

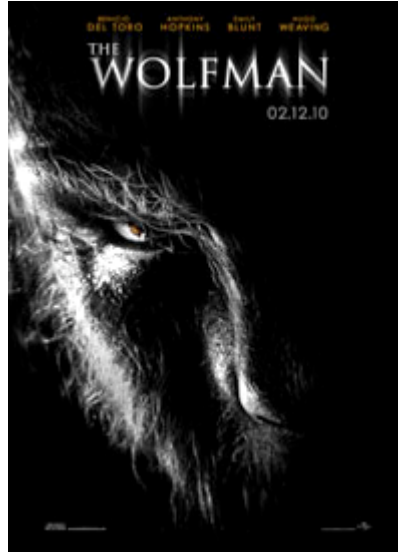


Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 14, 2010

Wolfman Legend Comes to Life on Screen

“Even a man who is pure in heart and says his prayers by night, may become a wolf when the wolfbane blooms and the autumn moon is bright.” Set in Blackmoor, England, in 1891, *The Wolfman* embodies all of the elements of the old-fashioned horror film: gore, thrills, suspense, and surprise.

Lawrence Talbot, played by Benicio Del Toro, is an American Shakespearean actor who returns to his hometown when he learns that his brother Ben has been missing for several weeks. The audience has the luxury of knowing what happened to Ben, who was shredded to pieces before the opening credits by none other than the Wolfman himself.



When Ben's bloody remains are discovered, Gwen Conliffe (Emily Blunt), Ben's fiancée, enlists the help of Lawrence to discover who may have done this to her beloved. The first suspects are the Gypsies, for whom Ben acted as liaison with the townspeople. Despite their grotesque appearance and their dabbling in “black magic,” these clichéd Gypsies are benign and prove to be helpful when they enlighten Lawrence on the enigmatic legend of the Wolfman, whom they believe to be the culprit.

Unfortunately, Lawrence's education on the superstitions of the Wolfman is cut short when an uninvited visitor interrupts the peace of the Gypsy camp: the Wolfman. After having mauled several of the Gypsies, the Wolfman disappears into the woods, followed by Lawrence, who is armed with a rifle. Cunningly, the wolf surprises and overcomes Lawrence, who is fortunately saved by a distant gunshot that causes the wolf to flee. Unluckily for Lawrence, it was not before the wolf was able to bite his shoulder, leaving him with “the mark of the beast.”

Gypsy Maleva restores Lawrence to health, despite warnings that Lawrence's injury has transformed him from a man to a beast. Lawrence returns home to his father (Anthony Hopkins), from whom he was estranged for many years. We learn that at a young age, Lawrence was sent to an asylum by his own father when Lawrence could not cope with his mother's suicide.

Strange things begin to happen. Lawrence becomes aware of his newly developed keen sense of sound, and an appetite for blood. By the next full moon, Lawrence discovers that the superstitions were founded and Lawrence has become a werewolf.

What ensues is a thrilling, shocking, and climatic storyline involving family secrets and romance. Unlike many other films of this genre, *The Wolfman* is characterized by a lively and intriguing plot, believable and understated dialogue, and real thrills. To enjoy this film, one must exercise a suspension of disbelief. Once that is accomplished, you will find yourself captivated every moment of the film.

What's most intriguing is the role that superstitions play. Much like in the 1941 version of *The Wolfman*, superstitions take on a role of their own and can prove to be quite difficult to overcome. This does not inhibit some of the townspeople from trying, however. In fact, when Lawrence admits to being



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a werewolf and begs to be put out of his misery, he is sent back to an asylum where he is treated for delusions. There, we are reminded of the torturous methods once used to “treat” mental patients. Regrettably, the superstition of the Wolfman is real and the poor psychologists must learn this truth in a most ferocious way.

Del Toro captures the audience in his depiction of an angst-ridden man who is conflicted by his inner-beast.

Despite having witnessed Del Toro rip Londoners to pieces, the audience will find themselves empathizing with this man whose future was stolen from him in one bite. Emily Blunt skillfully plays the role of both an ethereal and yet strong woman whose grief and fear leads her to fall in love with Lawrence. When she and Del Toro are together, there is visible chemistry and tension on screen that is unachieved in too many romantic films. Anthony Hopkins perhaps steals the show, however. When on screen with Del Toro, there is a believable strain that one would expect to find in this estranged relationship. From the beginning, the audience is aware that there is something inscrutable about Hopkin’s character, and they will not be disappointed.

Finally, the transformation from man to beast has never looked so good. The special effects in *The Wolfman* are enough to write home about. The atmosphere is delightfully ominous and dreary, and the menacing shots of the full moon are spine-tingling.

The Wolfman is an enjoyable cinematic experience, though the gore could have been toned down a notch. It is the gruesome nature of the film that has earned it an R-rating.



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