

“ERRORS OF THE HUMAN BODY” (Fantasia Movie Review)

Written by Michael Gingold
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One of the joys of this year’s Fantasia film festival in Montreal has been seeing all the evidence of how successfully mutable the horror genre can be. That’s literal in the case of ERRORS OF THE HUMAN BODY, which emphasizes the dramatic over the shocking even as it deals with mutations of genetic material—and more.

World-premiering at [Fantasia](#) (where it has its second showing today), ERRORS OF THE HUMAN BODY was scripted (with Shane Danielsen) and directed by Eron Sheean, who previously co-wrote THE DIVIDE and brought back that film’s most memorable actor, Michael Eklund, to star in this one. As opposed to his unhinged DIVIDE antagonist, here Eklund portrays a more disciplined man of science, geneticist Geoffrey Burton, who is summoned to take part in experiments at a German facility (played by the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics in Dresden). Particularly driven by the death of his infant son from a rare disorder, which led to the collapse of his marriage, Geoff begins working alongside former intern Rebekka (WE ARE THE NIGHT’s Karoline Herfurth) on a project involving the regeneration of human tissue and body parts. One of their colleagues is Jarek Novak, played by Tomas Lemarquis, whose striking bald-and-blue-eyed visage makes Novak visually cued to be an antagonist—and indeed, Geoff soon comes to believe that he’s pursuing a mysterious agenda of his own.



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ERRORS isn't a simple story of good and bad doctors, though; the ways in which Geoff allows his personal issues to affect his professional demeanor threaten to make him his own worst enemy. Sheean explores the expected ethical questions about screwing with our genetic makeup while making the conduct and conflicts of those involved the spine of his story, generating suspense through their behavior rather than from the promise of horrific developments. It all hinges on Eklund's characterization of Geoff, and after going so memorably over the top in *THE DIVIDE*, he proves equally compelling holding things back, even as Geoff's past tragedy and current suspicions about Novak's work unbalance him emotionally and mentally—never a good condition for a scientist to be in.

Sheean, on the other hand, maintains a cool control over his material, making the environment a crucial part of the narrative as the sterile halls and labs of the Planck Institute and the wintry Dresden exteriors practically impose despair upon Geoff. Lemarquis' looks make Novak almost seem like an extension of this milieu, and he stands as a memorable intellectual antagonist. Providing a bit of warmth in the midst of all this chill is Herfurth as Rebekka, also struggling to balance the personal and professional, and yes, that's *THE YOUNG ONES*' Rik Mayall, a little filled out and convincingly playing it straight as their supervisor, Dr. Samuel Mead.

It's probably impossible to discuss *ERRORS OF THE HUMAN BODY* in genre terms without invoking the *oeuvre* of David Cronenberg, and while Sheean isn't as focused in the physiological manifestations of his principals' scientific dabbling, there are moments—particularly during flashbacks involving Geoff's afflicted baby—that are certainly graphic and distressing. The more Geoff allows his suspicions to overtake him, the more he leads himself into dark territories, and patient genre fans will find their investment in the narrative rewarded by a couple of horrific developments in the final act. The final and most breath-stopping revelation, though, is a quiet one, positing quite powerfully that acting out of sympathy, not ambition or ruthlessness, is the greatest error a human body can make.

