



“Divinity” Is Visionary Sci-Fi About the Dangers of Playing God

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PARK CITY, UTAH – JANUARY 21: Filmmaker Eddie Alcazar and Bella Thorne attend the 2023 Sundance Film Festival “Divinity” premiere at Egyptian Theatre on January 21, 2023 in Park City, Utah. (Photo by Matt Winkelmeyer/Getty Images)

By Peter Jones

Divinity begins with a bursting flash of lights befitting the film’s title. Is this the big bang or perhaps something just as epochal for mankind?

Immortality is at the core of the work of idealistic scientist Sterling Pierce (Scott Bakula), who has developed *Divinity*, a mysterious serum that may be the answer to man’s quest to live forever. When the drug is corrupted by Pierce’s son and a world perpetually hooked on living forever, *Divinity* is revealed to be anything but holy.

Divinity, the latest visually stunning work from stylistic writer-director-producer Eddie Alcazar, premiered January 21 at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. Alcazar’s mentor, Steven Soderbergh, served as executive producer.

“I’m glad to be back here with something as crazy as this,” Soderbergh told the audience after the screening at the Egyptian Theatre. “Whatever you think, that was a thing!”

The film is ambiguously set in some virtual netherworld, a dark, retro-futuristic realm that sometimes feels like a dystopian 1950s or a commercialized near-future gone mad. The wonder-serum *Divinity* is crassly advertised on television like a *Viagra* of its time. Only a small minority of the population chooses to live out their lives — and deaths — naturally.

The dark music score by DJ Muggs and Dean Hurley helps set the tone.

“[Alcazar] was creating this universe, this other world and he wanted to give it a pulse,” Muggs says. “A lot of drones and sci-fi things, so I went in and worked on it.”

As the story progresses, Jaxxon Pierce, the now-aging inheritor of the drug’s patent, has sex with younger women and has convinced himself that his business enterprise will save the world, despite running counter to his dead father’s principled restraint.

When Jaxxon is kidnapped and forced to take a dangerous overdose of *Divinity*, the grotesque price of man’s pursuit for immortality is revealed.

Stephen Dorff, who plays Jaxxon, says he got involved in the project after a friend introduced him to Alcazar’s distinctive film work.

“I watched his short *Vandal*. I was blown away by that,” he says. “I thought, this guy is doing some original stuff. I’d love to work with him, and we started talking.”

In keeping with the aesthetic, Alcazar attended the Q&A in a mildly grotesque mask befitting *Divinity* and was virtually inaudible for much of the Q&A.

With slight nods to David Lynch’s *Eraserhead*, Alcazar, whose previous films include the provocative *FUCKKKYUUUU* at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, creates a dream-like science-fiction that is eerily visionary about the science-fact world we actually live in.

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