'Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time' is Perfect Background Noise For Making Out

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Rating: **2.0**/5.0

CHICAGO – Historically, video game adaptations are recipes for disaster when translated into film. While "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" with Jake Gyllenhaal and Gemma Arterton has a blockbuster opportunity to buck the decades-old trend, we're just subjected to more of the same soul-deadening time drain.

"Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" will go down in history akin to other video-game-to-film failures including "Resident Evil: Extinction," "Max Payne," "Postal," "BloodRayne," "Doom," "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life," "House of the Dead," "Mortal Kombat," "Street Fighter" and "Double Dragon". The film only succeeds in its mindless entertainment and can be considered excellent background noise while you're making out with someone at home.

Jake Gyllenhaal (left) and Gemma Arterton in "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time".
Image credit: Andrew Cooper; Disney; and Jerry Bruckheimer, Inc.

The special effects are cheesy, the costuming feels forced, you can practically see the actual sets in various scenes and ultimately the film's 116 minutes are about 110 minutes too long. Sure, the film looks like another Jerry Bruckheimer picture in some of its largesse, but so does it

also get the same disrespect as a failed Uwe Boll video game adaptation.

Jake Gyllenhaal in "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time".
Image credit: Andrew Cooper; Disney; and Jerry Bruckheimer, Inc.

Audiences will have a love/hate relationship with veteran cinematographer John Seale ("Poseidon," "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," "City of Angels," "The Firm") as his camera work teeters from true blockbuster skill to painfully amateur to watch. Likewise, parkour master David Belle serves up stunt work that totters just the same.

"Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" film writers Boaz Yakin, Doug Miro and Carlo Bernard should have hired an English-speaking translator for their conversation with "Prince of Persia" video game writer Jordan Mechner because their collaboration instead created a jumbled story that felt like you're trying to understand Chinese.

When the film wraps, audiences might find themselves trying to make sense of what happened and why. And then you'll remember this was just a big-budget film that was attempting to create a "story" in a movie whose primary attributes were the simple delicacies of Jake Gyllenhaal's perfect hair and five o'clock shadow coupled with a breathtaking face from Gemma Arterton that's hot enough to ignite even the sun (while never managing to need deodorant or a shower).

The role of Nizam in this film for the usually masterful Ben Kingsley can't even begin to be seen as memorable as past brilliant portrayals such as his role as Mohandas K. Gandhi in 1982's "Gandhi". Always making the most of what he's given, Kingsley in "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" was clearly forced to work with weak material.

The singular standout acting surprise in this film goes to Alfred Molina. Following his memorable role in 2009's hit film "An Education," Molina's entrepreneurial Sheik Amar in "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" is the film's chief redeeming quality from a performance perspective.

Jake Gyllenhaal (left) and Alfred Molina in "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time".
Image credit: Andrew Cooper; Disney; and Jerry Bruckheimer, Inc.

For inspiration, the film steals story and visual elements from various films. "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" feels like a cross between "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," "The Sword in the Stone" and "Pirates of the Caribbean". Still, "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" blows its wad early on with a memorable roof-jumping scene where the non-royalty, child version of Dastan (played by Jake Gyllenhaal) is plucked by royalty to later become the prince of Persia.

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"Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" is yet another immediate-gratification popcorn film that – once you're done relishing some of its eye-candified moments – you're left realizing you remember very little later on.

"Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" from director Mike Newell stars Jake Gyllenhaal, Gemma Arterton, Ben Kingsley, Alfred Molina, Steve Toussaint, Toby Kebbell, Richard Coyle, Ronald Pickup and Reece Ritchie. The 116-minute film is rated "PG-13" for intense sequences of violence and action. The film opened everywhere on May 28, 2010.

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