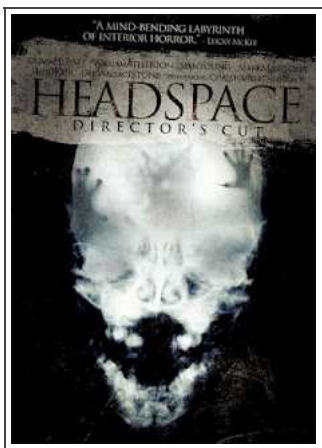




JUL 25, 2012

## REVIEW: HEADSPACE (DIRECTOR'S CUT)



I wish I could say that Headspace was an interesting failure. Not many films merit that kind of simplistic response, but it does happen. But Headspace is really just one of those unfortunate, regular kind of failures. It is a hodgepodge of ideas liberally borrowed from other movies, mixed together by filmmakers who seem to be taking themselves way too seriously, all of which is wasted on a cast of horror veterans who deserve better roles and a better movie.

In a prologue that completely wastes Sean Young, a mother of two young sons goes nuts and monstrous and needs to be dispatched by the boys' father (the always wonderful Larry Fessenden). We flash forward about ten years, and see what has become of the younger son, Allen (Christopher Denham, the mental patient from Shutter Island who was convinced a nurse wanted to see his penis so she could laugh at it). Allen, separated from his brother, and out of contact with a father who signed away the custody of his children, lives in New York, where he has cursory friendships with people we never quite learn enough about. One of these friends includes a neurotic hippie looking man who plays chess every day in the park. Allen forms an instant connection with this man, even though the guy seems to be halfway insane.



After Allen becomes super smart for seemingly no reason, he suffers a seizure and is taken to a hospital, where tests are performed on him. Once released into the care of a psychologist, people around him begin to die one by one. And frightening visions of monstrous, Lovecraftian things lurking in dark corners begin to torment him.

Headspace is basically a re-manufactured version of Jacob's Ladder, even borrowing some of director Adrian Lyne's signature quick shaky-head effects. The big difference between the two is that while Jacob's Ladder was both unique and interesting, Headspace is neither. Our lead character is almost immediately unlikeable, especially

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evidenced when he realizes that he can memorize entire books just by flipping through them a single time, which leads not to worry on his part, but overwhelming pride. At one point he even lurks outside a friend's window and watches as he fucks his girlfriend for a solid five minutes. How are we supposed to sympathize with a person like this? And how are we supposed to take these filmmakers seriously after they've shoehorned in a completely useless sex scene?



Headspace is a movie that wants to fuck with your mind, but all it does is test your patience. You're never really given a reason to care about Alex, his problems, or those folks who his problems are immediately affecting. And once the big reveal comes in the final act that is supposed to blow your mind, you're only left with the reaction, "Who cares?"

Headspace features some grisly and well-done effects, the best involving a shotgun blow to a head. A limited budget causes some of these effects to be captured in quick cuts or overly edited sequences, but what we do manage to see is pretty effective. It's also nice to see the likes of the aforementioned Young and Fessenden sharing the screen with Dee Wallace (The Howling), William Atherton (Ghostbusters), Udo Kier (Blade), and Olivia Hussey, who will always be sorority girl Jess, Audra Denbrough, and Mrs. Bates, and who is destined to be beautiful no matter her age.



What attracted me to this film in the first place was its recent re-release dubbed the "director's cut." Releases like this have become commonplace, but only when big money is involved, and half the time what is termed a director's cut is just the original movie with an extraneous scene added back to the movie in order to market it as different. You hardly ever see "director's cuts" of low budget horror films that hardly set the world on fire. Every once in a great while, you manage to come across a director's cut that is somehow inferior to the original theatrical cut (Donnie Darko, for one; and some would argue Richard Stanley's Dust Devil). If this version of Headspace is the director's cut - and therefore the "better" version - I sympathize with those unfortunate enough to have suffered through the first incarnation.

• STIR OF ECHOES

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