

Fantasia 2016: 'The Dark Side of the Moon' Review

By Kat Hughes -

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The Dark Side of the Moon is an interesting foreign language film that deals with man's inner-beast. Urs Blank is a high-profile lawyer dealing primarily in pharmaceutical mergers. He's good at his job and has all of the spoils that one would expect someone in his position to have – a fancy car, expensive apartment and dotting partner. After a merger ends in the suicide of one of the company heads, Urs starts to reassess his life. It is then that he meets Lucille, a carefree and sensual young woman, and Urs finds himself doing things he's never done before. Along with Lucille he takes some mushrooms, but experiences an unsettling side effect when his personality starts to dramatically change. Suddenly he's much more impulsive, and aggressive. Was it the mushrooms, or is something darker at work?

Based on a novel by **Martin Suter**, *The Dark Side of the Moon* has a very compelling narrative that keeps the audience invested until the bitter end. Reminiscent of *Vampire's Kiss*, our story again follows the devolution of a modern business man to primal beast. Thankfully though, German star **Moritz Bleibtreu** manages to portray the descent without any of the trademark 'Nick Cage crazy eyes'. The Cage classic saw Cage's Peter Loew convinced he was becoming

a vampire; this time around parallels can be drawn between Urs and the werewolf. The moon is a prominent and recurring image, as are wolves; Urs suddenly starts to change after his moonlight walk through the woods.

In addition to the trippy, twisty narrative, the visions are bold and beautiful. Director **Stephan Rick** juxtaposes the drab, cold grey and blue city shots with beautiful lush green woodland scenes. Much like our protagonist Urs the film really comes alive once we enter the woodlands. The visuals suitably rich and enchanting.

Bleibtreu holds the film together brilliantly. Were it not for his engaging central performance there would be a risk that the audience might get bored in places. Although only around 100 minutes, the pace of *The Dark Side of the Moon* feels longer. It's a definite slow-burner, but if you can give it your full attention it'll entertain.

A cautionary tale for those wishing to experiment with hallucinogens, *The Dark Side of the Moon* offers a great metaphorical spin on the lycanthropy curse. Held together by a strong performance by Bleibtreu, *The Dark Side of the Moon* is a fantastic entry in the German cinema catalogue.

***The Dark Side of the Moon* screens as part of 2016's Fantasia International Film Festival programme.**

REVIEW OVERVIEW

Overall ★★☆☆☆

SUMMARY

A great metaphor for modern man and his struggle with the beast within *The Dark Side of the Moon* is a psychological thriller that has plenty to chew on.