

'Troy' is visually appealing

David DiCerto/CNS

NEW YORK (CNS) — Ancient armies clash over love, honor and box-office glory in "Troy," director Wolfgang Petersen's grand-scale rendering of the story of the Trojan War. Exhibiting the creative hubris needed to undertake such a Herculean task, Petersen has crafted a bold portrait of war, epic in scope and intimate in emotional poignancy.

Loosely based on Homer's "The Iliad" (composed in the eighth century B.C., 300-400 years after the events recounted), the film chronicles the siege and fall of the ancient walled city of Troy by invading Greek forces. The conflict is ignited when Paris (Orlando Bloom), the lustful son of Troy's King Priam (Pe-

ter O'Toole), spirits away the beautiful Helen (Diana Kruger) from her husband, King Menelaus of Sparta (Brendan Gleeson) during a detente between the two rival nations.

Enraged by the public humiliation, Menelaus petitions his megalomaniac brother, King Agamemnon (Brian Cox), to raise a massive army in order to sack Troy and avenge his honor. The power-mongering Agamemnon agrees, more for insatiable greed than for his brother's honor.

Achilles (Brad Pitt), an invincible fighting machine whose arrogance is exceeded only by his contempt for Agamemnon, must be convinced to take up arms against Troy. Vowing allegiance to nothing save his own glory, he puts aside his long-standing

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feud in the hope of winning the eternal renown foreseen by his goddess-mother (Julie Christie) — the price of which, she warns, will be his life.

Hector, the duty-bound prince of Troy, is burdened with finishing what Paris, his I'm-a-lover-not-a-fighter kid brother, started.

Achilles almost single-handedly secures the beachhead, claiming Hector's vestal virgin cousin, Briseis (Rose Byrne), as spoils-of-war.

Grounded in human drama, the film retreats from the front lines only to examine the internecine strife and tensions of the Greek camp.

Technically, the film is a stunning achievement. The script suffers the usual stiff dialogue common to sword-and-sandal spectacles. Homer was blind, but some lines sound as if the screenwriter was deaf. Visual highlights include sweeping battlefield shots seamlessly blending live-action and computer-generated extras, a climactic burning of Troy and the balletically choreographed death match between Hector and Achilles.

Though true to the spirit of the



Warner Bros./CNS

Eric Bana (left) stars as Hector and Orlando Bloom as Paris in Warner Bros. Pictures' epic action adventure "Troy."

source material, "Troy" takes liberties, including compressing events from 10 years to what seems like a month, and importing the infamous Trojan horse from the Roman poet Virgil's "The Aeneid." It is suffused with a sense of the eternal, its characters' actions inescapably guided by a pagan notion of fate.

"Troy" lays open war's horror, banality and folly, summarizing the grim history of armed conflict as "old men talking and young men dying." As Hector says, "There is nothing glorious or poetic about war." Fueled by nationalism, revenge and rabid chauvinism, it also celebrates honor, courage and loyalty.

Due to intense battlefield violence and implied sexual encounters with partial nudity, the USCCB classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

DiCerto is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



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