



Review

MORBIUS



Written by [Cynthia Vinney](#) March 31, 2022

Every once in awhile a movie comes along that seems so ill-conceived, it's hard to understand how it managed to get made. *Morbius* is that kind of movie. From the very beginning, it demonstrates its tenuous relationship with logic when Jared Leto's Dr. Michael Morbius – who has made it his life's work to cure the rare blood disease that has left him frail and unable to walk without the help of crutches – exits a helicopter outside a Costa Rican cave, and after seeing a nearby corpse, comments on how the vampire bats within can take down an animal 10 times their size. He then slashes open his hand and stands at the mouth of the cave as, in an image more akin to something out of *Batman* than anything in the Marvel universe, the bats fly out in a frenzy.

This brief sequence establishes the cliched ground on which the movie sits. While vampire bats often come up in vampire-related stories, in real life they generally don't kill when they eat, nor do they attack one animal as a unit. And even if what Morbius says is true about them in the alternative reality of this movie, why would his scientific interest in them translate to an ability to

calmly stand there as thousands of bats fly at and around him; given his compromised physical condition, wouldn't the wind they generate alone make this impossible?

There are far more perplexing moments to come. Morbius returns home to New York City and starts some questionable science experiments with the assistance of his colleague Dr. Martine Bancroft (Adria Arjona) and the financial backing of Milo (Matt Smith), a friend since childhood who suffers from the same blood disease. The movie takes pains to explain the (extremely unofficial) medical trials Morbius is performing, which only serves to highlight the ridiculousness of it all. Plus, all this "science" simply delays the doctor's inevitable vampiric transformation. Eventually, though, he takes to international waters and is injected with a serum that fuses his DNA with that of the bats (many of which he's taken home with him and keeps in a shockingly clean cylindrical glass cage). Instead of the cure he was hoping for, however, his concoction quickly changes him from sickly and emaciated to sleekly muscled killing machine.

When Morbius comes to his senses and realizes what happened, he's shocked and desperate to avoid killing again. This could have led to an interesting Jekyll and Hyde-style examination of the character's new dual nature, but instead, Milo gets ahold of Morbius' cursed cure and soon Morbius has to protect the city – and especially Martine – against his friend, who fully embraces the life of a bloodsucker.

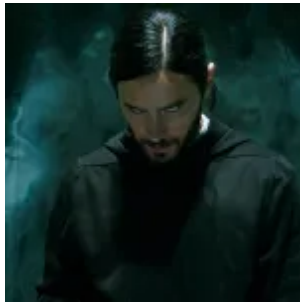
There are few exciting moments throughout the film and they are thoroughly outweighed by the remarkable number of nonsensical ones. The movie focuses on the rote plot but spends precious little time on character development or establishing the relationships between the characters. As a result, instead of feeling earned, many story points – like Martine and Morbius' platonic relationship turning romantic out of nowhere – feel more like the filmmakers are filling in boxes on their superhero movie bingo card. This makes it hard to care about much of anything happening onscreen.

Given the weaknesses of the script by Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless, it's hard to understand why actors of Leto and Smith's caliber wanted to be part of the film. Their performances are better than the movie deserves, especially Smith who manages to add a little humor and liveliness to the otherwise dour tone. Arjona also does an admirable job as Martine, although the script doesn't give her nearly enough to do, an issue that's also true for Jared Harris who plays Morbius and Milo's long-time doctor Emil Nikols.

Unlike Sony’s other *Spider-Man* spinoff, [Venom](#), which leaned hard into the absurdity of its scenario, director Daniel Espinosa keeps things deadly serious in *Morbius* and that just makes the movie’s issues all the more glaring. Even the action sequences are less than thrilling. Sure, they show Morbius fighting on high buildings and flying from great heights, but for some reason they’re also accompanied by graphics indicating the characters’ movements that only make it harder to determine what’s going on. Unfortunately, those graphics can’t obscure the mess that is *Morbius*.



MORBIUS



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RATING

2.0/10

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