



Film Review

Wake Up Dead Man

By Duncan Forbes



Wake Up Dead Man is the third film in the *Knives Out* series. Writer-director Rian Johnson returns, as does Daniel Craig as master detective Benoit Blanc. He is joined by a brand-new ensemble cast, including Josh O'Connor, Josh Brolin, Glenn Close, Jeremy Renner, Mila Kunis, Andrew Scott, Cailee Spaeny and Kerry Washington.

The Benoit Blanc mysteries have become one of the most consistent film franchises in recent years, and while 2022's *Glass Onion* wasn't quite as good as the original *Knives Out*, it was still a fun and compelling crime dramedy. *Wake Up Dead Man* also falls a little short of the 2019 original, but is a definite step up from *Glass Onion*. All of the twists, unreliable narration, and clever reveals are there, but this instalment in the series adds an interesting religious wrinkle, with the victim being a charismatic but volatile priest, and Blanc's key partner in the investigation being the assistant pastor. Themes as diverse as right-wing evangelism, resurrection and redemption are examined, lending proceedings a somewhat darker tone than previous entries in the franchise.



As has been the case previously, the ensemble is one of *Wake Up Dead Man*'s biggest strengths. Benoit Blanc takes more of a back seat than usual, but is as charming and brilliant as ever. Josh Brolin delivers a great, intense performance as the fiery Monsignor Jefferson Wicks, Thomas Haden Church is loveable and sympathetic as groundskeeper Samson Holt, and Josh O'Connor is the film's heart; conflicted, flawed, but ultimately righteous as Father Jud Duplency. The real stand-out, however, is Glenn Close,

who delivers a masterfully layered and complex turn as Wicks' right-hand woman, Martha Delacroix. As has become a staple of the *Knives Out* series, the writing and pacing are perfect, letting the mystery stay just one step ahead of all but the sharpest viewers. The cinematography in *Wake Up Dead Man* is astonishing, especially for a Netflix movie. The score, by regular Rian Johnson collaborator Nathan Johnson, is also emotive and fitting. *Wake Up Dead Man* has its flaws; it's occasionally tonally inconsistent, some of the twists and turns may frustrate viewers, and several members of the cast – notably Kerry Washington and Andrew Scott – are underutilised. Overall, though, this is another great addition to one of modern cinema's best franchises. Long may it continue.

