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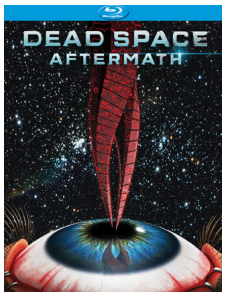
DEAD SPACE: AFTERMATH, set to arrive on DVD and Blu-ray from Anchor Bay Entertainment day and date with the DEAD SPACE 2 game next Tuesday, January 25, is the animated sequel to 2008’s DEAD SPACE: DOWNFALL—picking up where we left off in that movie. The crew of the USG *O’Bannon* is sent to Aegis VII and tasked with collecting shards of the shattered alien Marker.

The unwitting crew soon begins to succumb to the effects of the artifact, and the story unfolds through the eyes of four surviving crew members (of which two are notably voiced by STARGATE: SG1’s Christopher Judge and BABYLON 5’s Peter Woodward). A wraparound story features a nefarious government agency that interrogates the surviving crewmembers by means of psychological torture, in an effort to uncover the events that led to the ill-fated demise of the O’Bannon’s crew.



Tension mounts as each flashback is punctuated by a horrific ending for each crewmember in the wraparound story—but a quick check during the 78-minute running time revealed that I was about 20 minutes from the ending, and hadn’t seen any serious Necromorph action. DOWNFALL heaped up the bodies and gore from the very start, and while AFTERMATH’s story is not bad, it definitely needed to up the ante and the body count by the midway point, instead of in the final act. Just as AFTERMATH really gets going, it ends all too quickly, and the much-anticipated finale is rendered in the weakest of the diverse animation styles.

AFTERMATH sees the return of DOWNFALL producer Joe Goyette and supervising director Mike Disa, while the story segments were overseen by several renowned international animation directors using a blend of styles, which seems to be the trend in animated anthologies these days (HALO LEGENDS is another recent example). Thankfully, AFTERMATH’s assorted approaches are not too diverse to be off-putting—though it is a bit odd when the character models vary from segment to segment enough that a Hispanic character’s skin tone is tan in one and white in another.

The wraparound uses CG animation which is not up to par with today’s standards—or those of the last few years, for that matter. It’s a far cry from the images seen in other video-game tie-ins such as FINAL FANTASY: ADVENT CHILDREN and RESIDENT EVIL: DEGENERATION. In many places, the lip-syncing is way off, which only serves to further highlight the subpar visuals. There’s nothing particularly striking about the look of the Blu-ray’s anamorphic 2.40:1 transfer, either; with its somewhat limited animation, it stands out no better than standard DVD *anime*. What the disc does get right is its exceptional soundscape, which rivals some of the biggest Hollywood blockbusters. Serious effort was put into the Dolby TrueHD 5.1 audio, and despite the occasional odd positioning of sounds, it’s pure ear candy.

The discs open with the DEAD SPACE 2 trailer—the only extra on either one. The preview features balls-to-the-wall, jaw-dropping action, and it’s a shame that nowhere in AFTERMATH is there a single scene that invokes the same awe-inspired reaction. Somewhere along the way, Electronic Arts lost sight of its licensed spinoffs. DANTE’S INFERNO: AN ANIMATED EPIC, released after DOWNFALL, was an awful addendum to its video-game namesake, and unfortunately, AFTERMATH is also disappointment. While entertaining despite its many flaws, it misses the mark on everything that was great about its predecessor, and barely ties up the loose ends left dangling by DOWNFALL or the DEAD SPACE game. At best, it’s more worthy of a rental than a purchase.

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