

# Phenomenon (film)

***Phenomenon*** is a 1996 American romantic fantasy drama film directed by Jon Turteltaub, written by Gerald Di Pego, and starring John Travolta, Kyra Sedgwick, Forest Whitaker, Robert Duvall, and Jeffrey DeMunn.

In the film, an amiable, small-town everyman is inexplicably transformed into a genius with telekinetic powers. The original music score was composed by Thomas Newman.

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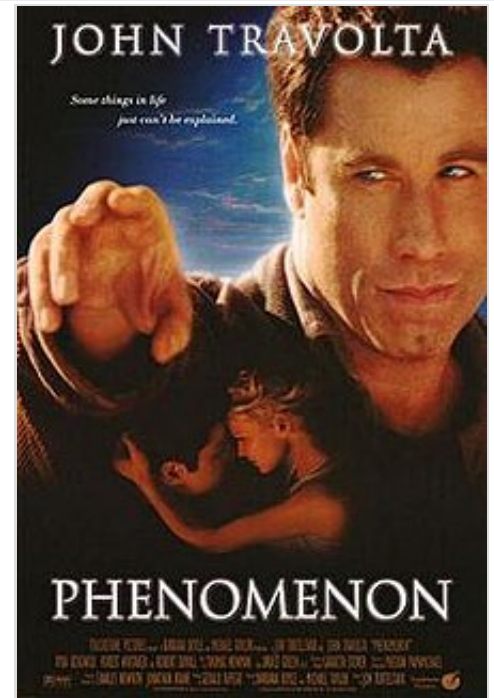
## Plot

George Malley is a kind but average auto mechanic in a small town in Northern California. While celebrating his 37th birthday at a local bar with his best friend, Nate, and father figure, Doc Brunder, he steps outside while drunk. A ball of shining bright white lights moves around in the sky, grows closer and hits him in the head, making a loud sound and knocking him down. When he comes to and re-enters the bar, he learns that nobody else saw the lights nor did they hear the sound. Doc notices something is amiss when George quickly achieves a checkmate in their chess game.

George begins to exhibit remarkable levels of intelligence. He easily absorbs vast amounts of information, formulates new, revolutionary ideas, as well as developing psychokinesis. Not needing sleep, he spends each night reading multiple books.

George tries to use his new intelligence for the good of his community. He correctly predicts an earthquake without any equipment. When Doc is called to aid a sick Portuguese man, George learns the language in minutes and

### *Phenomenon*



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	Jon Turteltaub
<b>Produced by</b>	Barbara Boyle Michael Taylor Charles Newirth
<b>Written by</b>	Gerald Di Pego
<b>Starring</b>	John Travolta Kyra Sedgwick Forest Whitaker Robert Duvall
<b>Music by</b>	Thomas Newman
<b>Cinematography</b>	Phedon Papamichael, Jr.
<b>Edited by</b>	Bruce Green
<b>Production company</b>	Touchstone Pictures

helps translate. He then uses his telekinesis to rescue the man's young relative. Visiting Nate, George decodes and responds to a signal on Nate's shortwave radio, though Nate asks him to forget about it out of fear that they might be picking up information from a nearby air force base.

During this time of upheaval the townsfolk become wary, but George finds support from Doc, Nate and from a growing relationship with a single mother, Lace, and her children, Al and Glory. George also sets a plan in place to help Nate get together with the mother of the Portuguese boy he rescued.

George invites Lace to join him on a trip to UC Berkeley to meet with seismologist Professor Ringold about George's earthquake prediction. Instead, the FBI takes George and Nate into custody over his code-breaking.

He breaks more codes, then astounds Dr. Nierdorf by easily answering a series of difficult quizzes and exams. When George threatens to talk to the press, he is finally released.

Returning to the local bar, George becomes frustrated with friends' questions about his abilities, and he causes a large mirror to break via telekinesis. Lace visits him to provide a shave and a haircut. Their innocent intimacy scares her since she has tried so hard to not like him, but it encourages him to stop avoiding the townsfolk. He goes to the county fair to ease fear with a demonstration of his powers, but the crowd goes into a frenzy, demanding his attention and his perceived healing powers. George is knocked to the ground, where he again sees the balls of light, before losing consciousness.

George awakens in a hospital. With Lace and Nate there for support, Doc explains that George has a deadly brain tumor. This has caused the lights and stimulated George's phenomenal brain functions. They have called Dr. Wellin, a leading brain surgeon, to see if an operation can save George's life. Dr. Wellin later determines there is only a 1 in 500 chance of survival, but wants to proceed with an invasive operation solely to do research on George's living brain. When George refuses, saying he still has work to do, the doctor has him declared mentally unfit and held against his will.

George escapes from the hospital and returns home. He spends time with Nate, then goes to Lace's to spend time with her and her children. The FBI agent shows up, but Lace persuades him to let George die in peace. George and Lace share a romantic and intimate time, but he informs her that he is about to die and she cries as she holds him.

Professor Ringold arrives at Lace's house, only to learn that he is too late. Lace gives him George's research materials, so he can finish George's breakthrough work.

A year later, George's friends are gathered for what would have been his 38th birthday. Nate, now fluent in Portuguese, is married to a visibly pregnant Ella. Other signs of George's phenomenal impact on the town and its people are seen all around.

<b>Distributed by</b>	Buena Vista Pictures
<b>Release date</b>	July 5, 1996 (USA)
<b>Running time</b>	123 minutes
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$32 million (est.)
<b>Box office</b>	\$152,036,382 (est.)

## Cast

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- John Travolta as George Malley
- Kyra Sedgwick as Lace Pennamin
- Forest Whitaker as Nate Pope
- Robert Duvall as Doc Brunder
- Jeffrey DeMunn as Prof. John Ringold

- [Richard Kiley](#) as Dr. Wellin
- [David Gallagher](#) as Al Pennamin
- [Ashley Buccille](#) as Glory Pennamin
- [Brent Spiner](#) as Dr. Bob Nierdof
- [Elisabeth Nunziato](#) as Ella

## Box office

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The film grossed more than \$16,000,000 on its opening weekend, debuting in third position and later climbing up to second. It finally grossed \$104,636,382 in the US and \$47,400,000 elsewhere, grossing approximately \$152,000,000 overall.

## Accolades

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Travolta and Whitaker both won a [Blockbuster Entertainment Award](#) for their performances in 1997. Whitaker also received an [Image Award](#). In the same year the film was nominated for a [Saturn Award](#). Travolta was nominated for an [MTV Movie Award](#) for his performance, as well as for Best Kiss with [Kyra Sedgwick](#). [Eric Clapton](#) was nominated for his song "[Change the World](#)" and won an ASCAP Award and the BMI Film & TV Award. [Thomas Newman](#) also received a BMI Film & TV Award for the score.

## Television

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A remake, titled "Phenomenon II" was developed for television as part of [The Wonderful World of Disney](#) series (1995–2005) as Season 45, Episode 3 and aired November 1, 2003. The TV movie was directed by [Ken Olin](#) and written by [Gerald Di Pego](#). The movie stars:

- [Christopher Shyer](#) as George Malley
- [Terry O'Quinn](#) as Secret Service Agent
- [Jill Clayburgh](#) as Norma Malley
- [Peter Coyote](#) as John Ringold
- [Gina Tognoni](#) as Police Officer Claire

## See also

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- [Phenomenon \(soundtrack\)](#), a compilation album of music from the film

## References

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## External links

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- *Phenomenon* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117333/>) on IMDb
- *Phenomenon* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v136220>) at AllMovie
- *Phenomenon* (<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/phenomenon/>) at Rotten Tomatoes
- *Phenomenon* (<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=phenomenon.htm>) at Box Office Mojo

- *Phenomenon II* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0313116/>) on [IMDb](#) (the Made-for-TV remake)
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