A tribute to corporate raiders? Only the braintrust behind this knows for sure.

Edward Hunt's The Brain

The Brain reunites the team of Edward Hunt, director, and Barry Pearson, writer. In 1977 the two produced a virtually unknown tax-shelter film, Plague, starring David Pineo, Kate Reid and Céline Lemoine, that was eventually released on the Texas drive-in circuit in 1979.

Hunt had previously written, produced and directed Starship Fission with Robert Vaughn in 1976, and Pearson had written the screenplay for Peter Pearson's Paperback Hero in 1972. You would have thought that these two gentlemen of modest but promising talent would have learned a thing or two about filmmaking over the years and perhaps gone on to do better things. However, time seems to be working in reverse with the theatrical release of The Brain. A more inept, amateurish piece of celluloid excrement cannot be imagined even in the darkest days of tax-shelter filmmaking.

The film was produced by Tony Kramreither, the man responsible for such Canadian cinematic gems as Mondo Nudo (1978), Hummuggos (1981) and Thrillkill (1983). However, recently Kramreither has been moving away from his more lurid films and getting behind quality projects like Leon Mann's Dancing In The Dark and the underrated Concrete Angels. The Brain represents a major step backwards to the bad old days. In fact, all involved in this laughable piece of junk, including special effects co-ordinator Mark Williams (The Fly, Alien), should be thoroughly embarrassed that this film has actually seen the light of day on the theatrical circuit. The Brain is headed directly for the bottom of the bin in the sleaziest section of your local video-cassette outlet reserved especially for this sort of pre-pubescent schlock horror flick. The Brain, which borrows liberally from David Cronenberg's Videodrome and Invasion Of The Body Snatchers, without a wit of justice done to either of these far superior films, concerns the doings of an evil, alien psychiatrist (David Gale) who controls the minds of those who watch his TV show by means of a living brain. The brain, which at first looks like an oversized piece of turd with a tail, is hooked up to all sorts of electrodes and TV monitors from which it relays commands to its master.

Not content with merely controlling human minds with hallucinations, the brain unexplainably develops a carnivorous appetite for the mad doctor's female assistant. "That's food for thought!", exclaims the wide-eyed psychiatrist as the unfortunate assistant disappears inside the squirming lump of turd. After a satisfying burp the creature develops the funniest set of fangs and bulging eyes imaginable.

Into this ludicrous state of affairs comes our all-American hero (the suburbs of Toronto and Mississauga are thinly disguised to be somewhere in New York, although the art director forgets or couldn't afford to lose the Toronto transit stops and other assorted bits of Canadiana, played by Tom Breznahan with a perpetual smirk). Of course he is cute and contemptuous of authority. He resists the psychiatrist's attempts at brainwashing and subsequently he is chased all over the lab and town by the mad doctor's remaining assistant, a certain overweight, lunatic-looking Nurse Varna, played unintentionally for laughs by Karen Reid. Each time one-in-a-while the rapidly growing brain will appear out of nowhere to menace our hero and wreak havoc on the good folks of Meadowvale.

Our macho high school hero is helped by his virginal girlfriend, the pretty but incompetent Cyndy Preston, until she too comes under the brain's power. Once again he is chased all over the place by Nurse Varna. Again he escapes and sneaks back into the TV studio, intent on destroying the brain. By now the organ has become the size of a Mack truck, eating everything in its path. Including, thank goodness, Nurse Varna. However, our hero, with his ex-virginal girlfriend at his side, comes face-to-face with the worst case of bad breath this side of King Kong. With an unbelievable shriek of horror, he blows up the saliva-foaming monster and happily all the good people of Meadowvale are released from its spell. Canada, oops. I mean America, is once again saved from alien domination.

In the middle of one of the endless boring chases, our hero's best friend and girlfriend, who are looking for him in the TV studio, stop.