

# The Making Of The X-Files Opening Titles

*The creators of the iconic sequence talk us through it, shot by shot*

## THE LOGO



**Bruce Bryant:** Our company, Castle / Bryant / Johnsen, had done a couple of hundred other opens, many of them for Twentieth Century Fox. They called us up about The XFiles and we met with them. Carol and I our former partner, Jim Castle, had done documentaries involving UFOs and odd phenomena, so we came in with the right vocabulary. We hit it off with Chris and his initial production team, and away we went.

**Carol Johnsen:** We had a deadline of maybe a couple of months until the airdate.

**Bryant:** Whatever it was, it came roaring at us like a freight train. We went through a number of iterations. We were dialing and tweaking right up until the end, so luxury was not a luxury.

**Johnsen:** Around that time, we also designed the open for Frasier. We did about 20 different versions of the skyline. It definitely took less time than The XFiles!

**Bryant:** Chris Carter had already designed the logo itself. So he gave us "The X-Files" in that typeface. Midway into the project, we were given Mark Snow's theme tune. When we're working on a project, we do like to have the music.

**Johnsen:** It helps us to create the cuts, the mood, the timing. Everything.

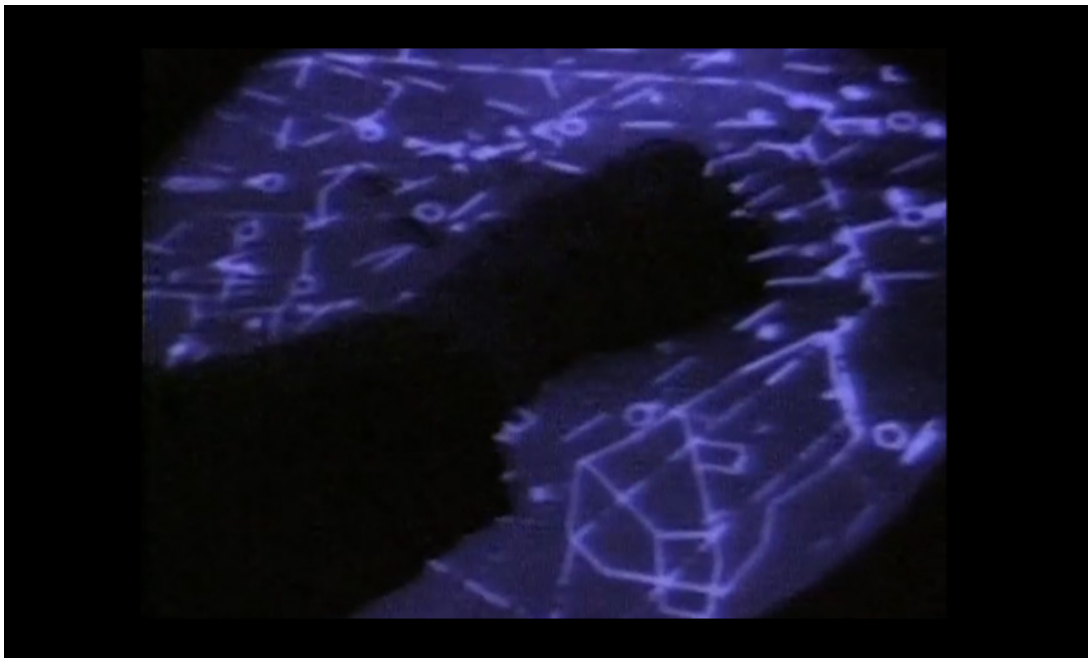
## THE FLYING SAUCER



*Johnsen:* The shadowy figure pointing at the saucer in this shot is actually Bruce.

*Bryant:* We both have a fair few cameos, as you will see. We shot some aerial footage in New Mexico, which we ultimately didn't use, but when we were on the ground at twilight Carol grabbed a camera, I pointed to a bald sky and we then added a saucer in post.

## THE CHART



*Bryant:* We were just simulating the type of tracking that NORAD do. It's a technician who's picked something up, either from the speed or the altitude, and doesn't know what it is. There's something being tracked. There was no particular backstory we had to tell, except to set up that they were with the FBI. Chris just wanted the mystery of the world he was creating reflected in the open

## THE GENERATOR / THE FACE



*Bryant:* That's a Van Der Graff generator. We shot it ourselves.

*Johnsen:* And the face belongs to somebody who worked in the postproduction company in our building. The image was something that Chris Carter specifically requested: he wanted a stretchy face.

*Bryant:* It makes you feel a bit edgy. Just a sense of terror.

*Johnsen:* We actually shot a bunch of people from the posthouse, but this guy had the best face for it. I don't know if he ever got recognized on the street because of it!

## THE SEEDS



*Johnsen:* Again, Chris wanted this image in there. It's stock footage we found of germinating seeds.

*Bryant:* He never told us exactly why he wanted it. But it certainly looks intriguing, especially because it's a mirrored image.

## THE BADGES



*Johnsen:* We shot these bits ourselves. And then I signed Scully's badge and our other partner signed Mulder's one. That's our handwriting!

*Bryant:* We didn't get to keep the badges. Fox are tight with their props.

## THE GHOST

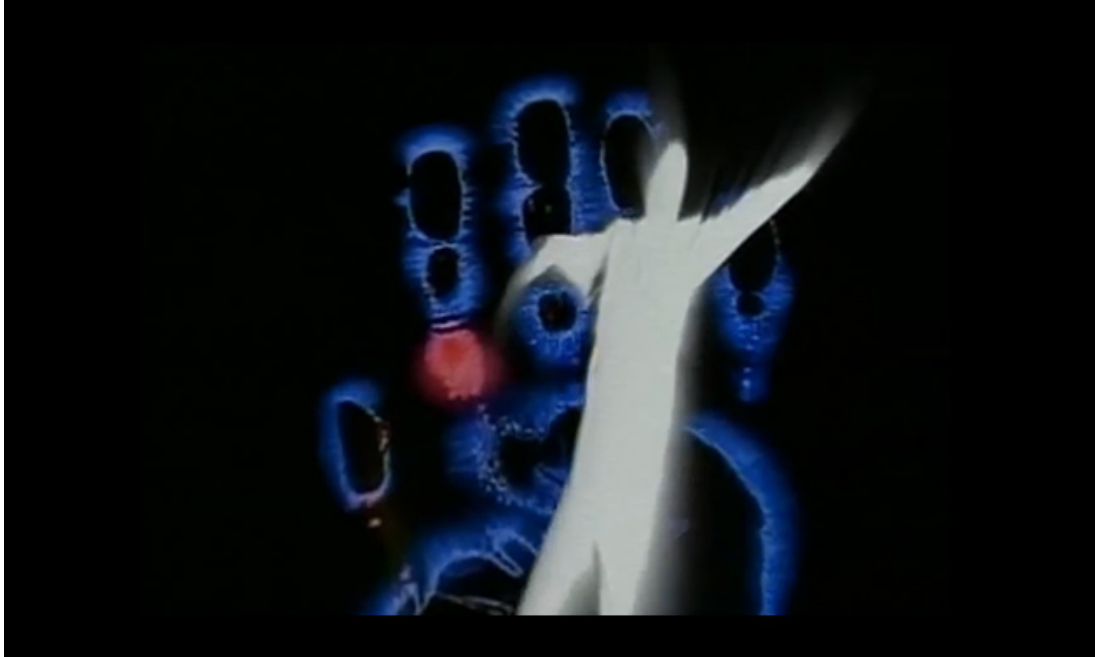


*Johnsen:* Another cameo from Bruce, this time as a ghost. We filmed it in one of the hallways in our office.

*Bryant:* It's a relatively simple negative effect. I went into wardrobe, though I guess I didn't need to, then we shot a high angle with our own light gear. Fortunately, we had fairly high ceilings.

*Johnsen:* It was actually very rare that we'd appear in our own work. It just worked out that way with this one. We weren't trying to be Hitchcock!

## THE BODY / THE HAND



*Johnsen:* That's me in a paper painter's outfit.

*Bryant:* We had Carol on the ground, moving in kind of a rhythmic way, and then made her fall in post. I think the only thing about this that does stick in our mind is that while she was on the floor writhing around, we had a client from another job come into the office. Which was apparently startling for them! I don't know if they went ahead with their job or not. Oh well...

*Johnsen:* It's an unusual way to make a living.

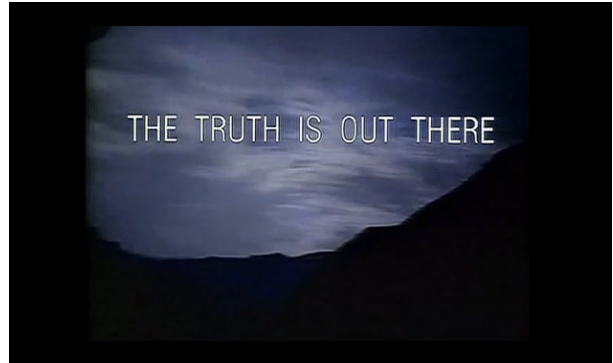
*Bryant:* We all came out of a documentary background, so we were used to doing all the different jobs: writing, camerawork, effects. And that was one of the real pleasures and challenges of titlework. Including writhing around on the floor.

*Johnsen:* There's no particular reason why there's a hand behind the body. We were just looking for a good background.

*Bryant:* We can gen something up if you give us a minute. But there's really no hidden meaning behind that, or the fact part of the hand is red. It was just to give it a little extra layer. Though we wouldn't want to debunk any theories fans may have!



## THE EYE / THE STORM



*Johnsen:* Yep, it's my eye!

*Bryant:* And that's a production shot from the company. We didn't have to head into the desert. *Johnsen:* We changed the line you see at the end two or three times. It wasn't always "The Truth Is Out There".

*Bryant:* Once the sequence locked, I don't believe it changed at all, apart from the end line.

*Johnsen:* It definitely got a lot of attention. The only other involvement we had with the show was that we had done some documentary work about cattle mutilation and UFOs prior to making this opening sequence, and The XFiles used some Polaroids we'd obtained from a sheriff in Colorado.

*Bryant:* Doing title sequences is really like creating a signature for a show. And we love to do that. You see it and you know what you're getting.

*Johnsen:* We're not doing so much TV now as we're living in Vancouver, Washington. There's not a lot of that kind of stuff going on around here. We've done a few things for Oregon Public Broadcasting, but we're focusing on graphics, web design and logos. But we're enormously proud of our work on The X-Files. It won the show its very first Emmy.

*Source:* EmpireOnline.com, Nov. 2014.

( <http://www.empireonline.com/interviews/interview.asp?IID=1787> )