

# The truth is still out there

It has taken 10 years for 'The X-Files' to finally return to the big screen. Director Chris Carter reveals what in the heavens took him so long

BY JOHN PATTERSON  
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Below, from left to right: Writer Frank Spotnitz, David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson and director, cowriter and X-Files creator Chris Carter. With aging stars, a six-year lapse since the show ended and a 10-year gap since the last movie, *The X-Files: I Want to Believe* is trying to reconnect with an audience saturated on edgy newer sci-fi and fantasy.

PHOTOS: AP



**X**-Files creator Chris Carter might be the most zenned-out guy you'll ever meet. An enviably youthful-looking 52-year-old, he is as lean and tanned as a surfer — he has been one all his life, which he admits explains a lot — with cobalt-blue eyes blazing under a full head of well-coiffed, absolutely white hair. This look, combined with his even-toned, soft-spoken articulation, reminds me at times of an adult version of one of the preternaturally calm and self-assured alien children in *Village of the Damned* (though Carter probably can't murder you using his mind).

Carter has been away a long time. He took five years off after the extraordinarily successful and influential nine-year run of *The X-Files* and its various outgrowths and spin-offs. He vanished so thoroughly that one might be forgiven for suspecting he'd been abducted by the aliens *The X-Files* was so obsessed with. He wasn't, of course, and now he's back with a new *X-Files* movie, subtitled *I Want to Believe*. It is the successor to *X-Files: Fight the Future*, which appeared as a part of the ongoing series narrative between its fifth and sixth seasons in 1998.

So what has he been doing in this long interim? "I took five years off because I ended the show when I was 45, and I felt that those 10 years involved nothing but output and no real input. So why not take this opportunity to do all the things I would probably kick myself for never taking the time to do? I'm not an empire builder."

You still built one!

"Well, I guess what I mean is, not by temperament — I'm not an egomaniac and I needed to step away from Hollywood. In those five years, I did some things that I've brought back to my approach. I became a pilot. I have a Cessna Caravan. I climbed some mountains, which I'd always wanted to do, and which helped in this movie because it taught me about extreme environments — a valuable lesson. I took

some great surfing trips. I became a music student, because I'd never had the chance to do that seriously. I was doing piano for a while, but then I stopped that and took three years of drum lessons, much to my wife's chagrin."

He also immersed himself in some cutting-edge hard science, thanks to some guidance — "a lifeline," Carter calls it — from his brother Craig, who is a professor of materials science and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"I did a fellowship at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of California at Santa Barbara. I had this opportunity to be around a lot of really smart people, all thinking about things that are completely imaginary — quantum physics, subatomic constructs, and so on. A lot of the scientists were atheists, and I thought that was interesting because they were talking about some of the most beautiful ideas I've ever encountered. I mean, truly poetic. And I thought exactly the opposite way from the way they saw it. I saw it as science trying to explain God, while they see it as science trying to explain truth. While those things might be one and the same, I think that this movie is in some ways informed by those ideas: science and faith."

Where does Chris Carter stand in that debate?

"I would call myself a spiritual person. I used to call myself a non-religious person looking for a religious experience. I'd say that sort of defines me, though in these five years, I've come closer to faith than I've ever been."

So *The X-Files*' Mulder and Scully — the rational man who "wants to believe" and the skeptical Catholic doctor — can we construe them as symbolizing conflicts or debates in your own mind?

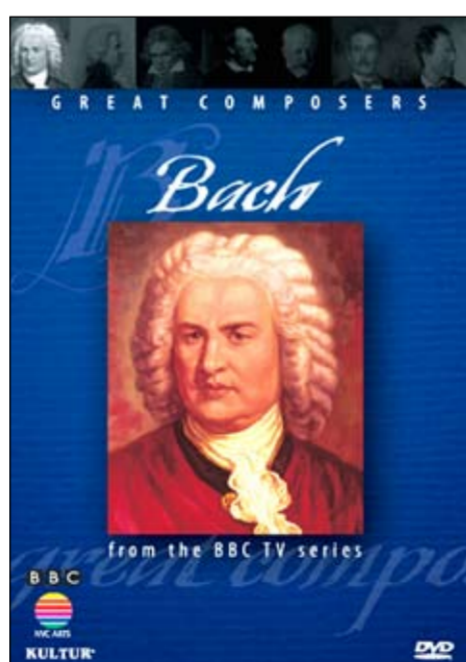
"Oh, very much so, yes."

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## [ CLASSICAL DVD REVIEWS ]



**BRITTEN**  
War Requiem  
US Premiere 1963  
VAI 4429



**GREAT COMPOSERS: BACH**  
BBC TV 1997  
Kultur D4118



**MOZART**  
Piano Trios  
Mutter, Previn, Muller-Schott  
DGM 073 4216



**EVERGREEN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
National Concert Hall, Taipei  
15 Sept. 2007  
ESO DVD No. 43

Britten's *War Requiem* of 1962 was something of a hit in its day, at least in classical music terms. There were dissenting voices, but generally it was felt that it boldly embodied anti-war sentiments at the Cold War's height. The Cuban Missile Crisis was to surface only months after its premiere (at the dedication of the UK's rebuilt Coventry Cathedral, destroyed by enemy bombing in World War II). And the horrors of the Vietnam War were still to come, and with them the more populist protests from the hippie musical flowering of that extraordinary era. But Britten's creation could be argued to have set the tone early on for what was soon to become a worldwide anti-war movement.

Video Artists International has now issued the TV film of its American premiere, at Tanglewood in what was then called the Berkshire Festival in 1963, with Erich Leinsdorf conducting.

It's in black-and-white, and the stilted enunciation forced on the soloists by the idiom was soon to be rejected out of hand by the emerging youth movement. Even so, the cumulative power of the *War Requiem* is undeniable.

Fury at the hideous brutality of all wars is its dominant motivation. Britten was a lifelong pacifist and he'd originally planned a requiem for Mahatma Gandhi, the pioneer of passive resistance rather than violent protest. But this commission proved irresistible, and for it he used the material he already had in mind admirably.

The use of Wilfred Owen's World War I war poetry is enormously effective. Indeed, it's these poems that really drive the work, with the music forcing them into the consciousness one more time. Owen's retelling of the story of Abraham and Isaac, with Abraham not sacrificing the ram at all, but Isaac "and half the seed of Europe,

one by one," is absolutely devastating in Britten's setting. And the way the work begins by alternating the poems with the Latin text of the *Mass for the Dead*, and then has the two going on simultaneously, is extremely strong.

This 40-year-old version isn't going to cut much ice with some people. But it's an historic re-issue, and all the more important in an age when there are wars being waged with far less public protest than the artists of the 1960s hurled at their politicians.

The BBC TV *Great Composers* features of 1997 were re-issued on DVD by the US company Kultur ([www.kultur.com](http://www.kultur.com)) in 2006. Seven composers — Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Mahler and Puccini — are each the subject of a 59-minute film. Of the five I've seen (I've not yet found Tchaikovsky or Mahler), the most impressive are those dealing with Bach and Mozart.

The format is standard. The life is outlined (with Kenneth Branagh narrating), excerpts of the music are played, and distinguished musicians and commentators give their views. What's impressive about the Mozart program is that it manages to give quite a sophisticated analysis of how perspectives on his music have shifted over the last half century, darkening the collective view and at the same time deepening our appreciation of his musical seriousness. (The older view, dating from the 19th century's embracing of the ambitious world of Romanticism, was that Mozart was delightful but lightweight, a sort of permanent child).

The US musicologist Charles Rosen and the UK opera director Jonathan Miller provide the most searching analyses on both composers. On Bach (who also had to wait until the 20th century for a full appreciation), Rosen marvels at his gigantic achievement

from his relative isolation in 18th-century Leipzig. Miller, by contrast, muses on the deeper meaning of the *B Minor Mass* and the *St Matthew Passion* — not really dependent on doctrinal belief, he says, but meditations on the mortality common to us all. Our shared mission is to die, he concludes.

Anne-Sophie Mutter and her husband Andre Previn play three Mozart trios with the help of the young cellist Daniel Muller-Schott on a DVD from Deutsche Grammophon. The trios aren't often heard, Previn remarks, speaking in German on a 12-minute bonus track (with subtitles in Chinese, English, Spanish and French). And unfortunately they don't indeed prove very memorable. Mozart wrote a huge amount, and he necessarily wrote some things fast, either for students, for amateur family music-making, or simply to make some much-needed quick money.

Finally, one more concert from Taiwan's wonderful Evergreen Symphony Orchestra. This one was played in Taipei on Sept. 15 last year, with the current music director, Gernot Schmalfuss, already at the helm. Included in the long program are Beethoven's *First Symphony*, Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra, Dvorak's *Rondo for Cello and Orchestra* (with Sun Hsiao-mei (孫小媚) as soloist), five Schubert songs sung by Liao Chong-boon (廖聰文), and orchestral versions of two Taiwanese folk songs.

It's a pity the Schubert songs, performed in their original German, don't have subtitles. But Liao gives a brief onstage introduction to each of them — probably more of a challenge to a professional singer than the performances themselves. The entire DVD, almost two hours long, is a delight, as are all these Evergreen concert recordings.

— BRADLEY WINTERTON