Scanners, starring Jennifer O’Neill, Stephen Lack, and Patrick McGoohan; written and directed by David Cronenberg, an Avco Embassy Pictures release, now playing at the Sack Savoy, Boston.

"There are four billion people on the earth. Two hundred and thirty seven of them are scanners." This radio broadcast only begins to hint at the awesome powers of the "scanners." By definition, scanning is the linking of two nervous systems separated by space. Yet when the two systems converge like a slingshot and a bazooka, the consequences can be incredible. These two hundred and thirty seven individuals have mental powers so intense they can fry your mind from the inside out. They are scanners, or their thoughts can kill.

David Cronenberg, a leading Canadian motion picture director, is the mind behind Scanners. Working from his own screenplay, he shot the film in nine weeks in Montreal. Scanners continues a long line of shock shock films made by Cronenberg with such notable titles as The Brood, Rabid, and They Come From Within. His new picture, however, by virtue of a larger budget and a more experienced crew, has slightly elevated itself above his past efforts and surpasses any of the crop of horror exploitation films currently making the rounds. Scanners can easily be classified as one of the few grade A B-movies.

The film opens with a bang—literally. In the first five minutes there are five deaths. Once Cronenberg has us primed for the rest of the picture's gore, some sort of a plot begins to develop. The top-secret Consev corporation is trying to assemble a powerful scanner to carry out a top-secret group of scanners to carry out Abandeton in the program plot. The Consec super scanner Revok is still much in another scanner faction, Cameron Vale (Stephen Lack), to hunt down and destroy the leader of the faction, the super scanner Revok is still much in another scanner faction, Cameron Vale (Stephen Lack), to hunt down and destroy the leader of the faction, the super scanner Revok (Michael Ironside). Vale is ignorant of his powers at first, but Roth teaches him how to control his abilities, only to find that he is their most powerful scanner yet.

Scanners, based on an interesting concept and the music of their characters is horribly underdeveloped. One saving grace is the make-up and special effects. The visuals are both striking and realistic. The overall production values are superior to Cronenberg's other pictures, but the film still lacks the quality of a top-rate feature. Nonetheless, Scanners is worth a viewing if only for the novelty of it. The opening sequence is literally mind blowing and the finale so intense one woman walked briskly out of the screening. The story is based on an interesting concept and the violence is bizarre. Seeing a David Cronenberg film is like taking a trip to the Combat Zone; everyone should do it once. Don't expect a lot from Scanners but then again, don't expect to be bored. It's certainly different.

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