

## Take a Trip to Drew Goddard's Brilliant 'The Cabin in the Woods'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 12, 2012 - 9:06am

- [Amy Acker](#) [2]
- [Anna Hutchison](#) [3]
- [Bradley Whitford](#) [4]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [5]
- [Chris Hemsworth](#) [6]
- [Drew Goddard](#) [7]
- [Fran Kranz](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Jesse Williams](#) [10]
- [Joss Whedon](#) [11]
- [Kristen Connolly](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Richard Jenkins](#) [14]
- [The Cabin in the Woods](#) [15]



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Drew Goddard's "The Cabin in the Woods" is a brilliant dissection of not just the clichés of the horror film genre but how they have played a role in the darkest corners of our society for centuries. It's also a damn blast, as fun a time as you'll have in a movie theater this season (and probably next). It's one of those rare films that's just pulsing with energy on so many levels — as genre-loving comedy, as straight-up horror, and as something you've simply never seen before. "The Cabin in the Woods" is a great film.

It's also a film that works best the less you know about it. So I will tread VERY lightly with spoilers. Considering what Lionsgate has chosen to give away in their trailers, I'll stick with those elements of the film but I will say this – you may think you know all you need to know about "The Cabin in the Woods." You do not. You may think the preview gives away too much. It does not. From the very beginning of "Cabin," the opening scene, Goddard and co-writer Joss Whedon are playing with your expectations, not only as genre fans but as film goers in general. Who are these people? What are they doing? Where's the cabin? Where are the damn woods? And, from that moment through to the end, Goddard and Whedon are in complete control. The best genre filmmakers of all time lead you by the nose, taking you to the edge of your seat and always guiding the way through their films in such a way that you can't wait to see what's around the next corner. They're always ahead of you and keeping you focused. Goddard and Whedon do exactly that with "The Cabin in the Woods," and the path is so much fun to take that you'll leave wondering when you can do walk it again.



The Cabin in the Woods

Photo credit: Lionsgate

The basic foundation of "The Cabin in the Woods" is meant to be incredibly familiar to people who have even a passing interest in the horror genre: "Five beautiful young people in a cabin in the woods. Bad things happen there." The people fit relatively (but not overly) into horror movie archetypes. There's the beautiful virgin Dana (Kristen Connolly), the jock Curt (Chris Hemsworth), the pretty girl Jules (Anna Hutchison), the comic relief Marty (Fran Kranz), and the new guy Holden (Jesse Williams). The quintet goes to a cabin so deep in the woods that it's away from technology, cell towers, and most of humanity. And from the minute they cross into the area surrounding the cabin, Goddard conveys that something is not at all normal here. These people are being manipulated, controlled, and pushed toward a required result. Who's pushing them? Why? Is there anything they can do about it?

Once again, treading more lightly with spoilers than most critics, Goddard and Whedon have found a way to take the clichés and archetypes of horror and give them reason and weight. Why do people split up in horror movies? Why do jocks seem to play up their macho aggression and dirty girls want to fool around in the scary woods? "The Cabin in the Woods" not only finds reasons for these horror clichés but places them in historical context. Let's just say that Jason wasn't the first one to kill a virgin. We've been telling stories of sacrifice and carnage since the written word began and Goddard and Whedon's brilliant script finds a way to place the horror genre in film in the world of horror overall in all mediums.

And they do so with such a smart, clever sense of what matters to horror fans. We've all seen countless horror films that nail the set-up and flub the follow-through. In fact, a vast majority of horror films get less interesting as they go along – as characters we like are killed, as secrets are revealed, and as the creaky floorboard is revealed to be a CGI creation that's really not that scary. Rarely has there ever been a horror film that pays off in its third act like "The Cabin in the Woods." It doesn't just follow through, it virtually explodes the genre, going completely unpredictable places with such confidence that I can't imagine anyone thinking that the film didn't deliver on what it promised. The final act is such a bold creative risk that one marvels it even got made.



The Cabin in the Woods

Photo credit: Lionsgate

Is "The Cabin in the Woods" perfect? I think a second viewing might convince me that it is and I think that history will be VERY kind to this film but I do wish the actual horror had a bit more bite to it. To be blunt, "Cabin" is never really scary. The entire process has been so deconstructed that it may have been impossible to provide the scares but as characters were being killed, I longed for one honestly scary set-piece. Goddard and Whedon seem to enjoy the intellectual aspects of the film more than the visceral ones, and there could have been a slightly better version of "Cabin" in which the death scenes didn't feel quite as routine (there are a couple of amazing sight gag deaths, including a spectacular one late in the film, but none that provoke any actual fear).

"Meta" horror movies are much harder to pull off than people think. For every "Shaun of the Dead," there's a dozen films that were pretentious, silly, or just plain annoying. Horror films that recognize and comment on their own genre in a subversive way (some of Sam Raimi and Peter Jackson's work certainly qualifies) and yet are also purely entertaining on a surface level as well as an intellectual one are extremely difficult. And very few have been as consistent, clever, and smart as "The Cabin in the Woods." Don't miss it.

*"The Cabin in the Woods" stars Kristen Connolly, Chris Hemsworth, Anna Hutchison, Fran Kranz, Jesse Williams, Richard Jenkins, Bradley Whitford, and Amy Acker. It was written by Drew Goddard & Joss Whedon and directed by Goddard. It is rated R and opens on April 13, 2012.*



[16]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [17]  
Content Director  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [16]

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 5:28am):**  
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/18141/take-a-trip-to-drew-goddard-s-brilliant-the-cabin-in-the-woods>

- Links:**
- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
  - [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/amy-acker>
  - [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/anna-hutchison>
  - [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/bradley-whitford>
  - [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brian-tallerico>
  - [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/chris-hemsworth>
  - [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/drew-goddard>
  - [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/fran-kranz>
  - [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
  - [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jesse-williams>
  - [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/joss-whedon>
  - [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kristen-connolly>
  - [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
  - [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/richard-jenkins>
  - [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-cabin-in-the-woods>
  - [16] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
  - [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>