

The Thing with Feathers

2025 | 98mins

Director: Dylan Southern

Starring: Leo Bill, Benedict Cumberbatch, David Thewlis

Listed in the Sunday Times 'Top 100 Novels of the Twenty-first Century', *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* by Max Porter has been adapted for the big screen in this haunting debut feature by director Dylan Southern. This is Porter's second time having one of his novels reimaged in film this year after the release of *Steve* (2025) in early September. *The Thing with Feathers* transforms the words of Porter into a dark picture of the reality of life after loss, creating a touching psychological drama with subtle notes of horror.

Much like the book, the film follows a father, left to raise his two young sons after his wife's sudden death, who must navigate grief which taunts him in the form of an overbearing, spiteful crow. As a film that explores the throws of grief, *The Thing with Feathers* grapples with loss on a deep and intimate level. Southern took a leap in working with these sensitive themes and capturing grief embodied in a physical being. He said in an interview that 'if you've been through a period of grief, you feel seen when you've read the book and I wanted to make a film that had those qualities' (ScreenRant, 2025).

The Thing with Feathers is a tribute to grieving. It deals with real themes often avoided by both creatives and audiences. What makes it so authentic is that it does not follow the stages of grief, it weaves between the lowest of emotions, to hope and vulnerability.

Southern has succeeded in visualising struggle, delusion and a family in turmoil, highlighting that grieving is not linear, and most significantly, shining light on male grief. Cumberbatch spoke on this at the Berlin Film Festival, "uncertainty and emotional vulnerability are not top of the agenda of the alpha male or the strong man image of what masculinity is, so I'm very happy to be part of storytelling that goes in the opposite direction of that," (Variety, 2025).

'Dylan Southern has crafted something truly unique- an emotional gut punch wrapped in a dark, fantastical nightmare'
 - Briarcliff Entertainment.

Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

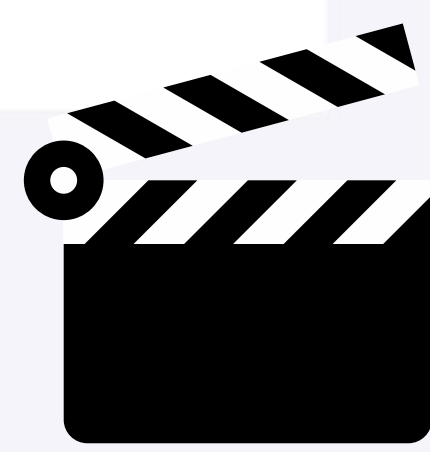
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Did You Know?

- *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* was first adapted into a play, initially performed in Ireland in 2018.
- The crow has long been a symbol of death throughout folklore, cultures and mythology which determined its use as the embodiment of grief in the book and likewise, the film.
- Nicola Hicks, a sculptor who creates anthropomorphic figures, helped with the designing of the crow. Though she does not usually work for films, her sculptures also feature in *Saltburn* (2023).

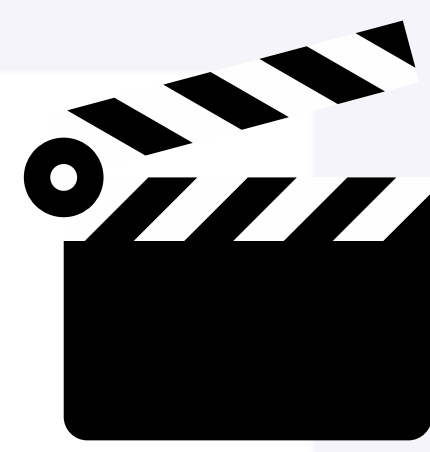
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