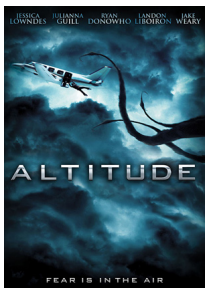
This is gonna be a bit of a quickie because 1) practically the entirety of ALTITUDE (on DVD and Blu-ray this week from Anchor Bay) takes place on a small eight-passenger plane, and as a result 2) the limited space for the story to function in allows for some nifty surprises. Since there’s not *much* monster action, there’s…really not much to talk about without giving the non-monster stuff away. And since the monster’s origin is one of the flick’s biggest tricks…well, you get the point. What I *can* do is tell you the plot and introduce the characters!

AUTOPSY’s Jessica Lowndes is Sara, a lovely young thing with a fresh pilot’s license who is giving a few of her chums an airborne lift to a—*buuuuurrrrp*—Coldplay concert. Though Sara’s mother was also a pilot who met her end during a failed flight, Sara is nevertheless confident in her ability to get her friends safely to the—
urp
—Coldplay show. Her passengers include her relentlessly skittish boyfriend (Landon Liboiron), who acts like flying includes being stung by scorpions; her emo-haired musician cousin Cory (Ryan Donowho); best friend Mel (Julianna “perfect nipple placement” Guill); and Mel’s wretched boyfriend Sal, played so obnoxiously by Jake Weary that I’ll cross the street if I ever see him coming.



Award-winning comics artist Kaare Andrews makes his feature-length debut on ALTITUDE after directing many shorts. Indeed, a copy of an EC-lookin’ comic book (WEIRD TALES) makes an appearance and has some significance, and the film itself feels EC-ish in spirit and delivery. Gore and T&A are absent, but that’s fine—this story, equal parts tense and silly, doesn’t require such visual accessories. I’ve heard and read others’ comparisons of this flick to THE TWILIGHT ZONE, and that ain’t far off, either.

When the plane suddenly gets sucked into a bitch of a storm and Sara can’t regain control of the craft, arguments and anxieties immediately flood the plane. The resulting tension works almost perfectly, aside from you wishing the shouting, bullying, letterman-jacket-wearing Sal would die, die, *die* as soon as possible. Thanks to this utter douche of a character yanking me out of certain scenes, I wasn’t completely on the edge of my seat, but I was leaning forward pretty far off the couch at times.

As mentioned above, the midair monster doesn’t have a lot of screen time. When I *did* get a good look at it, however, I decided that the beast deserves to join the ranks of other creatures I wish I could have plaguing my house all year. I wouldn’t mind ducking tentacles all day and night as long as I could see this thing, up close and personal, anytime I wanted. I realize I’m being vague about the behemoth’s appearance, but I went in blind and was glad I did.

The discs’ 2.40:1 widescreen and 5.1 audio are fine by me—for a movie with constant lightning crashes and thunder and airplane hums, the sound design works without being irksome, which it very easily could’ve been. The flick’s images are sharp enough to help you forgive some of the clumsier CG FX; you’re clearly watching a mid-flight monster movie on a budget, but it looks pretty damn good for being just that.

The extras lead off with a solo commentary by Andrews, who capably details the film’s creation from A to Z, including achieving the FX despite the budget, alternate scripts and tweaks, etc. It’s a fun chronicle to listen to, due to moments like the filmmaker claiming he chose a largely blue color palette because he wanted producer Ian Birkett—who is colorblind and cannot see green or red—to enjoy watching the movie. My favorite bits were hearing about the tricks Andrews used to pull off the plane FX, both inside and out of the craft.

A four-part behind-the-scenes documentary is well-put-together, featuring interviews with all involved. It’s cool to see some of the tricks Andrews discussed in the commentary and hear from other folks, though you might catch some crossover stories here—just a heads-up. What’s really interesting is to see how well Andrews handled his feature-length debut—never once in the interviews or on the set does he seem rattled at all, and in fact he makes shooting a movie look just as easy as you please. Those hungry for monster stuff may wanna skip to the “Post-Production” segment, though this nifty bit—like the film itself—is very light on highlighting the critter.

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

DVD PACKAGE: 💀💀💀💀

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