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## ‘The Invisible Man’ Gets A Suspenseful, Modern Update Where Abuse and Use of Power Are the Horrors

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I remember the first time viewing the 1933 version of director James Whale’s *The Invisible Man* which was an adaptation of H.G. Wells novel for the first time. Particularly, the scene where Claude Reigns unveils being invisible for the first time and the maniacal laughter that followed after. The special effects were well ahead of its time and the story dealt with the conundrum of having such power. Something like that can corrupt even the purest of men. 2020’s *Hollow Man* also explores this similar theme as well.

Universal’s Classic Monsters found it’s heyday from the 1920s throughout the 1950s. These classics still capture the views of many modern horror audiences today. Now, it’s a challenge to put these tales in a modern context. The need for nostalgia has begotten an overabundance of reboots, sometimes multiple times within a franchise. Universal Pictures even purposed a ‘Dark Universe’ in 2017 including some beloved figures like Dracula and The Wolfman. Those plans were scrapped when 2017’s reboot of *The Mummy* underperformed both critically and monetarily. Since Bela Lugosi’s eerie 1931 portrayal of Dracula, we’ve seen many incantations of the character. As horror movies dive more into emotional and timely aspects, how does one adapt a story with these larger than life characters?

Director **Leigh Whannell (Upgrade, Insidious: Chapter 3)** brings us his version of *The Invisible Man* that can literally happen anywhere. It’s not in a haunted house or dark, dreary laboratory tucked in the confines of a desolate town. An abusive relationship could be happening to a loved one or right next door. We meet Cecilia Kass (**Elisabeth Moss**) as she is escaping her violent relationship with Adrian Griffin (**Oliver Jackson-Cohen**), an emotionally unstable optics scientist. As she makes her escape with the help of her sister, Emily (**Harriet Dyer**), Adrian is believed to have taken his own life sometime after. As she stays with her friend and police officer James (**Aldis Hodge**) trying to start a new life, you find out that Cecilia is not out of the woods yet. A sudden inheritance only serves to offset the slow-build horror to come.

The mastery in this film occurs within the empty spaces done by Whannell and cinematographer Stefan Duscio. Early on, the camera often pans towards rooms often dropping the sound out. Disturbances begin in subtlety; a stove turning itself high or sudden movements of clothes at a certain point. Whannell instills a creeping sense of dread, both for the audience and Cecilia. It plays between the lines of if Cecilia’s PTSD is getting the best of her or if her thought to be dead ex-boyfriend has found a way to gaslight her undetected. Within the pockets of suspense, composer Benjamin Wallfisch includes a score that almost serves as an extra character. While we can’t see Adrian, Wallfisch tweaks the music in a way where it feels like he’s in every single space.

This is where the performance of Elisabeth Moss shines. Much of the movie is a self-contained story of a woman trying to start over. However, she’s trying to deal with the effects of the abuse of her past and a perceived far fetched quandary that those closest to her dismiss. Whannell provides spaces where Moss’s acting prowess takes over and we can see how paranoia evolves in Cecilia. This movie also serves as a metaphor for abuse in general. We rarely see the physical form of Adrian and the invisible part of him only shows up in specific instances. As Cecilia’s plight gets darker, the camera often fixates on a certain point for a longer beat. Cecilia almost never gains an ounce of reprieve once the movie kicks in gear and neither does the audience.

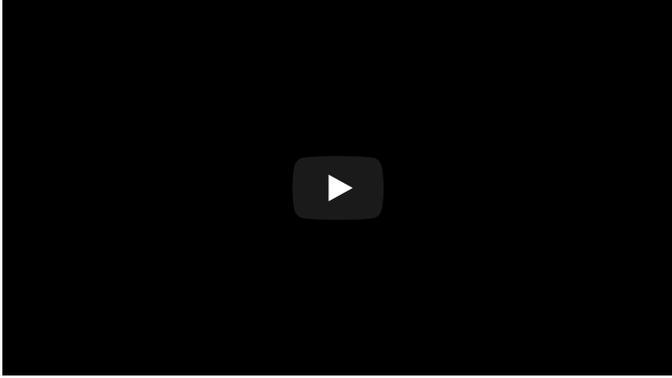
Whannell was able to reimagine the ‘monster’ of the invisible man into something just as sinister. It’s not only that Adrian could be watching Cecilia’s every move and sabotaging her good faith efforts to move on, but it could also be others as well. Tom (**Michael Dorman**), Adrian’s surviving brother and lawyer serves to gaslight Cecilia even through Adrian’s absence. Cecilia has a frosty relationship with her sister Emily who is portrayed to be the most emotionally strong of the two. Even though Cecilia stays with a police officer, that’s not enough for her to escape Adrian’s grasp. At some point, Cecilia has to make the choice to fight back.

Where Whannell’s take on the story succeeds in the neverending cycle of an abusive relationship. Even though a person could be gone, the specter is always present even if not physical. Using something as far fetched as an invisible man shows how pervasive both technology and abusers can be if they are in conjunction with one another.

Like the previous original film, the updated Invisible Man shows the dangers of power in the hands of an unstable person. However, in this adaptation, we get to see the effects of such behavior through the eyes of an abuse victim. It’s not enough that a man could walk around the confines of your home undetected. It’s also the damage that occurs after someone thinks they have gotten away from their abusive situation. That’s the real horror.

In the early part of the movie, Cecilia is almost afraid to go check the mail. Her surroundings, even though perceived to be in safe company, make her a prisoner. We’ve come a long way from a doctor wearing bandages to make himself seen. If a remake is going to exist in the modern space, it has to take on some modern horrors.

Photo Credit: Universal Pictures



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Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host, and photographer since 2014, Murjani Rawls has been stretching the capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 700 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

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