

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (2010)

Rated PG-13. Our Ratings: V-5; L-1; S/N-4. Length: 1 hour 56 min.

*The wicked plot against the righteous,
and gnash their teeth at them;
but the Lord laughs at the wicked,
for he sees that their day is coming.
The wicked draw the sword and bend
their bows to bring down the poor and
needy,
to kill those who walk uprightly;
their sword shall enter their own heart,
and their bows shall be broken.
Psalm 37:12-15*

Yes, this is another of those Prince Dastan & Princess action films based on a video game, and yes, it is about as good-meaning that if all you want are cardboard characters involved in computer-enhanced action in which lots of blood and body parts are spilled, then this might be your film. It is supposedly set in the Persian Empire, the exact time not designated, though the architecture of the huge city is obviously not from ancient Persia but from the Muslim era. Both the buildings and the costumes are from the time when the land of Persia was under the

domination of the vast Muslim empire that ruled from Spain to India. However, I am sure that the adolescents who will turn out for this film have little interest in such historical anomalies.

Thanks to the computer, Jake Gyllenhaal puts to shame Douglas Fairbanks as an athletic warrior. Jake's Prince Dastan is able to make impossible leaps across rooftops; run up the side of a building or along a series of roof poles jutting out; or leap into the air above the heads of his attackers, execute a somersault, and attack them from behind. Oh yes, and the more there are of his attackers, the better he seems at outfighting them. The actor plays the grown-up orphan who was adopted by the King Sharaman (Ronald Pickup) and raised alongside the two royal sons, Tus (Richard Coyle) and Garsiv (Toby Kebbell).

During an expedition led by the three sons the king's sinister brother, Nizam (Ben Kingsley), persuades them to lay siege to a city called Alamut. Nizam claims that they have weapons of mass destruction that they are supplying to the enemies of Persia. Yes, you read right, "weapons of mass destruction" –the audience picked up on this and laughed. Later, other references to the present were also well received, most such references being delivered by Alfred Molina's Sheik Amar, delightfully oily as the slave entrepreneur who loves to talk. At one point Amar is convinced that there is a secret government plot to get entrepreneurs such as himself; and he hates taxes with a passion that one wonders if he is the ancestor of the Tea Partyers?

There is of course a feisty princess Tamina (Gemma Arterton) guardian of a magical dagger that is able to turn back the sands of time, a silly device that becomes central to the plot. And there is the threat of the Destruction of the World, if our heroes do not recover the dagger in time. Oh yes, I

forgot to mention that Dastan is accused of murdering his foster father, and thus spends most of his time on the run while seeking to discover the murderer. This is a sometimes-funny escapist film, but I suspect that those playing the original video game will get more value for their money.

For Reflection/Discussion

1. What do you think of the characters? Anything new here, or the usual crop of heroes and villains? What do you think of the usual practice of white, English-accented actors/actresses playing ethnic characters such as Persians?
2. What do you think of the advice, “A true king follows the advice of his council but always listens to his own heart” ?
3. How does Princess Tamina show her mettle when she is being held over the abyss by Dastan? How do future developments undercut this brave act?