get what I mean? It's just a natural relationship in a history over a period of time. I think now we've grown up, we're older and I think we are more appreciative of the relationship period and the unique experience that 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 at battle sometimes.

Q: How comfortable are you now owning this role that has become such a cultural icon? For awhile it seemed like you really wanted to distance yourself from it. Are you more comfortable now with it? How does it feel to sort have this with you for the rest of your life?

GA: I feel very fortunate. I think my desire to distance myself stems in a majority from, you know, I started when I was 24. I told them I was 27 to get hired. But I was 24 and at the time it was like, "Yeah!" Somebody sent me an interview that I did on, I don't know what it was, some cheesy TV station, and I was so, like, sure of myself in the way I was talking and everything. I think I had to surround myself with so many survival mechanisms in order to survive. Just as a 24 year-old to be thrown into that so early when I'd done a little bit of theater and it was really intense. 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!" My response was like, "Yeah." And I think in a sense, to a detriment at times, because I just assumed that I should just be able to deal with stuff. I should be able to press on and buckle up. So it was a disservice to myself. I can't remember what your original question was. So I was just in it for such a long time that when it ended, there was a part of me that didn't want to see a set for I didn't know how long. I didn't even know if I was ever 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 I didn't do that much stuff while we were filming, and in my hiatuses I did a couple of things, but not, you know, I didn't really go after that between exhaustion and being a mom and stuff. And I just wanted to do something bigger for fuck's sake. You know, for crying out loud. (laughter) 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.

Q: The story is Chris [Carter] really fought for you...

GA: Yeah.

Q: Is that something you're thankful for?

GA: Fuck yeah! He's a godfather to my first-born child. Yeah, I've acknowledged that over and over again. He knows I'm thankful.

Q: Do you know what you're doing next?

GA: I do, yeah, I'm doing a film in South Africa called The Smell of Apples. It takes place in the '70s during apartheid. It's a lovely film based on a book.

Q: Is it a relief to get away from the very complex mythology?

GA: Definitely the fans know so much more about the episodes than I did and what happened. I mean, I practically forgot I had a baby, which is just really sad. (laughter) I'm exaggerating a little bit. But it's kind of true.

Q: In the first movie you got to stand naked in freezing water for a lot of time, didn't you?

GA: Oh did I? Did I? (laughter)

Q: Do you get to do any fun stuff like that in this film where you are physically uncomfortable?

GA: Unfortunately, David gets to do all of that. Serious, I should feel relieved though. I've come to set to do some dialogue scenes when he's been scaling cliffs and all that kind of stuff. Was that too much? Did I say too much?



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