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movie review

# 'Sword' not too sharp

**"Sword and the Sorcerer"**  
Lee Horsley, Kathleen Beller  
National Theater  
Rated R

"Sword and the Sorcerer" is a funny movie. The trouble is, it's a little funnier than its creators intended.

The makers of "Sword" were evidently shooting for the same audience that made "Raiders of the Lost Ark" the great success of last year. They packed "Sword" with lots of chase scenes, some trick gadgetry, a couple of perfectly hideous villains, a cute, resourceful hero and an equally cute, resourceful heroine. Unfortunately, where "Raiders" flew with fast action, high suspense and superb humor, "Sword" limps by.

Lee Horsley is Teron, your typical macho medieval hero complete with fur cape and three-bladed sword. He's a wandering adventurer (modernly referred to as a mercenary) out to avenge his royal parents' deaths. In the process, he runs across a damsel in distress who promises him a night of frolic in return for releasing her brother from the evil king's dungeon.

So far, so good. It turns out that our hero runs into another obstacle — Zushi, a weird sorcerer who

can change shape and is resurrected occasionally. Between the two, Teron gets himself chased, thrown into prison, chased, whipped, chased, crucified, and just generally picked on.

The story is drawn with some light humor and a lot of triteness. Most of the scenes have been seen many, many times before, as if the editors spliced in bits from old swashbuckler movies. What's worse is that the writers miss golden opportunities to add humor in these scenes, and instead try to cram it in where it fits awkwardly, at best.

For example, after consulting the traditional Secret Map, Teron and his gang find their way into the traditional Secret Tunnel That Leads into the Heart Of the Dungeon. After sloshing through the muck by torchlight, our boys are attacked by a flood of rats. No quips, no rolling eyes, nothing. They torch the rodents, and go on their way.

Teron then leaves his party at the end of the tunnel to do some scouting. "Ssssh!" cautions the temporary leader, "or the guards will discover us." When he turns around, of course, a wall of well-armed guards surrounds him. It's a gag that's been done a million times, straight from the Sunday afternoon TV swashbucklers.

There is a good deal of good humor, luckily, and this saves the picture. Much of the humor is unintended, the "laugh at the movie" kind instead of the "laugh with the movie" kind. It must be depressing for the creators, but

it's a blast for the audience.

This type of humor is especially evident in the most predictable and awkward scenes, like when Teron falls hundreds of feet from the castle tower . . . into the castle hay loft. Or when Teron, hanging on a cross while his maiden is being wed to the evil king, interrupts the maiden's wedding vows with a very 20th century "No way!"

"Sword and the Sorcerer" also throws in lots of special effects and gore to try to patch up the weak spots. One character meets his end by having his nose put to the grindstone . . . literally. Others have their tongues cut out, their hearts magically drawn out of their chests, etc. The blood takes on a Monty Python-type function, but this is still definitely not a show for the squeamish.

There are other special effects that are much more palatable, and better performed as well. Most memorable is the Cask of Faces, a stone casket with human faces etched on the sides that come to life realistically.

Director Albert Pyun combines lots of gore, a little sex, some clever repartee, an overabundance of chase scenes and some excellent special effects for a wonderfully awful movie. It will be enjoyed by anyone who liked "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" or likes to make fun of "Night of the Living Dead." It's mindless entertainment pure and simple, and it's so bad that it might just be worth looking into.  
**by matt meyer**

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