

No Supernatural Slam Dunks in Teen Horror ‘Wolves’

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on November 13, 2014 - 2:42pm

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – For the pack of horror fans who mourn the “PG-13” toothlessness of the teen wolf, the limited-release film “Wolves” tries to reclaim the character with slow-mo, WWE-with-claws fight scenes and some sprinkles of brief softcore wolf porn. If that’s all one could ask for from a werewolf movie, you probably can’t be blocked from giving this one a curious look; however if you’re trepidatious of a plainly junky, R-rated reaction to “The Twilight Saga,” perhaps you can be stopped.

“Wolves” presents its lead Cayden (a stiff Lucas Till) well into his transition as a teenage wolf. However, he’s not a cool teen wolf like the one played by Michael J. Fox who dazzled classmates with his basketball dunks, but one that scares the town senseless. He eventually runs away after getting too wolf-y with his girlfriend and then killing his parents in the same hormonal rage, ending his brief career as the non-murderous high school dude who had it all.

Cayden then begins a life as half-dog/all-drifter until he meets Wild Joe (John Pyper-Ferguson) who has Cayden’s animalistic qualities, and advises the young man to relocate to a specific small town. Following the word of this mysterious man, Cayden relocates to the locale, and takes up farming work for a married couple who don’t ask any questions. He even gets a new girlfriend, Angelina (Merritt Patterson). However, it’s Cayden who becomes the confused one when he is confronted with his origins by the weird townspeople. Many of the people in his new town are - surprise! - also wolves, and are led by an evil man named Connor (Jason Momoa of “Game of Thrones,” who won’t be getting a rom-com role anytime soon). Unbeknownst to both of them, they share a deeper connection.



‘Wolves’

Photo credit: Ketchup Entertainment

The essential component that ties "Wolves" together, or threatens to make a little sense of it, is that it's written and directed by David Hayter. Those who have followed the uprise of superhero films may know him as a forefather of the phenomenon, considering his co-writing credits on "X-Men," its follow-up "X2," and later his futile attempts to adapt "Watchmen." With these projects in mind, "Wolves" has context of a less-constricted origin story, both with its lack of adapted source, and its R-rating. As well, it treats wolves like human beings with inhuman abilities, AKA mutants, who have an unwritten code that their extreme potential must abide by. In this regard, Till's Cayden more-or-less becomes Hugh Jackman's Wolverine (with the drifter imagery to boot), while Momoa's head honcho is like the furry and fanged version of Ian McKellen's Magneto. The roots of "X-Men" provide sameness in spite of different beasts.

Hayter's Hollywood screenwriting background similarly explains this story's hunger for unnecessary twists. Aside from a generic tale of an outsider finding where he belongs, Hayter attempts to create a twisting narrative for this unintentional family reunion that only becomes tedious. A complicated lineage doesn't make the men and women in "Wolves" unique so much as possibly accidentally incestuous.



'Wolves'

Photo credit: Ketchup Entertainment

And yet with regard to the elements a writer/director would normally have more control over, "Wolves" has a laughably failed dark tone, which almost makes it fair game of at least a bad movie recommendation; Hayter wages self-sabotage with stupid dialogue that's as dramatically damning as his unfortunate motorcycle sequences. Should you dare, you'd - howl! - with laughter at non-funny dialogue like "Life is complicated, and you ate my f**king parents!" or the numerous times in which these man-wolves are referred to with the easy metaphor as emotional monsters.

Whatever its intentions are amongst its subsequently questionable integrity, "Wolves" hits an ugly snag with something less explainable than most analyses of "Too Many Cooks," and one that resists usual erudite criticism in its truth. Werewolves are hazardously silly characters, and are best taking a moonlit center stage as supporting beings. However much audiences may have adapted over time to characters (like mutants) with a rigidly fantastical presence and dramatic dimension, nothing can be done to remedy the cheesiness in wolves carrying out dramatic interaction with straight faces, despite the dedication of the film production's makeup team. It's the climactic moments of "Wolves" that rely on a certain group of patient genre geeks, while leaving others as dissatisfied outsiders; those latter viewers will probably find "Wolves" to be as awkward as the nude wolf-lady image waiting on the film's IMDb page.

"Wolves" opens in limited theaters on November 14, 2014, and is currently available on VOD. Featuring Lucas Till, Merritt Patterson, Stephen McHattie, John Pyper-Ferguson, and Jason Momoa. Written and directed by David Hayter. Rated "R"



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