

What We Do in the Shadows (2014)

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour 26 min.

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 5; Language 5; Sex/Nudity 5.

Our star ratings (1-5): 4

For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.

John 3:20

If you enjoyed such mockumentaries as *Waiting for Guffman* and *Best of Show*, then you should have some fun with this import from New Zealand. Filmmakers Taika and Jemaine Clement enable us to enter the domicile of four vampires who share an old house as they are getting ready to celebrate Wellington's social event of the year for the undead: The Unholy Masquerade. Before the film has begun they apparently have struck a deal with the New Zealand Documentary Board, as a crew follows them around to record their life together. The crew has been promised safety from attack by the vampires, but as added insurance they wear crucifixes around their necks.

Viago (Taika Waititi), 379 years old, serves as the guide, speaking directly into the camera. He was quite a dandy in his day and so, hating clutter, he nags the others for their sloppy ways. Someone is not keeping up his end of the agreement to share the chores—it has been five years since the bloodstained dishes were washed, as we see when the camera shows us a sink over flowing. Also, he pleads, it would be helpful if others would spread out papers before biting into the neck of a guest—the expensive couch has been ruined. Later

we see him doing just that as he settles a woman onto the couch just before biting her neck. He has tried to show her a good time during her last hours, according to his code. However, the papers do not help much because he accidentally severs an artery so that blood spurts all over him and the room.

Vladislav (Jemaine Clement) was born in the Middle Ages (862 years ago) when it was socially acceptable to torture people. He was then known "Vlad the Poker", "Vlad the Impaler" having already been taken. He sadly realizes that in the 21st century he should not be using his torture chamber instruments.

Deacon (Jonathan Brugh), 183 years old, has a human friend named Jackie (Jackie Van Beek)—well, actually a go-fer. A housewife who longs to become a vampire, she does a lot of the vampire's unsavory work such as mopping up all of the spilt blood, in the hope that eventually she will have her wish granted.

The Nosferatu-like Petyr (Ben Fransham), at 8,000-years the oldest of the lot, spends most of his time in the basement where his stone tomb is located. He says very little, but then perhaps at his age he has already said everything that could be said. He still is proficient at killing and sucking blood.

Rounding out the quartet is Nick (Cori Gonzalez-Macuer), accidentally transformed into a bloodsucker. So enthusiastic is he that he cannot keep their identity a secret, sometimes running through a city street exclaiming, "I am TWILIGHT!"

The events at the ball, at which zombies, werewolves, and such are also in attendance, and a running encounter with a pack of werewolves produce a lot of laughs, and even a riff on the buddy genre and the nature of friendship as accepting the other despite differences. Even if you are like me, no fan of the vampire genre, you might find much to enjoy in this tongue-in-cheek movie, mercifully short at 86 minutes. The

four getting ready for the ball elicits one of the chuckles in that they have to tell each other how they look because mirrors do not reflect their images. Should you be looking for discussion questions, see the article reprinted in the April 2014 issue of Visual Parables, "Nightmare on Your Street: Teenagers and Horror Films."