

'Victor Frankenstein' stitches a bizarre patchwork of a movie

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of 4 Stars

Running Time: 109 min.

This is a strange one. Mary Shelley's famous novel has been updated numerous times, and the latest attempt is one of the most unusual of the lot. Despite the title suggesting otherwise, *Victor Frankenstein*

is actually a tale about his assistant. In what appears to be an attempt to win over the masses, it also tries to be every kind of movie to every person, mixing action, horror, police procedural and romance into one package. The results are a mixed canvas stitched together from wildly varied approaches and inspirations.

Narrated by the man who would eventually be known Igor (Daniel Radcliffe), the story begins with a hunchbacked character owned by a circus and working as both a clown and occasional medical practitioner. When a beautiful trapeze artist named Lorelei (an underutilized Jessica Brown Findlay), falls, Igor jumps to the rescue and his incredible skills are noted by Victor Frankenstein (James McAvoy). Frankenstein breaks him out of his awful environment and asks the younger man to help him with his secret experiments.

Before you know it, Igor's getting a big makeover. His large hunch turns out to be an easily remedied abscess and his hairstyle goes from a Robert Smith (of *The Cure*) look to something of a Prince Valiant "do". I'm not sure if that's an improvement, but it impresses Lorelei and romance blooms. In the meantime, the pair of medical scientists are hunted by the religiously devout Inspector Turpin (Andrew Scott), who will stop at nothing to get his men.

Yep, it sounds completely ridiculous. Just as it is in execution. Did I mention that a resurrected

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chimp goes on the rampage at one point? As you might have guessed, there is no hint of subtlety to be found. Turpin walks around crime scenes and states what happened and why without much explanation of how he came to his outrageous conclusions (even Sherlock Holmes would be confounded). When Frankenstein’s reckless and crazed approach to experimentation reaches its heights, the amount of spittle flying from his mouth appears to increase dramatically. One can’t help but think the actors based their performances on those from classic monster movies.

There are even a couple of brief but elaborate chases and scuffles, which is extremely odd for what is usually a cerebral horror tale. They show our heroes running, sliding and punching foes - essentially, being much more adept at fighting than any bookworm should be. It all becomes very surreal during the final confrontation with the monster, which has a feel more akin to a WWE showdown than a terrifying struggle with a beastly creature.

At least it’s never boring, and it certainly looks fantastic. The production is more lavish than just about any horror movie of recent years. This includes the colorful and elaborate backdrops at the circus and the environments within the lab (both in Frankenstein’s loft and later in a large castle set). They’re full of strange objects and impressive detail. Additionally, there are plenty of neat visual tricks - when Igor talks about anatomy, we see diagrams of skeletons superimposed over figures. Pretty much every penny spent is visible onscreen.

Regardless, I can’t honestly recommend this. This retelling doesn’t really have much to say about science, creation, obsession or for that matter anything else. I ended up taking it as an intentionally campy riff on the classic tale. And I’m not even sure if that was the actual intent. Would a major studio really spend \$90 million dollars on an over-the-top, silly lark? Something tells me that things just got a little out of hand and this is the resulting patchwork. *Victor Frankenstein*

earns some cheesy B-movie smiles, but one wishes its creators had spent more time in the lab before bringing their creation to life.

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