

Interview: Tom Payne Plays Mind Games With Us



[photos by Michael Hanna Photography for SciFi4Me]

It's 6pm on a Tuesday at the Red Bull Studios in Santa Monica, CA and the cast and creative team of the new sci-fi thriller film, *Mindgamers*, has just finish a panel and press junket. The film follows a group of brilliant young students, lead by *The Walking Dead's* Tom Payne, who create a wireless neural network capable of transferring motor-skills from one brain to another, anywhere in the world, via a quantum computer. Though they hope the technology will change humanity for the better, they soon find out that darker forces, perhaps, the trailer hints, led by the great Sam Neill (*Jurassic Park*), threaten to use it as a means of mass mind control.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb62EQyJFyo&feature=youtu.be>

Amidst the new wave tech office furniture, giant posters of extreme sports stars, and hors d'oeuvres, Tom and I find a little time to chat about his geeky side and the not so sci-fi elements of his new film.



Cast and crew of MINDGAMERS sat for a Q&A panel.

Ayla Glass: How did you learn about this project, and what attracted you to the script initially?

Tom Payne: It was like any other project that you audition for. It was a script that came to me and the part seemed really interesting. I'm a bit sci-fi nerd myself. I love *Flatliners* and movies like that, and I thought this had a similar kind of vibe, and the subject matter really interested me. And I needed a job (he laughs). So I got offered this one and I thought it would be really fun. It's gotten much bigger and more interesting and more exciting than I could of thought it could have been. I have been amazed at Red Bull's investment in pushing things forward and tackling difficult subjects. And making a movie that isn't like any other. I don't think I've seen a movie like this before.

AG: So during the panel you touched a little on that you got really into quantum science after reading the script and getting involved in the movie. Was that a passion ahead of time?

TP: No I hadn't really thought about it before. I had my own ideas about life, and death, and what happens, what doesn't happen, and I knew they didn't involve religion, so I was always looking for something else. So when we started the movie, and we started having these conversations within

the cast, and with the writers and director about existence and about quantum physics and the connection between people, it really chimed with me and gave me a new direction to go in with my understanding of how things work. But it's such an enormous subject. I've never really been a scientist. I feel like if something interests you then you follow that and there was parts of science that interested me, but I just knew that it wasn't my direction. But at the same time I am a very quite a geeky person and into sci-fi. One of the things that made me do the movie was that I wanted to do a sci-fi movie and this one had some really interesting themes and really interesting questions. So it was great to get involved in that.

AG: So would you do a sci-fi movie again?

TP: Absolutely. I've been telling my agent I want to be in the new *Predator* movie or the new *Alien* movies. I love sci-fi. I think it's really exciting and asks questions and it just... looks really cool!

AG: Yes! You get to wear cool outfits, shot cool guns... So you want to be in an alien invasion movie next if possible?

TP: Absolutely.



Tom Payne at the MINDGAMERS panel.

AG: Nice! How was it working with Sam Neill. He's such a renowned veteran actor. How

was that relationship dynamic on set?

TP: Sam has been around for a long time now, and he does so much work and such different performances. At the end of it, he's just a working actor, and that very much comes across with him. He has an ease to his work and to himself that puts you at ease. I take my job seriously but my energy isn't really too intense. And Sam's isn't too, so when you meet actors who are doing it in a way that you do it and in a way you aspire to do it. Then it gives you confidence that you don't have to be too method, or too crazy, or too whatever, because I've seen this person do amazing performances. I don't want to change the way that I work because that's the way an "amazing actor does it," and I know that you don't have to. Generally, I come to work really invigorated and excited and I did on this movie.

AG: If you could describe this film in one word, what would it be?

TP: Mindbending.

AG: Amazing. Is there anything specific you would like audiences to take away from the film?

TP: I think the main thing is just that it opens the conversation. I think that's the most important thing. The movie is not linear in a way that a regular movie is. I've watched the movie twice now and the second time I got more out of it. Honestly, I left the movie and I was like, "I don't know if that was a good movie, but I also don't know if it's a bad movie" because it doesn't fit the narrative of a regular movie. It doesn't go, this is the beginning, this is the middle, this is the end. A lot of things happen simultaneously, and it's not constructed in a "normal" way. So you come out of it having had an experience, and asking questions about the movie but also everything to do with the movies and all the things it brought up. And that was different for me. I'm used to leaving a movie and going "ah, okay that was nice," and this movie I was like, I need to go away and think about that. So that was really cool, it's a whole new thing. And with the experiment that's happening... there is a lot of great music in the movie and a lot of great visuals and ideas. It's definitely a stimulating project, so I'm excited to see the results of the experiment.

AG: Do you think you're going to jump in there in the back maybe?

TP: Yeah, if I'm here I will I think.

AG: Okay. Final question: any hints as to what the second half of season 7 holds for you on *The Walking Dead*?

TP: (laughs) I can't say...

AG: No?! Do you make it?

TP: I can't even tell you that. I can say that, first episode back, Jesus takes everyone to meet the Kingdom in Ezekiel, and we start the long journey to building the resistance... And that's all I can

say.

MindGamers: One Thousand Minds Connected Live (also known as *DxM*) takes place on Tuesday, March 28, 2017, at 9:00 p.m. ET/6:00 p.m. PT and is produced by Fathom Events and Terra Mater Film Studios. Tickets are on sale now at <http://www.fathomevents.com/event/mindgamers>

The Walking Dead airs Sunday nights at 9/8c on AMC.

[Follow @twitter](#)

[Follow @twitter](#)

