

'The Invisible Man' takes a different approach

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Delivers a few THRILLS, CHILLS

Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 124 minutes

It has been 123 years H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* hit bookshelves and 87 years since the first of many cinematic adaptations. The latest arrives at theaters this week. It's an impossible task to outdo the original classic, so the newest version tries a different approach to the material, focusing not so much on the titular character as it does on a woman he happens to be terrorizing. While not all of it works, the film makes an effort to distinguish itself and offers a few thrills and chills.

Cecilia Kass (Elisabeth Moss) is the withdrawn and abused wife of obsessive optics genius Adrian Griffin (Oliver Jackson-Cohen). Tired of having every aspect of her life controlled, she attempts to sneak away and start a new life. Living as a recluse in the home of friend/police detective James Lanier (Aldis Hodge) and his daughter, Sydney (Storm Reid), Cecilia fears reprisals, but gets unexpected news that Adrian has died. The protagonist's acquaintances advise her to move on, but strange events begin to suggest that her past might still be with her, quite literally.

Soon, the lead's personal life begins to unravel as friends get frustrated when she becomes convinced that an invisible Adrian is still alive and stalking her.

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While this type of adaptation takes some of the fun away from the concept by seemingly ignoring the Adrian character and instead focusing on the traumatized Cecilia, Moss gives it her all and the committed performance will ultimately reel patient viewers in. The film teeters toward silliness at several points, but the actress treats the material with the highest regard. As her mental state deteriorates and everything about her new life start begins to fall apart, one can really get a sense of the lasting effects of her traumatic relationship.

The technical skills on display are also impressive. There are a lot of long takes and wide shots used. Often, viewers see extended images of empty rooms, or of the protagonist staring out and suspecting that someone might be in the area. Some of these quiet, still moments do generate tension. And while not every jump scare works, there are a few scenes involving household items being moved and sudden stings that are effective. Thankfully, when the action does arrive, it's cleverly put together with impressively staged skirmishes.

Extreme close-ups of the characters' faces are also used during dramatic moments and even elaborate attack sequences. It's entertaining to see the camera tilting sideways at certain points when people fall to the ground.

As mentioned, the movie isn't perfect. Frankly, it takes too long to get going and one wishes that the antagonist was a little more involved in the proceedings. The story wants to keep things mysterious, but in doing so makes Adrian little more than a one-note raging bully. This approach misses out on getting in the diabolical head of the villain whom many in the film claim is a genius.

And while the action that occurs late in the movie is fun and exciting, there are some logistical problems. Cecilia does strange things with important evidence, and one of the big sequences in which Adrian commits a number of assaults doesn't draw the attention it should from authorities. Additionally, as Cecilia's situation worsens and the police get involved, there is an interview that can only be described as a conflict of interest for one of the participants.

You certainly will need to give the movie some time to find its footing and forgive it for several lapses in logic. However, as a genre picture it does deliver a smattering of pulpy thrills along with some moments of drama depicting the struggles of being abused and shell-shocked. And even if it doesn't all work, at least it attempts to give the transparent man concept something of

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a fresh spin. Compared with other scare fare out there like *Fantasy Island*, you could do much worse.

In the end, *The Invisible Man* may not be as well remembered 90 years from now as the original film still is, but it also isn't as trivial or lightweight as it might otherwise have been.

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