

RILEY ON FILM

Film reviews by freelance writer & podcaster Damien Riley

ANNIHILATION

Something other-worldly has landed and this is nothing like us. We don't know what it wants or if it wants anything. We can't see it but we see its impact on the area around it. This is a film that reminded me of "Alien" 1 in its sci-fi purity. It also surprised me with some chilling horror aspects.

Annihilation (2018)

R | 1h 55min | Adventure, Drama, Fantasy | 23 February 2018 (USA)

"A biologist signs up for a dangerous, secret expedition where the laws of nature don't apply." –

[IMDB](#)

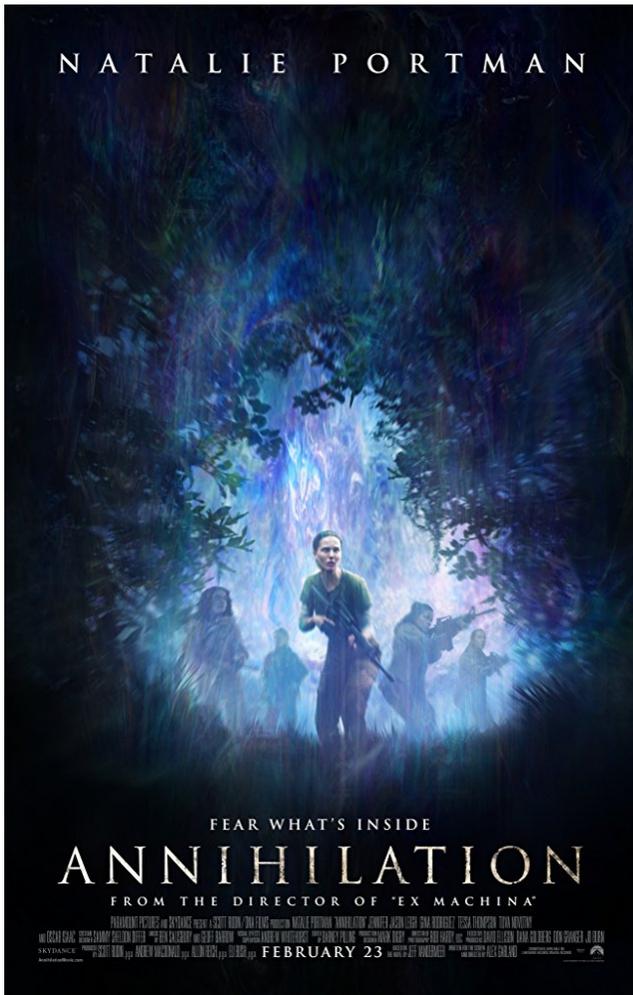
Director: Alex Garland

Writers: Alex Garland (written for the screen by), Jeff VanderMeer (based on the novel by)

Stars: Natalie Portman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tessa Thompson

Director Alex Garland ("Ex Machina") Pulls out all the stops with this his second directorial project. I don't want to let him sound "new" though, take a look at his writing credits: "Dredd" (screenplay), "Never Let Me Go" (screenplay), "28 Days Later..." (written by). In my opinion, "Annihilation" is his largest undertaking to date. He wrote the adaptation from a novel and directed this film.

Now for the cast: Natalie Portman plays Lena, the soldier turned biologist who ventures out on a mission to examine a strange new region changed by unknown forces. She is not only following her scientific curiosity but she



wants to find out what happened to her late husband Kane, played by Oscar Isaac, in a place called “The Shimmer.” Benedict Wong plays a hazmat suited govt. professional who keeps a storyline running throughout the film through questions. Jennifer Jason Leigh plays the all-too-creepy leader of this expedition, Dr. Ventress. She speaks in barely above a whisper most the film. Gina Rodriguez is the third woman on the mission. She is known for playing Jane on the tv series “Jane the Virgin.” Also in this is Tessa Thompson who you will recall was in “Thor: Ragnarok.”

What it's not:

A long pointless sci-fi posing as a mystery. I want to celebrate this fact



because it seems lately we've been fed pseudo si-fi that never delivers.

What it is:

An engaging well-written story that holds your attention through elements of drama, mystery, horror, and sci-fi. It's also an incredibly cast and well-directed film that keeps you guessing and never leaves you hanging. While keeping some questions open-ended there is much room for discussion but the main spine of the story is explained and concluded well. I find this to be more and more rare in sci-fi mystery these days. Is it any coincidence the director of this film is its seasoned writer and a great one at that?

I won't hide the fact that this is a long film at 2 hours. There were a couple of times I wondered how much time had passed (and I tend to do this when things are not chugging along). Still, in those moments you get to absorb the most incredible visuals and CGI. In between that the adventure moves swiftly.



My final word and rating:

This is a great adventure film I highly recommend. It is rated R for horror and gore elements so it's not for the squeamish. I am a horror fan however so for me and my recommendation, I give this film a 9/10. I am officially a big fan of director/writer Alex Garland and looking forward to his next project.

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Author: Damien Riley

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