One of the most hyped films to hit the theater in some time, we sent the trusty and talented Mitch Cyrus out to see "300" ... which really looks incredible. The film a story of 300 Spartans who went willingly to sure death to defend their homes and families from impossible odds, one of the most incredible stories in all of history. The special effects and battle scenes are supposed to amazing, and the violence breathtaking. Mitch had a strong opinion on this one, come on inside to find out what he thought of it.

"Spider-Man 3" and "Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End" have some competition for the biggest blockbuster of 2007, and it comes in the form of a graphic novel come to vibrant life in the "Braveheart on Steroids" interpretation of the Battle of Thermopylae call "300". Frank Miller has taken all the style and imaging he learned from his green screen masterpiece "Sin City" and applied them to this amazing film that can be compared to the first "Terminator" in the fact that it never once takes its foot off the accelerator in two hours of testosterone dripping action.

Is the film violent? Absolutely; in the same vein as "Kill Bill", or the aforementioned "Sin City" and "Braveheart". This is a story of 300 Spartans who went willingly to sure death to defend their homes and families from impossible odds, one of the most incredible stories in all of history. No, it's not "Letters from Iwo Jima" or "Saving Private Ryan" in regards to accuracy. The battle was back in 480 BC, and the film and letter archive from that period is just a bit sketchy. This is a stylized rendition of a historic event, and it comes across as much more interesting than Wolfgang Peterson's lumbering "Troy", and probably a lot more accurate at that.

But you don't go into a movie adaptation of a graphic novel for a faithful historical account. You go in to be entertained, and "300" delivers in spades. Live actors combine with green screen backgrounds and CGI to create a world that seems foreign, yet familiar; animated, yet realistic. It is a visual feast that is on the awe inspiring level of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, but different. In LOTR, Peter Jackson made the impossible look real; in "300", Miller makes the

real look surreal.

Plot? Spartans don't need no stinkin' plot! You know all you need to know within the first 20 minutes. Spartans are bad assed warriors who are trained ruthlessly from the time they are old enough to walk to value combat, comrades, country, and death in battle far above their own lives. And this goes for the king as well, as King Leonidas is treated no differently from any other, taken from his mother at age seven to either survive the trial by fire or to die during it.

It is with this groupthink of "never retreat, never surrender" that the Spartans greet the envoys of the Persian Empire when they react to the request to submit to Persian rule by tossing the entire party down a bottomless pit. Even the Spartan women are tough as nails, as Queen Gorgo is just as adamant as her husband in regards to the proper course of events.

But as usual, there are problems, and unfortunately Leonidas must first consult the Oracle and their priests to obtain permission to send out the entire army. The corrupt old men deny this request, so Leonidas leaves with his 300 men "bodyguard" contingent. He makes no bones about how he intends to hold off the Persians; he talks about the narrow pass into the mountains, and that he intends on making his stand there. From that point, you get numerous battle sequences, interspersed with parlays with the Persians, strategy sessions between Leonidas and his men, or scenes from back in Sparta where Gorgo continues to lobby the legislature to send out the entire army.

Political intrigue may be an interesting diversion, but it is in the battles where the true adrenaline lies. These are bloody, grotesque scenes that give "300" its well earned "R" rating, but they are stylized in such a way as to not be quite as stomach turning as Mel Gibson's "Braveheart". Slow motion takes, improbable gymnastic moves, and comic book blood letting dulls the grossness down to a more tolerable level.

Despite the emphasis on action, some people do stand out, most notably Gerard Butler as King Leonidas, although it is funny to see him more made up here with his CGI pecs and abs than he was in his prosthetic half-face in "The Phantom of the Opera". Butler does a good job in rounding out a character that in truth only has a couple of dimensions to him. Duty and country are his main concerns, but he shows a great deal of love as well as respect for his Queen as well. Look for the Scotsman to come out of this as a very hot property for leading roles in future blockbusters. Lena Headey also does an excellent job in the role of the Queen, combining ice-cold resolve with compassion that could melt the strongest warrior's heart.

Now some people might want to try to look at this film as some parallel to current events going on in the world. Some people are stupid. This is not a political analogy to the War in Iraq, nor is it a cautionary tale about one side or another (a la the excellent "V for Vendetta"). It is a balls to the wall action flick that exhibits the best in the category of "movies for entertainment", and is completely unapologetic for its over the top excessiveness...and it would be a much weaker film had they chosen to change its tone.

My young adult daughter attended it with me, she of the addictions to "Lord of the Rings" and the "Harry Potter" series. Her comments? "That was SUCH a guys' movie! I want to see it

again!”

As do I. As will you.

My Rating: Bernie Kosar (3 ½ footballs). No, this isn’t “The Departed”, or “Saving Private Ryan”, but it is something that you’ll not be able to forget.