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LET THE RIGHT ONE IN (LÅT DEN RÄTTE KOMMA IN)

Movie Details

Post Author: Matt Ho August 7, 2013 0

OUR RATING 

DIRECTOR TOMAS ALFREDSON

WRITER JOHN AJVIDE LINDQVIST

 2.5/5 2 votes

US BOX OFFICE \$2.1M

RUN TIME 1 HR. 45 MIN. **RATED** R

YOUR RATING

GENRE HORROR, INTERNATIONAL

WATCH THE TRAILER LET THE RIGHT ONE IN (LÅT DEN RÄTTE KOMMA IN) TRAILER

STARS Ika Nord Kåre Hedebrant Karin Bergquist Lina Leandersson Per Ragnar Peter Carlberg

SYNOPSIS

A bullied 12-year-old boy develops a friendship with his new neighbor who he discovers is a vampire.

REVIEW

Believe it or not, back when *Twilight* began infesting theaters and inspiring producers to spawn shows with equally egregious fang suckers sulking in the misery of modern teenage romance, there was something *much* better. It was Swedish author John Ajvide Lindqvist's novel *Let the Right One In* that director and fellow Swede Tomas Alfredson decided to bring to the big screen. Though the majority of audiences directed their attention to mainstream releases, Alfredson delivered a far superior film that brought dignity back to the vampire genre.

Let the Right One In is in the minority of adaptations that's actually good. The main reason being

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U.S Box Office

Weekend Box Office for 8/2/2013

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The Wolverine	\$21,324,890
The Smurfs 2	\$17,548,389
The Conjuring	\$13,027,154
Despicable Me 2	\$10,134,120

Source: *The Numbers* - Movie Box Office

Advertising

Lindqvist wrote the screenplay himself, to which he handles extremely well without diluting the material. Whereas the book is more in-depth and contains several secondary characters, its film equivalent has a silent ambiance with its subtle approach and the desolate wintery setting of Blackberg, Stockholm that gives it a haunting mystique.

The minimalism not only works well within time constraints, but it makes the story tighter, concise, and even better in certain respects. Leaving out the character Tommy, for example, really drew out Oskar's (Kåre Hedebrant) loneliness. There are some things left unexplained, but the way it's presented leaves much to the imagination without feeling like a plot hole; plus all major components of the narrative are covered. In my opinion, the omissions were judiciously made since it allowed a concentrated focus on the relationship between the two main characters, which is the heart of *Let the Right One In* anyway.

The plot itself can be hard sell because *Let the Right One In* is, in a way, deceptively sweet: a boy who's constantly harassed at school finally finds solace in his androgynous vampire neighbor Eli, played by Lina Leandersson (the character is referred to as a "she" in the film, so I'll do the same for clarity sake). As well, there's no doubt that the premise has a sense of romanticism especially since the film is a lot tamer than the book. However, it's still *far* from being a PG-13, R.L. Stine-esque tale considering the strong presence of murder, mutilation, rage repression, and bullying.

What's really interesting about the film is that it doesn't really exploit the horror when it's appropriately called for. In fact, *Let the Right One In* hardly relies on Eli for scares. That is not to say that she isn't frightening, because in her inhuman state, she's a feral, animalistic being who kills to survive, and we expect that because of what she is. The twist is that she's not the primary hunter. Her meals come from Hakan (Per Ragnar), her caretaker that she uses to hunt victims for blood, most of whom are unfortunately adolescents. Eli cares neither who he does it to, nor how he does it, as long as she feeds without doing the dirty work herself.

Please Oskar...be me a little. – Eli

Lindqvist cleverly grounds the blood-sucking mythology with realism by incorporating the dark side of humanity that involves serial killing and twisted manipulation. *Let the Right One In* becomes more terrifying because what we fear about this supernatural entity now presents us with a human threat that's very real. It's not always Eli as The Vampire that's necessarily the terror; it's the presentation of

that's very real. It's not always Eli as the vampire that's necessarily the terror, it's the presentation of a 200-300 year-old entity trapped in a 12-year-old's body controlling a grown man to do her bidding that's scary. Then there's Oskar himself.

He's harmless for the most part, but this is a kid with serious issues. With all the merciless bullying, it appears he has developed homicidal tendencies. He has a fascination of the macabre, which is evident with his morbid hobby of collecting newspaper clippings of murder cases he hides under the bed. And the night Eli meets Oskar, she watches him fantasizing about killing his tormentors (horrid children, by the way) by imagining them as the tree he's repeatedly stabbing, while re-enacting taunts that were once directed to him.

Balancing the grim of the two characters is their bond. Oskar finally has a friend; Eli enjoys his company and encourages him to stand up to his bullies. It's a connection formed from two loners who find common ground with their solitude and more interestingly, their bloodthirsty nature that shows an interesting divide between them. While Oskar shows repulsion to Eli's violence, she reminds him of his desire to kill, as opposed to her needing to do so to live.

One of the major questions *Let the Right One In* poses about their friendship is Eli's sincerity: is she genuinely seeking a companion in Oskar? Or is her intention to prepare him as her new helper once Hakan is out of the picture? Lindqvist definitely treats the relationship in a more romantic manner in the film compared to his original rendering, so in a way, it leans towards the former. Yet, there's still something unsettling about it. Even with a seemingly happy conclusion, it's hard to imagine Oskar's future as anything but ideal given the circumstances.

The young stars of *Let the Right One In* give outstanding performances, made more impressive by the fact that they practically carry the entire film. Hedebrant plays Oskar perfectly, displaying his character's dangerously suppressed anger, as well as his lonely, fearful self that makes him empathetic. The kids who play the bullies deserve much praise given how much their acting just makes you hate them. To call them mean is a huge understatement.

Alfredson couldn't have picked a better female lead than Leandersson. She has the most difficult role with Eli as she has to play as both a grown-up and a child at the same time. Leandersson portrays the multiple facets of her character phenomenally as a creature of the night and an immortal that while an adult, is still somewhat of a child emotionally. The scene of her breaking an old apotropaic where a vampire cannot enter a home unless invited by the owner (hence the title) is instantly memorable, only to be followed by an emotional performance in a captivating moment with Hedebrant.



VERDICT

Let the Right One In is a great example of a book-to-film adaptation done well. Its minimalism makes it mysterious and thankfully less contrived considering the 428 pages worth of story that could've been unsuccessfully crammed in. The novel is darker and more violent, but the film retains its own gloom with fantastically written characters. The acting is flawless and the chemistry between Hedebrant and Leandersson is incredible to watch. Hopefully, the film will encourage you to pick up a copy of the novel, which is worth the read.

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