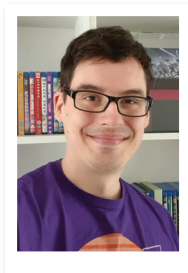




The Conjuring: Last Rites



The Conjuring: Last Rites is the fourth and final film in the *Conjuring* series. Helmed by *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It* director Michael Chaves, it stars series regulars Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga as paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren, who

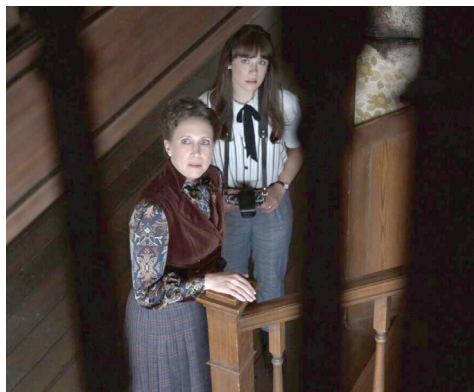
must face their most dangerous case yet - the violent haunting of the Smurl family.

Since the first film in 2013, *The Conjuring* has been one of horror's most consistent franchises, with three solid frighteners thus far. While each instalment has been slightly less impressive and original than the one before, even 2021's *The Devil Made Me Do It* had enough positives to recommend it.

Unfortunately, this climactic entry is where the wheels fall off. *Last Rites* is so far removed from what *The Conjuring* franchise began as, it feels more like an *Insidious* movie. Gone are the lingering tension and vague realism of previous films, replaced with ineffective jump scares and ludicrous action sequences.

The Conjuring: Last Rites isn't a total failure. Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga continue to have unmatched on-screen chemistry, and look more than ever like the real Ed and Lorraine Warren. Their family dynamic, along with their now adult daughter Judy (Mia Tomlinson), is authentic and enjoyable, and if this were a family drama about Judy's engagement to ex-cop Tony Spera (Ben Hardy), you could probably call it a success.

But what a *Conjuring* film should be, above all, is scary, and in that, *Last Rites* stumbles horribly. There is one really effective jump scare, with hardly any building suspense, which is something the first two films in the series did better than virtually any horror movie of the 21st century. When the climax



of the film is the Warren family pushing away a comically spinning mirror, you know that you have a dud on your hands.

Blame must land largely on the shoulders of director Michael Chaves, and writers Ian Goldberg, Richard Naing and David Leslie Johnson-McGoldrick. *The Devil Made Me Do It* was the first *Conjuring* film not directed by horror legend James Wan, and written without the involvement of Chad and Carey W. Hayes, who penned the first two instalments in the franchise. While there was a noticeable dip in quality in that third movie, it still maintained enough intrigue and fear to at least belong in the series. Perhaps it is the involvement of more writers, or maybe the creative team buckled under the weight of expectation in this climactic film, but the story is a mess, and the directing is clunky, leaving *Last Rites* as one of the most disappointing horror films in years.

Fans of the series will undoubtedly want to see this, as it is the last of the *Conjuring* series, and despite all its flaws, does give Ed and Lorraine a satisfying conclusion to their stories. However, the film itself, the way it is made, and especially compared to previous entries in the franchise, is at best a disappointment, and at worst, an insult to a formerly great horror series.