



Creature

Written by Larissa James & Nick Nardini
Directed by Larissa James

Alice is nervous. She isn't good at costumes and is running late to a Halloween party. Spooked, she calls her best friend, Lucy, who's already at the party. Lucy dismisses Alice's fear as social awkwardness, but en-route Alice is attacked by four masked trick-or-treaters. Little do they know, they would trigger a monstrous transformation in Alice.

Adapting real-world fears into genre entertainment has been a staple of horror for decades, whether its race relations depicted in Romero's zombie classic *Night of the Living Dead* or our fear of ageing as depicted in Cronenberg's remake of *The Fly*, the extremity of horror allows for more accessible social critiques. Larissa James' directorial debut *Creature* fits perfectly into this mould. The setup is simple; Alice is running late to a Halloween party and, after her friend bails on meeting her, she is on her own. Immediately feeling uneasy she sets off in the dark where she is suddenly set upon by four masked attackers disguised as trick or treaters. It's no surprise going by the title that Alice transforms into the titular creature before exacting

her revenge on the male assailants. It's a simple premise but there's a lot of fun to be had in this semi-campy revenge horror.

There's an upbeat modern jukebox soundtrack throughout the short which gives a fun energy to the opening scene as Alice drives to the party. This energetic soundtrack continues into the splattery final scenes and the sense of fun is undoubtedly contagious as everyone looks to be having a great time on screen. There's some fantastic and suitably gruesome sound design sitting comfortably above a fun horror score consisting of strings and confident stings that accentuate the scares perfectly.

With some wonderful creature design on display, it would be easy to bathe it all in darkness and get away with less attention to detail in the work, but James and DoP Andy Lemon bless the viewer with well-lit night cinematography that allow us the time to relish the meticulous SFX work. Aided with plenty of fun and suitably over-the-top gore that rides that fine line of being gruesome without ever being overly grotesque. But the real trick of it all is the balance between the more eccentric technical elements and a natural central performance. If lead actress Lily Gibson was at any point a more melodramatic presence on screen the film might risk making a mockery of its serious subject matter, but Gibson and James together are comfortably able to perfect the balancing act that is comedy horror.

Creature's greatest strength is its sense of fun. It doesn't take itself too seriously whilst still covering a serious topic and there are just the right number of laughs to make it a wonderful watch. James and everyone involved have created a perfect way to spend 5 minutes.

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