

TITLE: MIND JUMPER

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Format: Screenplay

Pages: 92

Genre: Action/Sci-Fi

Locale: Urban

Elements: N/A

Period: Current day

Analyst: BW

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OVERALL SCORE:	7/10
Premise	8/10
Originality	8/10
Dialogue	6/10
Structure	6/10
Characters	5/10
Pacing	6/10
Craft	8/10
Budget	Medium/High
Recommendation	Consider

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LOGLINE: A cop and mysterious federal agent are forced to track down a vicious serial killer capable of possessing and transferring his consciousness into other people’s bodies.

COMMENT SUMMARY: Working off an interesting and well-constructed premise, the plot twists and central conflict between Xen and Tom can be focused and heightened for maximum dramatic effect.

SYNOPSIS: A mysterious **BALD MAN** emerges from a strange portal and immediately attacks nearby citizens. Right when he is going to murder Officer **DAVIS**, the Bald Man presses his forehead to the cop’s and kills himself instead.

Detective **TOM BATCH** and his partner **RANNIA** investigate the crime scene and deduce that the victims were killed using police-issued firearms, leading them to Davis’s involvement. After a dangerous car chase, a now-murderous Davis is apprehended and transported to the hospital. Tom is introduced to federal agent **MARTIN DEVENUE**, who tries to convince Tom that the Bald Man and Davis’s behavior are the result of their being controlled by a dangerous serial killer named **XEN**, who is capable of possessing and transferring his consciousness into other people’s minds and bodies — a phenomenon known as “mind jumping”.

Xen inhabits several people in pursuit of **DOCTOR PHILLIP HURT**, who has discovered a miraculous pathogen capable of regenerating and enhancing the human body through experimentation on a “Patient Zero”.

As they track Xen through the use of Martin’s Mind-Tracker (a device that pinpoints Xen’s “mind jumps”), Tom grows increasingly suspicious of Martin’s origins and knowledge about Tom’s family — especially since he blames the FBI for the death of his father a year ago. Tom

confronts Martin when he learns that the FBI has no record of him as a federal agent. Martin then reveals that both he and Xen are from the future, and Martin came to avenge the death of his future partner — Tom's son, **DANNY**.

After several face-offs, Tom and Martin track Xen to Dr. Hurt's lab. Xen possesses his number one target, **JOSEPH BATCH** — Tom's father, and the "Patient Zero" used to advance the mind-tracking technology. Martin reveals that Joseph's death would ensure Xen's freedom, as Joseph's DNA is the foundation to mind-tracking technology and the Mind-Tracker's ability to capture and imprison Xen's consciousness.

Tom and Martin intercept Xen at Martin's childhood home, as Martin suspects Xen will try to kill him as a child before completing his mission. After a prolonged struggle, Tom is finally able to trap Xen's consciousness into the Mind-Tracker. Martin tells Tom to keep the Mind-Tracker hidden from everyone before succumbing from his wounds.

Tom is reunited with his family, and encourages his son Danny to take an interest in law enforcement. In a secret government base, it is revealed the military successfully recovered Joseph Batch's DNA in addition to Martin's body, and plan to use both to advance future research.

CHARACTERS:

TOM, as the hero, acts and behaves in ways that come off as very standoffish, which makes it really hard to root for him and sympathize with his story.

Half of it is acting rationally, or in the moment, when he theoretically shouldn't — running towards a dangerous suspect in a burning car must violate tons of police protocol, for example, which he's had years of training doing. This takes away from the "authenticity" of the world. If Tom IS gonna break the rules, the other characters should call him out on it. If he did this every time, he'd be suspended or fired, and in this instance he has no personal connection or special reason to throw protocol out the window. Him saying "That was stupid" after the face just makes us wonder why he did it in the first place.

The second part involves his behavior towards Martin. Telling Martin/the FBI he's not going to work with them (does he have ANY authority to tel the FBI to shove it?). Locking Martin out of his car and ignoring Martin's texts — especially in the middle of an extensive murder investigation, where his family is targeted and Martin may have — makes him come off like a brat. Telling himself that saving Martin's life from the subway train instead of catching Xen makes him come off as thoroughly unlikeable. Tom also doesn't come off as perturbed or emotionally moved at all to see that Rannia — ostensibly his partner for years — has been horribly murdered.

MARTIN's main problem is that the majority of his dialogue is extremely exposition-heavy. If all of the exposition was cut from his dialogue, we don't have too much character. His actions never really stop or deter Tom from doing what he wants to do, and their relationship never seems to gain the deep sense of connection it needs to be fully-invested. So we have two options to address this"

One, he can either be cut, or cut early — kill him off, leave Tom with the Mind-Tracker, which forces him to not only accept the crazy stuff that is going on around him, but gives him an even greater sense of urgency. With Martin by his side there's always a safe assumption that they have the advantage when facing off against Xen.

The second option is to transform his character in a way that deepens his relationship with Tom and increases the stakes. Why not make him the wisecrack? Or a novice with the FBI, forcing Tom to mentor him like a son? Or, more dramatically, why make him **Danny**? Maybe he wants to come back to avenge his father's murder in the future, as they were partners in the future. That would give them an interesting dynamic (Tom would have trouble believing this man who claims to be his son), and, should something bad happen to adult Danny (like he gets killed, for example), it gives Tom a more interesting (and personal) dilemma — does he raise his kid differently? Does he go insane trying to change the future? How far will he go for his family? (I have another thought on this, which I'll elaborate on in the "Plot" section).

XEN is functional as the Terminator-like villain. The plot point that he NEEDS increased adrenaline to survive provides a great reason for a ton of action sequences.

There are moments when his plan comes off as meandering, and it may just be a result of him HAVING to cause havoc in order to sustain himself, which leads to a ton of escaping and diverting from his main course. If his main goal is to kill Joseph Batch and destroy the Mind-Tracker program, he may be able to move much more efficiently from cop → Hurt → Batch. (I have more thoughts on this in the "Plot" section.)

There are moments when he comes off as menacing or all-knowing that we can elaborate on. When he tells Tom "Martin is not your friend!" — why? Besides killing Danny when he became possessed by Xen, we can probably play that up more.

I think what I'm responding to, however, is the potential relationship between Xen and Tom. At the moment, they don't really have that special of a relationship with each other — for Xen, Tom is just another body in his way, and for Tom, Xen is just a weird perp who may or may not have supernatural abilities.

The block in this potential relationship is Martin. Right off the bat, Martin's already got the backstory with Xen, and the proper motivation to stop him, and Xen has the proper hatred for Martin that gives their interactions juicy moments of drama. Therefore, solely by their position and relationship to each other in the story, this makes Martin the more interesting character at the moment, and the one you want to follow as the protagonist.

So, in order to make Tom and Xen's relationship more compelling to watch, we can address it in one of two ways: by altering Martin's function in the story, or by altering Tom and Xen's relationship.

With option one, re-examining Martin's place in the story, we can either refocus the story on Martin, and make him the main character we follow. Or we can kill Martin off early or cut him completely, which by default leaves the final showdown (and all the subsequent drama leading up to it) between Tom and Xen.

The second option is to rework Tom and Xen's relationship to one another. What if we make Xen a future version of **Joseph Batch**? Or an **adult Danny**? (It's clear by my plugging Danny twice now that I think using him as a character in the main story will up the drama substantially!) In both scenarios, Tom is forced to deal with one of his family members who he loves most. It will also make him wonder if there's anything he can do to avoid this, or — even more juicy — if there IS no way to prevent Danny from becoming a killer, would he be forced to deal with Danny in the present now? Would Martin want to do something, therefore pitting Martin and Tom against each other? (I'm getting very *Looper* vibes with this trajectory). Either way, look for opportunities to strengthen the ties and stakes between the main hero and the

main villain.

PLOT:

Right now it reads as a very action-packed race to stop the bad guy after a few hits-and-misses. I was discussing this a bit in the “Characters” section, but further fleshing out the premise and strengthening the dynamic between Tom and Xen will further distinguish *Mind Jumper* from other action/sci-fi flicks.

I’ve talked a lot about how the character dynamics, so in this section I’ll examine the sci-fi elements of mind-tracking. A lot of these are just spitballs off the top of my head, I’m sure the writers have tons of better ideas, but this is just to show that using the premise as a springboard for cool, unique sequences will make the movie stand out and keep viewers engaged as they watch. This will also help tackle the exposition. Take out all the exposition Martin lays out for us. What rules become clear through the action? What doesn’t? Look for opportunities to demonstrate the rules of the world in a visually engaging way so we have more space for developing Martin’s character.

Tom doesn’t really seem to have a character arc outside of doing his job as a cop and catching the perp, so bringing his personal demons into the main story will make watching his struggle more compelling. He seems scarred and angry at his father’s death — though this plays out a few times during the narrative, it never really “holds up” or sends the main plot in a brand new direction. Perhaps Tom has left the force in disgust, and now Martin NEEDS his help, because it is his DNA (which has Joseph’s DNA) that will help power a broken and faulty Mind-Tracker? In this scenario Tom will therefore be forced to go against his friends and allies to get access to weapons and information needed to stop the killer. Or, perhaps it’s revealed that Martin has been tracking Xen for over a year, and Martin was the one who tried killing Joseph Batch, hoping to prevent mind-tracking and the Xenobiotics from ever coming to fruition? This would derail the entire plan, and force Martin and Tom to face off against one another.

There are moments to play upon and expand the mind-tracking premise. As soon as Martin said that killing Xen without a proper host to contain him would lead to a deadly cloud, I was EXPECTING that to happen. That would cause some great drama. If it affects Martin and Tom, then you have a cool sequence where they’re trying to maintain their sanity and hunt for the “new hosts” the cloud of consciousness finds (this is assuming that the premise is tweaked a bit to allow this to happen).

Maybe Xen is allowed to possess and split his consciousness into multiple hosts at once, as long as he is touching them. That could lead to a nightmare scenario where you have an army of innocent people attacking our protagonists — do you kill them all? What do you do?

Maybe Xen possesses young Danny, as a failsafe to ensure Tom never kills him. Would Martin even kill a young Danny? How would they deal with that? That raises a very interesting dilemma, and I’d be dying to see how Tom deals with that.

Or maybe Tom himself becomes possessed by Xen, and he has to battle to keep control over his own mind? Maybe, since he has Joseph Batch’s DNA, he’s able to fight back and control Xen, which would force Xen to try and escape? Or maybe Tom, knowing it’s a lost cause, decides to flee to the middle of the ocean and end his own life to save everyone else?

Maybe Xen traveled back in time because, once upon a time in the past (our current timeline), there was a CURE. IE, a way for possessed individuals to be saved and regain their

consciousness and “expel” the mind jumper to another host? Maybe he’s coming to eliminate it? And maybe the cure lies in the Batch DNA — whether that’s Joseph, Tom, or Danny leaves a lot of fun possibilities that raises the stakes and Tom’s investment in stopping Xen.

(In most of the scenarios save the CGI giant cloud, I think most of these could be feasibly achievable using little to no SFX budget).

A micro-note: Danny having seizures is brought up, but never comes back again. So it can be cut or expanded/revisited later on in the plot.

STRUCTURE:

Structure is sound. Some re-jiggering of the plot would help from keeping the Second Act becoming a little stale — especially with the action sequences. There are multiple car chases and shoot-outs that all end in a similar way. Escalating from there (and leaning in to the premise) will keep the action fresh and engaged and also raise the stakes for Tom and Martin. What if Xen decides to blow up a building and raze it to the ground? What if he can copy his consciousness, and possesses TWO people near the end to try and deal with Tom and Martin, and it only multiplies out of control from there? Let’s say he dies and there IS the huge cloud that possesses and wreaks havoc on the city? Variation and escalation of the cool premise will definitely keep viewers engaged, as they can ONLY see these type action sequences in *Mind Jumper*.

CONCEPT:

Very interesting, well-thought out concept. It’s a premise that is compelling and “cheap” enough to pull off well without resorting to too much CGI or futuristic stuff. The premise and its rules are well thought out, which makes it easy for viewers to follow and stay engaged on the action — the remaining challenge lies in conveying these in a way that isn’t an exposition dump by Martin.

OVERALL:

An engaging premise with lots of potential. Its brilliance is that since it mostly focuses around mind-control, a lot of it can be achieved with very little to almost no special effects of big budget. The action and violence would probably appeal straight to guys — at the moment there’s not a lot of strong female characters to gravitate around. Heightening and reorganizing the action sequences, strengthening the characters out of their archetypal roles, and further exploring the mind-jumping premise and integrating it into the shoot-em-up cat-and-mouse hunt between the heroes and villain can easily make Mind Jumper mind-jump from a consider to recommend.