

GILLIAN ANDERSON X OBJECT?

GILLIAN ANDERSON breaks into a wide grin, then looks thoughtful. "That's a good question!" she beams, momentarily lost for an answer.

TV Zone has just asked if the actress who plays no-nonsense FBI agent Dana Scully in *The X-Files* could observe a real post-mortem — a procedure her character has undertaken on the show many times.

"Could I watch one?" she pauses again. "Yeah, I could probably... I don't know. I have an odd side. There's a side of me that's incredibly squeamish and there's a side of me that's unsqueamish, that can take a great deal and is fascinated by all that icky stuff. I don't know. It would depend on the day I think."

Gradually we begin to expose the gulf between character and actress. Both are determined professionals, but the similarities end there. Scully is single, intense and

rather humourless. Gillian is a married mother, laid back, with a wry sense of humour. And she doesn't know the first thing about carrying out a post mortem...

Just Pretending

"I wasn't given any training," she says of those scenes. "It's just pretending — pretending like you know what you're doing goes a long way. In terms of understanding what it is that I'm saying while I'm doing a post mortem, some of that stuff can be looked up. When we're doing a big scene where there's a lot of tubes coming in and out of noses and stuff like that then special people will come in and make sure that everything's stuck in the right place."

This "pretending" also works when using firearms. While agent Scully is a crack shot, Gillian has had no training at all in the use of weapons.



Lazarus Scully is held by a former colleague



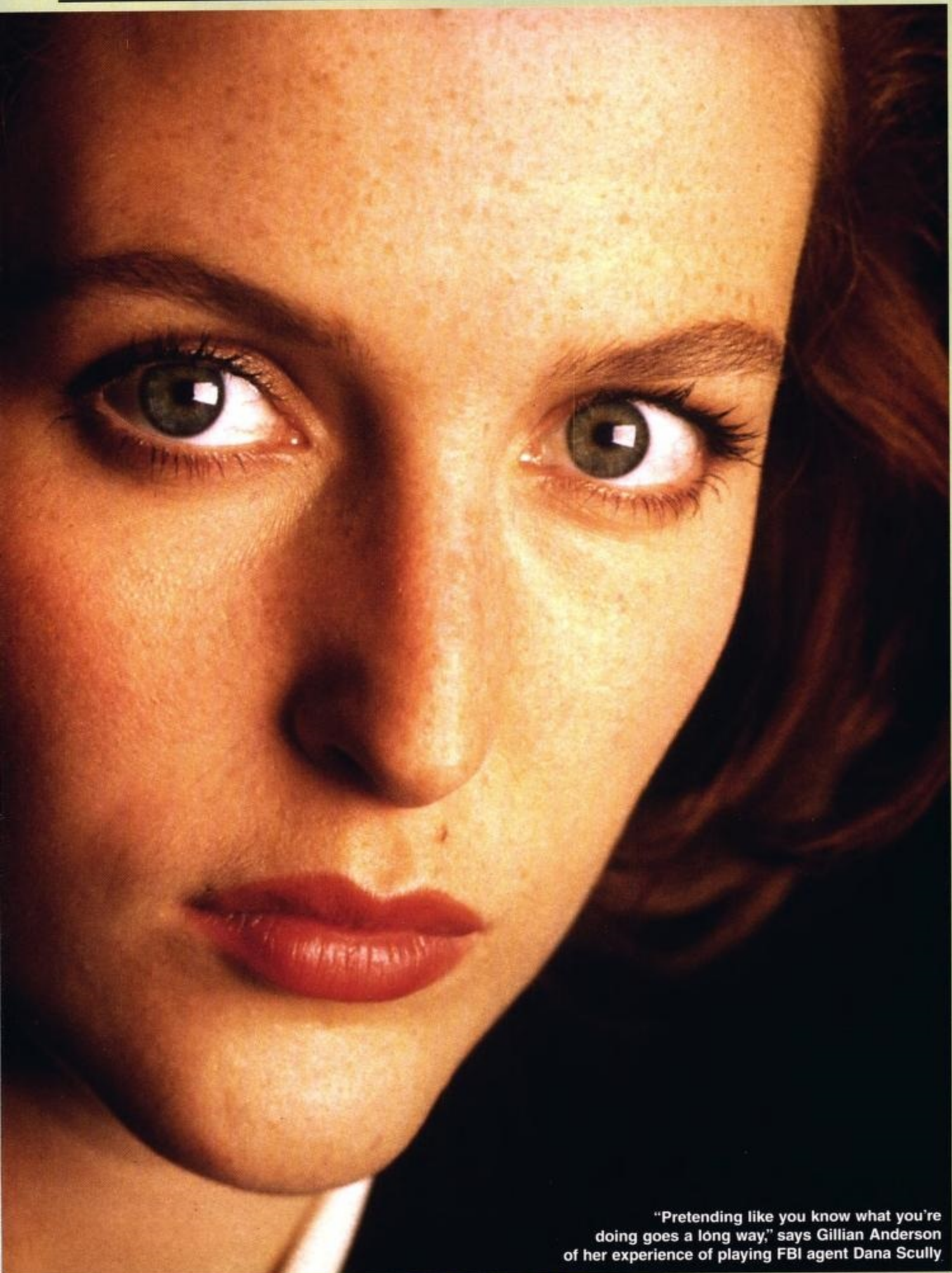
Gillian has had no FBI training



On location in Vancouver



The X team: Anderson and Duchovny



"Pretending like you know what you're doing goes a long way," says Gillian Anderson of her experience of playing FBI agent Dana Scully

"There are people on set who know how to handle guns and who have given us some pointers before, but we haven't gone to a place and had training."

The Real FBI

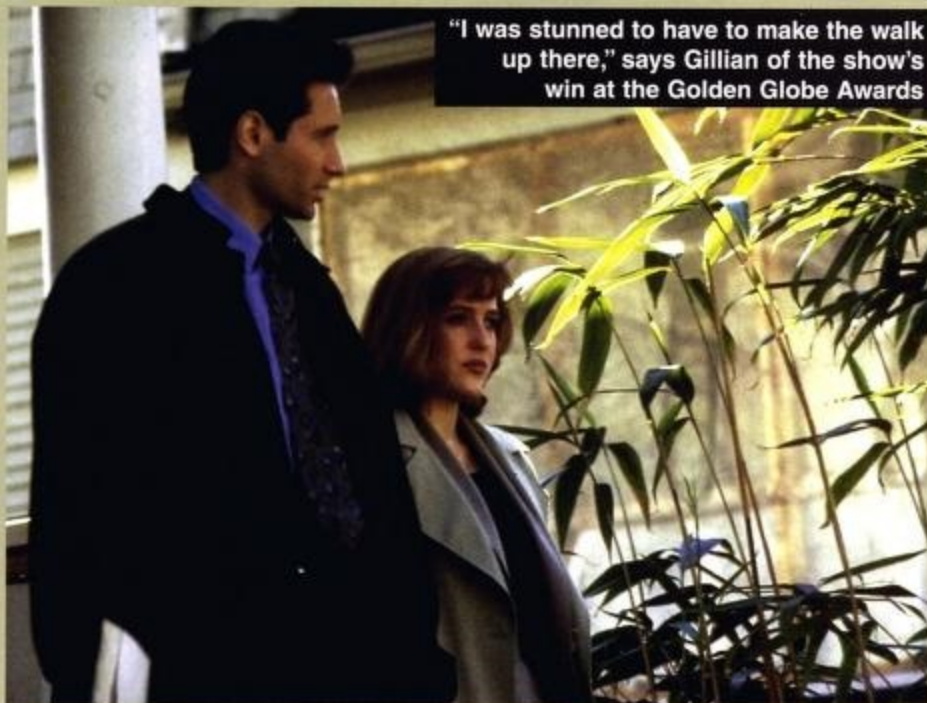
In fact, her only real experience of the life of an FBI agent is when she and co-star David Duchovny visited FBI headquarters — an excursion arranged as a publicity stunt by the American listings magazines *TV Guide*.

"It was a special trip," she recalls. "We took a bit of a tour and it was fun, it was neat. It was less informative in terms of information than it was in terms of how the place looked, how people dressed, how they behaved, what their personalities were like."

And how did the real FBI respond to the show?

"Very well," she replies. "Apparently quite a few of them are great fans and they were pleased to have us there — and very cautious while we were there. There was always somebody with us and if one of us had to go to the restroom there'd be somebody walking back with us."

It's no surprise to find fans of **The X-Files** at the FBI. In fact, fans of the series are everywhere. In America, the show pulls in the audiences in a peak-time Friday night slot; in Britain it has proven one of Sky One and BBC2's biggest attractions. The UK video releases have ground to a halt — not because they failed, but because they were phenomenally successful. Fox are re-thinking their strategy to maximize profits...



"I was stunned to have to make the walk up there," says Gillian of the show's win at the Golden Globe Awards

Award Winners

Then there's the recognition within the television industry: the Best Drama series award at the Golden Globes, and a nomination for Best Drama at the Emmys.

The Golden Globe win, Gillian says, took everyone by surprise.

"Well, I think it was a shock, especially for me. I was stunned to have to make the walk up there. And I think everybody was just so pleased that all the time and energy and effort and money that's put into the show to make it look as good as it can look was being appreciated and rewarded."



But success can take its toll — as the actress reveals while in the middle of a major European publicity tour.

"It decreases the amount of private life I have because of the increase of interviews and press that I have to do. Ultimately as a result of that more people are talking about it, more people are watching it, more people are responding to me when I'm out in my private life."

Nevertheless, as we sit in her London hotel room, Gillian confides that since entering Britain she has remained anonymous.

"I haven't gotten recognized since I've been here — except by people who were expecting me," she says. "I did a radio show the other day and somebody recognized me because she knew I was coming. It's actually quite wonderful because in LA and Vancouver I'm recognized all the time."

With the show's cult success has come a legion of devoted fans — The X-Philes. Although both she and David Duchovny have steered clear of the convention scene so far, Gillian says she is delighted the series has attracted its followers.

"It's basically people who love the show," she states. "Who am I to judge whether their love of the show is on the obsessive side or not? If that's what makes them tick, it's fine. It doesn't bother me at all."

The X-Files success story began some two and a half years ago when its creator Chris Carter finally succeeded in getting the pilot story into production. No one — not even Carter himself — had visions of the show becoming quite so huge as it has.

"There was no awareness at that point

gillian anderson



— it was just a pilot,” Gillian explains. “At that time I didn’t really know what a pilot meant and what it would mean to get picked up or not picked up.

“It was just a regular audition. I was given the script by my manager, and liked it and went and auditioned, and they called me back. It seemed perfectly normal at the beginning. I was just along for the ride and the pay cheque coming and hadn’t been working for a long time and it was a good project that I was interested in. But I wasn’t thinking about the future.”

Liking Scully

So what had initially attracted her to the role of Dana Scully? “I like her a lot,” the actress states. “I think she’s a nice person. She’s a very strong character, very independent, very passionate and highly intelligent and a good role with positive attributes that one can aspire to. I genuinely have warm feelings for her.”

And she is well aware that such a strong leading female role does not come along very often in Hollywood.

“She is a rarity. I’m very, very lucky to have the opportunity to play somebody and for such a long time, that I like and respect, who is a step forward in the realm of television women.”

Gillian also has a clear idea of how Scully should look, and has maintained a healthy input into the selection of her wardrobe.

“At the beginning I was pretty determined to steer away from too conservative, and outfits that I’d feel weren’t ap-



Surprisingly, Dana Scully can still find something to smile about...



Away from the X-Files set...

Photo © Mark Harrison, courtesy Sky Television

propriate for her. After a while the wardrobe designers kind of took over, and now they bring stuff in and I try it on and decide yes or no and whether it works.”

The X-Files faced its biggest crisis during the second year when Gillian became pregnant, effectively preventing her from appearing in the middle episodes of the season. Initially fearing that Chris Carter might choose to write Scully out for good, she was relieved to find that instead an ingenious alien abduction plotline had been contrived to explain her absence, while other episodes she did appear in were shot to hide Gillian’s pregnant bulge.

At first rumours abounded on the Internet that Scully would become preg-

nant — and the baby would be an alien!

“It was just not a fact at all. Just rumours,” says Gillian, who’s heard of those stories. “At the beginning when they were trying to think of ideas as to how they were going to get through it, they must have tossed that up at some point, but those rumours didn’t come about until later.”

After a short break to have the baby, Gillian was soon back on set for the episode *One Breath* — back to “twelve or sixteen hours a day, five days a week”.

Coping

How does she cope with the stress of acting commitments and motherhood?

“I don’t know,” she shrugs. “We shoot the show ten months out of the year, so that takes care of ten months. The rest of it is travel and promotion. It’s honestly just doing it and hoping that it all turns out OK. I have a nanny who comes to work with [her daughter] Piper and me, so Piper’s there all the time and it seems to be working all OK. She actually loves being on set, she loves people, she’s a very joyful baby. But she’s much more verbal now, so there’s not long periods where we can actually have her on set.”

The X-Files is shot entirely on location in Vancouver, the Canadian dollar offering better value than if the series was made in Hollywood. By necessity, Gillian and her family live in Canada during production months. She describes the working atmosphere on the show as, “Very professional, very jovial and the crew is wonderful and very kind and hard working.



Scully investigates...



Looking for clues in Tooms



Facing miracles in *Miracle Man*



The agents will never fall in love...



...Gillian as herself

Photo © Mark Harrison; courtesy Sky Television

It's a very relaxed but intense set."

But surely it must prove a little wearing spending such long periods on sets lit by low-key lamps, with ever-present fog providing atmosphere?

"Yes it does," she agrees, "especially the fog. People complain of sore throats and stuff like that, which is unfortunate. We're all going to find out we have cancer in a few years. I'm not sure what they use. I've asked and they told me, but I forget. But apparently it's currently proven there are no harmful side effects."

The Real X-Files

From on-set smoke conversation turns to a subject about which there might be no smoke without fire: the existence of UFOs and alien lifeforms. Gillian has yet to meet someone who has had a real-life alien experience, but professes to maintain an open mind.

"I have a tendency towards that type of material. I find it fascinating, and I believe in the existence of other beings in the Universe. I've wanted very often to see UFOs when I'm driving at night time and there's a lot of sky, I often think 'Gosh wouldn't it be great to see a UFO', but it never happens."

The speed with which she delivers her thoughts on the possibility of alien lifeforms makes one realize that every journalist must ask that question. Going for broke I raise the possibility of a on-screen relationship between Mulder and Scully — and it's obvious that the subject has been raised so many times, it's getting boring.



A strange funeral in *Humbug*

"No, that's not going to happen," she delivers the well-rehearsed response. "We're all pretty much against it."

We proceed down a different avenue of discussion; David Duchovny has provided story outlines for the show, does she have any desire to do the same?

"I've thought about it," she reveals. "I don't have time — he has a lot more time than I do, and that's something that he's interested in. I could come up with an idea and call Chris and say OK give me a credit, and he'd probably do it too, but I feel I have too much on my plate already and I don't want to begin to be involved in that right yet. Maybe in a year or so."

That being the case, if she did have

more creative control over the series would the actress like to see more of Scully's personal life?

"I would now and again, but ultimately the show isn't about that. It's about the cases we're investigating, but it would be fun to play and also interesting for the audience to see little snippets here and there what goes on with her."

Although she's dedicated to **The X-Files**, Gillian thinks it's unlikely she would watch the series if she wasn't in it.

"I'm not a television watcher," she confides. "There's never been a show that I've watched regularly and I'm not that interested in scary things either — I don't like to be scared."

For the foreseeable future, Gillian Anderson's life remains playing at being an FBI agent. "My contract says five and a half years. It looks like we're gonna go for another two or three more years [after season three] and then that'll be it. There have been talks about movies. I haven't been in on the talks, but there probably will be one, but hopefully not until the show is over."

Then, when the day finally comes that Mulder and Scully have closed the X-Files for good, Gillian is looking for a complete change of scenery and pace.

"I think it would be a good choice to do something comedic after this. Something like black comedy at the theatre!"

David Richardson

(The third season of The X-Files will receive its UK debut on Sky One in the New Year)



One of those "icky" moments from *The X-Files Pilot*