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MOVIES

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Alpha Male (2006)

Reviewed by [Mark Stevens](#)

Contains strong language



Updated 05 August 2006

A melancholy story of bereavement and family breakdown, **Alpha Male** takes itself seriously but quite never finds the emotional weight necessary for us to do the same. Jennifer Ehle (**Wilde**, **This Year's Love**) heads the cast as Alice, widow of Jim (Danny Huston). Left on her own, she tries to cope as children Elyssa (Amelia Warner) and Jack (Mark Wells) feel the loss of the family's alpha male. The resulting drama proves a dream-like evocation of death and dysfunction.

Ehle excels as Alice, capturing the reserved shellshock of a woman who knows she can't afford to indulge her grief. Despite doing everything she can to ease her children through the painful transition, she watches helplessly as Jack (played brilliantly by Arthur Duncan as a child, less convincingly by Mark Wells as an adult) begins to blame her for everything. Told by his father that he needs to become head of the family, young Jack is totally unprepared for such a challenge and the film keenly observes this boy's muddled attempts to play man.

"TOO CONVENIENT TO RING TRUE"

Hints of sexual tension between mother and son come to little as does daughter Elyssa's gradual mental breakdown. Debut writer/director Dan Wilde eventually relies on some trite third act plotting to deliver a climax, but it feels falsely tacked on, too convenient to ring true. What sticks in the memory is the evocative cinematography and creepy score; both turn the family's beautiful country mansion into a haunting, haunted place where choked up despair and adolescent angst simmer towards disaster.

End Credits

Director: Dan Wilde	Genre: Thriller
Writer: Dan Wilde	Length: 93 minutes
Stars: Jennifer Ehle , Danny Huston , Patrick Valli , Trevor Baladi , Trudie Styler , Amelia Warner	Cinema: 11 August 2006
	Country: UK

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