

Film Review: Consider the Meaning of Life Force in ‘Annihilation’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 23, 2018 - 8:23am

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CHICAGO – Alex Garland, the standout creator/director of “Ex Machina,” is back with “Annihilation,” another science fiction story. And like the previous film, it explores implications of a sci-fi event, in this case an outer space incident that restructures a cellular code, that ends up destructive.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

There are shades of other films that have been seen before (like the Alien series) that waters down the plot, but the visual sense that Garland paints in the atmosphere is wholly original. It’s a ploddingly paced film, with jump scares and odd creatures, and at its core is a type of Twilight-Zone type story, not a compliment. Natalie Portman is the lead actor, and the character she was portraying doesn’t gel with her usual persona. Her confrontations – with her missing husband, her team and the “Shimmer” (which is the zone created by the invasion) – are the drivers for the film, and her low keyed approach dims the slow-moving plot that much more. It’s not top drawer Alex Garland, but any Garland film is better at cinema-altering perceptions than most attempts.

The film is told in flashback, as Lena (Natalie Portman) relates her story of surviving the “Shimmer,” a contaminated zone that is a result of an outer space meteor hitting near a coast in America. The zone it creates is getting larger, and defeats whatever exploration team is sent into it, including a group with a soldier named Kane (Oscar Isaac). He has been missing for a year, and is Lena’s husband.

Lena is a biologist, and was coerced into entering the Shimmer with four female companions, including hard-as-nails Anya (Gina Rodriguez) and the spooky Dr. Ventress (Jennifer Jason Leigh). She relates their encounters within the Shimmer, and it includes fantastic hybrid creatures – like a wolf bear – and a new evolution of biology, where different species are intermingling. After traveling to the source of the meteor hit, Lena also felt a connection to a new destiny.

“Annihilation” opens everywhere on February 22nd. Featuring Natalie Portman, Oscar Isaac, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tessa Thompson, and Gina Rodriguez. Screenplay adapted by Alex Garland, from a novel by Jeff VanderMeer. Directed by Alex Garland. Rated “R”



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Lena (Natalie Portman) Enters the Shimmer Zone in ‘Annihilation’
Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

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