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MSRP: \$14.95

RATED: R for strong horror violence/gore, sexuality and language

STUDIO: Moderncine

RUNNING TIME: 84 minutes

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- “Fractured Skulls: The Making of Headspace”
- Filmmakers’ Commentaries
- “Headspace Revisited” featurette
- Deleted, Extended and Alternate Scenes
- Never Before Seen Audition Videos
- FX Journal
- Trailers

The Pitch

When Alex encounters a mysterious stranger, he begins to get smarter each day. It’s not long before he realizes that his new intellect comes with deadly side effects. Headaches and visions plague him at every step. Soon, savage unexplainable murders are linked to him. Now, it’s a race against time as Alex discovers that the source of this evil may not be human and the key to this mystery may be in his own past.

The Humans

Andrew van der Houten (director), Olivia Hussey, William Atherton, Sean Young, Mark Margolis, Larry Fessenden, Erick Kastel, Dee Wallace Stone, Udo Kier and introducing Christopher Denham

The Nutshell

A boring and pretentious field trip to the Old Actors’ Home.

The Lowdown

Watching a movie like *Headspace* always makes me feel like a bad person, or at least not a very forgiving one. It’s a first feature, made by obvious fans of the horror genre, and chock full of recognizable character actors. You’d think that all those things would give the viewer plenty of apologetic ammunition with which to shoot holes through the nearly incoherent script, shoddy editing, and community playhouse acting. But, those bullets backfire and only help illuminate how much of a misfire this movie really is.



I am always happy whenever a movie delivers on the promise of its title, though.

The story, like most failed horror yarns, has some intriguing concepts at its core. Alex (Christopher Denham) is a quiet loner who (for no reason other than need of a plot) suddenly develops the ability to use almost all of his mental capacity. This means he can read entire books in seconds and recall every piece of information inside, hear what people are saying even though they are in another room, can know personal information about someone and pretty much anything else the movie wants him to do. While it sounds like a pretty neat idea, the script places no rules or reason to his new-found powers, and it only forms the foundation of the incomprehensible events to come. See, thanks to his expanding brainosphere, Alex is also now aware of some kind of demonic beings from another dimension who like punching holes through chests and killing hapless morons in public bathrooms (this scene has one of the most uncomfortable focuses on loud shitting I've ever seen). Again, what could be a fascinating notion is played off like the worst episode of *Fear Itself* with an even smaller budget and production value.

It would be a little easier to forgive the ramshackle excuse for a plot if there was even one truly good performance in the mix. Sadly, this is not to be found. Christopher Denham is by no means a deplorable actor, but he's given nothing to work with and looks like he's in the middle of a serious opium addiction. While he gets a few unintentionally silly lines here and there, it doesn't help elevate the movie to "so bad it's good" status. There is one actor who threatens to give the movie some cynical laughs and that's Erick Kastel as Harry Jellenik, a reclusive painter and chess player who Alex seems to have a strange connection with. While he starts off just as dialed in as everyone else in the picture, when things starts to go south, he gives a performance that seems to be unconsciously channeling the crazier bits of Matthew Fox in *Lost*. It's too bad he isn't the main character, as that would've made the movie at least *MST3K* worthy.



A personal message from the makers of “Headspace”

And all those noticeable name actors? Don’t get your hopes up. You can tell that each of them were on set a day, maybe two at the most. Only Mark Margolis has an even close to decent part as a former Russian (yup, Hector Salamanca is a Russkie) government agent with some insight into what’s happening with Alex. The explanation is just as incongruous as the rest of the movie and isn’t abstract in an interesting way, but in a “whatever” way. Every other name actor does absolutely nothing worthwhile. You can almost smell the easy paychecks through the screen.

But, the nail in the coffin are the monsters. Even the worst low to no budget horror flick can have the silver lining of a well-designed creature or fun kills (the above headspace-ing being the only good one in the movie and naturally at the very beginning). The monsters are teased throughout with glimpses of their claws and tendrils and I was hoping that by the movie’s end it would at least show a cool beastie. Of course, *Headspace* delivers a costume that you’d find in the Halloween Horror Nights storage room. I’ve seen scarier things on an episode of *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*



A still from the unreleased “Trepanation Made Easy!” featurette on the Special Edition of *Pi*.

It’s too bad *Headspace* is such a disappointment. There’s plenty here for a decent low budget horror flick, but it’s squandered at every conceivable turn. I know that some of the same people are responsible for some Jack Ketchum adaptations (of whom I’ve never seen or read anything of) and are also behind a movie I have been meaning to catch, *The Woman* (Lucky McKee’s endorsement quote on the cover of the *Headspace* DVD gave me unfulfilled expectations). So, maybe *Headspace* is one of those “find your footing” projects that got some names out there and started some careers (Christopher Denham seems to have gone on to some high-profile projects like *Shutter Island* and another movie I’m clamoring to see, *Sound of My Voice*), but it doesn’t excuse this snoozefest.

The Package

It’s obvious the makers of *Headspace* have more love for the film than I, since the DVD package is pretty good. You get a half hour “Making Of” featurette that mostly details the effects work and has every name actor on board shelling out the usual platitudes towards the new kids making their first movie. The feature “Headspace Revisited” is a half hour conversation between director Andrew van den Houten and star Christopher Denham that takes place at one of the movie’s recurring locales. It’s friendly and easy-going, but it’s feels like the equivalent of being the third wheel to two friends playing catch-up. There are two commentary tracks: one with the director and cinematographer/co-writer which is jovial and nostalgic, and the other which has the trio of the editor, the composer and the makeup FX artist. This one is a bit colder and one of the commentators is actually calling in on what sounds like a speakerphone, so it’s a little more

technical than the other commentary. There's a nice handful of deleted, extended and alternate takes of scenes that would be fun for the few hardcore *Headspace* buffs out there. You also get a short slideshow of the makeup FX and designs used for the movie, some audition tapes (these are always awkward), a trailer for the movie and trailers for other films from ModernCine.

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Rating:



Out of a Possible 5 Stars

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