

VARIETY

Review: “Pandorum”

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Named for a mix of paranoia and delirium, “Pandorum” more strongly evokes the condition of déjà vu. Pilfering from “Alien” and “The Descent,” as well as artier movies in which astronauts suffer cabin fever, director Christian Alvart (“Antibodies”) leans heavily on quick-cut shots of snarling flesh-eaters aboard a spaceship and still manages to tempt the viewer into hypersleep. Underutilized stars Dennis Quaid and Ben Foster won’t keep Overture’s medium-budget sci-fi horror vehicle from plummeting hard after liftoff.

Rudely awakened from cryogenic slumber aboard their 22nd-century mission to locate a habitable substitute for Earth, Lt. Payton (Quaid) and Cpl. Bower (Foster) find they can’t remember the reason for their trip; nor can they make radio contact with anyone else in space.

After a great deal of wandering in the dark, homesick Bower discovers the dead bodies of fellow crew members, some bodies that look dead but aren’t, some warring survivors with very sharp knives, and dozens upon dozens of beasts that bear a striking resemblance to the gurgling, bald-headed, sharp-toothed baddies of “The Descent.” As if these creatures weren’t challenging enough, Payton and Bower also have to reboot an onboard nuclear reactor — and, natch, fend off “pandorum.”

Seemingly in deference to budgetary concerns, top-billed Quaid is for the most part relegated to reading dialogue into an intercom (“Bower, do you read me?”) as his character coaches Foster’s more adventuresome one through various close encounters. Action-film vets Cam Gigandet (“Never Back Down”) and Cung Le (“Fighting”), playing shipboard toughs, are called upon to perform hand-to-hand (and hand-to-claw) combat, none of it exciting. As the vessel’s token female, newcomer Antje Traue delivers her lines in a husky whisper, which gets old fast, as does Alvart’s familiar habit of making every faintly illuminated pipe and tube onboard look like a potential alien limb.

Special effects are none too convincing, while sound effects are of the cheaply jolting variety favored by producer Paul W.S. Anderson in his films as director (“Resident Evil,” “Event Horizon”). Other tech credits are, like the pic as a whole, lazily derivative