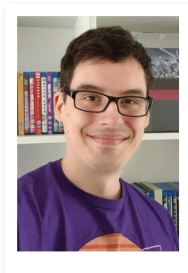


Wolf Man



***Wolf Man* is the second re-imagining of a classic Universal monster by director Leigh Whannell, following on from the 2020 instant classic *The Invisible Man*. It stars Christopher Abbott and Julia Garner as a struggling couple who, along with their young**

daughter (Matilda Firth), head into the Oregon wilderness to settle the affairs of Blake Lovell's missing father. On the way there, they encounter an unnatural creature that threatens their lives in more than one way.

Leigh Whannell struck gold with *The Invisible Man*, a clever, timely updating of the 1933 film by James Whale. When he was selected to helm the remake of 1941's *The Wolf Man*, it seemed like a match made in heaven, and the excellent trailer only seemed to confirm this further.

Unfortunately, *Wolf Man* is not the triumph it could have been. There are many great things about it, and it is fundamentally a good film, but unfortunately, the whole is less than the sum of its parts.

The filmmaking is beyond reproach. Whannell and cinematographer Stefan Duscio use many techniques to make this an uneasy and unique watch, from nifty camera tricks to intense and immersive sound design to clever use of darkness and light. The score by Benjamin Wallfisch is effective and unrelenting, and the physical and visual effects are blended seamlessly together.

The cast is great from top to bottom. Christopher Abbott shines in the lead role of troubled father Blake Lovell, and carries the majority of the film's emotional weight. Julia Garner holds her own as his wife Charlotte, and ten-year-old Matilda Firth is beyond impressive as their daughter Ginger.



Sam Jaeger and Benedict Hardie also do well in small roles as Blake's survivalist father and a resident of the Oregon mountains respectively.

Unfortunately, *Wolf Man* also has its share of flaws. While the make-up effects of Blake's *The Fly*-like transformation are suitably skin-crawling, his final lycanthropic form is quite disappointing, definitely more "man" than "wolf". While the concept of a devoted father and struggling husband slowly losing himself is a fascinating one, and played well for the first two-thirds of the film, it kind of falls apart when things turn into a strange blend of stalk-and-slash horror and action-thriller chase. The idea is great, but the execution leaves a lot to be desired, and the different take on werewolf mythology sadly isn't explored to its fullest.

Perhaps *Wolf Man*'s biggest issue is that it couldn't live up to the weight of its expectations. *The Invisible Man* was such a pleasant surprise, pressure was on Leigh Whannell to produce something comparable, and unfortunately, this offering is significantly inferior. Likewise, the trailer for *Wolf Man* was so impressive, the actual film is unable to deliver on its promise.

The filmmaking is skilful and the performances committed, but this blending of *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Fly* feels more like a missed opportunity than anything else.