

Blu-ray Review: Sleepy Thriller ‘The Woman in Black’ Miscasts Daniel Radcliffe

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on May 23, 2012 - 4:59am

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Ciaran Hinds](#) [3]
- [Daniel Radcliffe](#) [4]
- [Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [James Watkins](#) [7]
- [Janet McTeer](#) [8]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [9]
- [Sony Pictures Home Entertainment](#) [10]
- [The Woman in Black](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – Nothing jars an audience quite like the sudden appearance of a fearsome apparition in a dimly lit room. Even hokey thrillers like William Castle’s “House on Haunted Hill” still manage to make viewers jump from their seats by using this reliable horror standby. “The Woman in Black” has one such moment, but it is surrounded by a murky sea of grim tedium.

This is a sleepy little haunted house picture that proves to be the worst possible post-“Potter” role for Daniel Radcliffe, who was straining to distance himself from the boy wizard even while completing the phenomenally successful franchise. His stage work has given him ample opportunities to take bold risks. His singing and dancing in Broadway’s “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying” raised nearly as many eyebrows as his nude scene in London’s “Equus” revival. Yet his screen roles outside of Hogwarts (such as “December Boys”) have been of the underwhelming variety.



Blu-ray Rating: **2.0/5.0**

The gravest misstep in “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2” was the decision to age its three young stars rather than hire adults to play versions of Harry, Ron and Hermione nineteen years in the future. The resulting mixture of makeup and visual effects was unconvincing at best, laughable at worst. It doesn’t help that Radcliffe’s morose widower in “Woman in Black” looks strikingly similar to Old Harry. It also doesn’t help that his co-star is Ciarán Hinds, who just shared the screen with him as Aberforth Dumbledore in “Deathly Hallows,” or that the vengeful ghost that haunts him has a pale, digitally enhanced face not unlike Voldemort’s. There are even several train sequences that are nearly impossible to watch without having John Williams’ iconic “Potter” theme echo in the back of one’s mind. Radcliffe’s performance is not bad, per se, but he still appears to be a boy playing dress-up. Yet his actorly tick of breathing heavily through gritted teeth has thankfully subsided, and there are a handful of scenes requiring raw emotion that prove Radcliffe has a vastly more interesting screen presence than blank-faced bores like Zac Efron or Channing Tatum. He’s just about ten years too young to convincingly play a lawyer devastated by the death of his wife in childbirth. His grief-fueled desire to connect with the afterlife causes him to develop an ill-advised fixation on a homicidal ghost intent on having the townspeople’s children off themselves a la “The Happening.”



The Woman in Black was released on Blu-ray and DVD on May 22, 2012.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

The film opens promisingly enough with a pre-title sequence where three girls hurl themselves out an attic window as the petrified faces of their china dolls look on. There is certainly no shortage of chilling imagery on display here, from the furious rocking of an empty chair to the spectacular submerged causeway leading up to Osea Island. Yet the flat-footed pacing and uninspired characters cause the film's multiple stabs at suspense to fizzle out. Jane Goldman's uncharacteristically humorless script merely goes through the motions of a routine horror formula, while James Watkins' direction lacks the visceral edge that made his 2008 directorial debut, "Eden Lake," so profoundly unsettling. Janet McTeer momentarily jolts the film to life with some freaky bouts of madness, though Hinds' fine work only makes one yearn for another viewing of his far better supernatural drama, "The Eclipse." Perhaps the biggest problem with the film is the strange indifference of its protagonist to the incessant ghostly mischief. He never looks sufficiently terrified when the house snaps, crackles and pops at him from all angles. That isn't Radcliffe's fault since his character is supposed to be drawn to the mysteries of the netherworld, but his lack of fear makes it even harder for the audience to get worked up over all the loud thwacks on the soundtrack.

"The Woman in Black" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English and Spanish subtitles, and includes two brief featurettes where the filmmakers defend their decision to avoid period-specific details like accurate accents. It was Radcliffe's idea to have his godson, Misha Handley, play his son, and the pair do share some tender moments (Handley's hand drawn pictures of a despairing Radcliffe earn the film's only laugh). In the audio commentary, Watkins and Goldman discuss their efforts to create resonant scares through precise compositions and eerie shadows, yet it's clear that more thought was put into the visual palette than the narrative itself. You know it's a bad sign when a character is creeping slowly up the stairs toward an unseen threat and all you can think of is Frau Blucher's immortal line, "Stay close to ze candles. Ze staircase...can be tweacherous."

'The Woman in Black' is released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and stars Daniel Radcliffe, Ciarán Hinds, Janet McTeer and Liz White. It was written by Jane Goldman and directed by James Watkins. It was released on May 22, 2012. It is rated PG-13.



[13]

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]
Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
matt@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 3:50am*):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/18612/blu-ray-review-sleepy-thriller-the-woman-in-black-miscasts-daniel-radcliffe>

- Links:**
- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/mattmoviemann>
 - [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>
 - [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ciaran-hinds>
 - [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/daniel-radcliffe>
 - [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/harry-potter-and-the-deathly-hallows-part-2>
 - [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
 - [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/james-watkins>
 - [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/janet-mcteer>
 - [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matt-fagerholm>
 - [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sony-pictures-home-entertainment>
 - [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-woman-in-black>
 - [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
 - [13] <mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com>
 - [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#MATT>