

## Olivia Wilde Resurrects Horror in ‘The Lazarus Effect’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 27, 2015 - 11:31am

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Psychological horror films are the best tweaks, because they remind us of our fears, and where are fears are rooted. The strange combination of science, religion and a blockbuster performance by Olivia Wilde creates an atmosphere of dread and weirdness in “The Lazarus Effect.”

This is also a bit of a spoof, as director David Geib adds the appropriate screaming soundtrack, and the characters – all scientists – are the usual horror film collection of goofballs and naysayers. But the use of death as a scientific phenomenon that could possibly be reversed, is as intriguing as the day Dr. Frankenstein opened his lab. There is also a quick side trip on the question of afterlife and religion, which consecrates a peculiar recurring scene, and it’s frighteningly appropriate to the consequence of the story. Is there stiff acting, a demonic dog and quality kills? Hells yes!

A team of research scientists, Frank (Mark Duplass), Zoe (Olivia Wilde), Clay (Evan Peters) and Niko (Donald Glover) are in the midst of a three year project. The original intent was to find a drug strain that could help emergency room doctors buy some time on dying patients, but it has morphed into a “resurrection” experiment, bringing dead beings back to life.



Zoe (Olivia Wilde) Experiences Another State in ‘The Lazarus Effect’

Photo credit: Relativity Media

This variation had been practiced in secret, but Zoe decides to bring in a student videographer named Eva (Sarah Bolger) to record this history. They resurrect a dog first, but immediately suspect there is something awry, as a stimulant drug is causing unusual behavior. When the university and a pharmaceutical company shut the experiment down, a rogue action by the determined team imbues a human with "The Lazarus Effect."

The best horror films are rooted in reality, and the fears we derive from that reality. "The Lazarus Effect" runs with this notion in spades, as it piles on death, possession, religion, fire and the concept of Big Brother in the pharmaceutical company that forcefully takes over the project. These are fears that 21st Century citizens deal with everyday, and the encapsulation of it in one film was very effective.

The star of the show is Olivia Wilde. The angular actress is a potent match for what possesses her eventually, and she adds a touch of horror that mostly comes from the "look" on her face. She obviously relishes portraying a soul that has no boundaries, and creates the Frankenstein monster that will take more than pitchforks and torches to bring down. This is a performer on the rise, and this one is great progression on that resume.

The supporting cast, actually the scientific team itself, is hilariously out of the horror film handbook, especially with the genius casting of Donald Glover. Glover is best known as Troy from the TV show, "Community," and plays a role that Troy would be proud of – supported by Mark Duplass as the feckless team leader and Evan Peters as the stoner genius. The same cast and story could have been transported to the 1980s intact and familiar. The demonic dog, which appears and disappears at precise moments, is almost poignantly brilliant. Need some "Twin Peaks" credibility? How about the great Ray Wise as the representative for Big Pharma?



The Scientific Team 'Celebrates' in 'The Lazarus Effect'

Photo credit: Relativity Media

Even the silliness seems to have a point in this film, which is why the film goes beyond this type of genre. The scientific explanations make as much sense in this film as religious debates on the afterlife, which are also prominently featured. There is stiff acting (mostly by Duplass, intentionally?) and quality kills, and I believe that director David Gelb and screenwriters Luke Dawson and Jeremy Slater upped the "HF" (Horror Film) quotient to spoof those conventions, while at the same time relying on them.

The fascination with death is based on the reality that we're all going to die. But what price would we pay not to die, and keep coming back? No religion has answered that question yet, and no person has yet to defy the reaper. Have a nice weekend.

*"The Lazarus Effect" opens everywhere on February 27th. Featuring Olivia Wilde, Mark Duplass, Donald Glover, Sarah Bolger, Evan Peters and Ray Wise. Screenplay by Luke Dawson and Jeremy Slater. Directed by David Gelb. Rated "PG-13"*



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