

TONIGHT, WE DINE AND WATCH

Starring: Gerard Butler, Lena Headey,
David Wenham, Dominic West, Vincent Regan

Directed by: Zack Snyder

2007 Warner Bros. Pictures



Written by: Lisa Schwarzbaum for Entertainment Weekly

The Spartans' paltry number against the massive forces of King Xerxes' Persian army provides the eye-candy comicbook epic 300 with its title. But it's impossible to tote up the liters of blood that spill in luxurious slow motion, the plasma arcing through the air like tracer fire. Viewed against the copper-tinged landscape and spurting from the wounds of muscular men whose preferred fighting wardrobes are bronze helmets, crimson serapes, and leather BVDs, the gore is brilliant indeed — the ancient battle of Thermopylae, by way of 21st-century digital technology and ab-toning techniques. King Leonidas (Scottish actor Gerard Butler), the revered leader of ancient Greece's most fearless, born-to-raise-hell warrior city-state, is blessed with perfect teeth,

great gams, and a thrusting dark beard. When he bellows "Spahhhrr-TANZI!" in a ripe hybrid Greco-Anglo-Spago accent, attention must be paid. For his part, Xerxes (Brazilian star Rodrigo Santoro) takes himself deadly seriously as a god. He is a vision in ancient bling and eyeliner, with the plucked eyebrows of a nefarious club impresario.

I linger over the surfaces of 300, which is closely based on the vivid graphic novel by Frank Miller (Sin City) and Lynn Varley, because surfaces, most of them computer-generated, are all this newfangled sword-and-sandals epic is about. The experience is chilly in its blankness. Sin City, after all, is a comic book of the most extreme order, a futuristic reverie of ultra-noir lawlessness, and

even a skeptic like myself can appreciate the artistry of experimentation in translating Miller's cultish on-the-page imagery to the screen. But 300 has a real historical basis. And the story of the outnumbered Spartans who fought to their deaths (thereby inspiring the rest of Greece to unite in defeating their invaders) is as awesome as any in the history of warfare and nation-building.

When watching Leonidas and his men outwit their ferocious adversaries, it's inevitable to think of

Braveheart, Saving Private Ryan, Letters From Iwo Jima, or, for that matter, The Lord of the Rings or Gladiator — any high-concept battle pic in which the charge is thrilling and the toll guaranteed to be terrible. It's also inevitable to wish there were some Mel Gibsonian madness in this gleaming techno-chess game of a production. Director and co-screenwriter Zack Snyder, who did such a snazzy job reconstituting George Romero's Dawn of the Dead three years ago, ramps up his snazzy quotient here, excited by the challenge of adding



a third dimension to Miller's strong 2-D style using little more than actors, a bluescreen, and a massive, computer-based post-production army. But in the controlled artfulness of every scene, no ragged breath of real, ugly, human consequence escapes.

**GIVE THEM NOTHING!
BUT TAKE FROM THEM
EVERYTHING!**

This is dazzle for the head, not the heart.

Which is not to say there aren't moments of beauty and sensuality pleasurable on their own pop-sexy graphic terms. When, at Leonidas' request,

a porn-princess oracle is consulted by the ghoulish Ephors (like a senior center full of scabrous Voldemorts), she rouses from a kind of drug state in a sinuous orgasmic dance, essentially naked unless you call wet, transparent gossamer fabric a cover-up. She's a dirty delight — and a close approximation of Miller's original drawings. At home in bed before committing to battle, Leonidas and his powerhouse wife, Queen Gorgo (The Brothers Grimm's Lena Headey, a tough beauty), mix serious political pillow talk with serious sexy time — the other reason, aside from operatic violence, for the movie's R rating. What's not to like?

There will be those who enjoy the way a man's head is severed from his body in a neat, Boar's



Head ham slice of a gesture. Others will dig the scene in which the Spartans create a tactical optical illusion out of a pile of enemy dead — that is, they pile 'em high, crouch behind the stack, and then topple the deceased on the heads of the advancing living. (Still more will appreciate the sight of *The Wire*'s Dominic West in pageboy hair and leather girdle, playing a political weasel who advocates capitulation, and *Lord of the Rings*' David Wenham as Leonidas' most faithful soldier.)

Look, but don't be touched: There is much to see but little to remember in this telling of a battle we

are meant never to forget. And in the emptiness that lurks at the edges of this spectacle, there is this movie lover's fear that impersonal computer elegance is the strategy of the future, both for studios and soldiers.



THIS IS SPARTA!

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN



This movie has brought the story to great popularity. Although this movie may be a great motion picture that is loved by many viewers, they should know where it all came from. The movie is after Frank Miller and Lynn Varley's graphic novel 300. The comic books were issued back in 1998 by

Dark Horse Comics. The writer, Frank Miller is known for being involved with comic books He is the writer and illustrator to many comics like Batman, Daredevil and Sin City. The paintings were done by Lynn Varley who took the same look as their other popular comic books, Sin City. The 300 novel is like the movie but just comic version. It is artistically an amazing book and the story is also a thriller like the movie. If you are a big fan of the

motion picture, you should be sure to get the comic that the it came after.

The graphic novel is now available on hardback at Amazon.com for \$19.80