So, you want action? Look no further than director Tarsem Singh’s *Immortals*, starring Henry Cavill as the legendary hero, Theseus. I don’t know if screenwriters Charley and Vlas Parlapanides would go so far as to say they poured all their blood, sweat, and tears into the script or not, but there’s sure a lot of all three in their movie. Especially blood, courtesy of a colorful variety of impalements, slashes, and decapitations.

But perhaps ironically, what makes *Immortals* such a special action film is the brain beneath all the brawn. The story, based loosely on Greek mythology, is surprisingly thoughtful, particularly in its approach to spirituality. Faith, and the lack thereof, is a vital part of the script, and in many ways the driving force behind the plot. Theseus—brilliantly played by the perfectly cast Cavill, who has the charisma to perhaps become the next big Action Hero—starts out as a man who scoffs at his mother’s religious convictions, and believes the gods are nothing but fairy tales. But once he’s caught up in a war that will decide the fate of all the Greek people and maybe the world, he discovers that the gods are in fact very real, and to Theseus, that changes everything. On the other hand, the film’s villain—an awesomely malevolent warlord named Hyperion (Mickey Rourke in a truly intimidating performance)—believes in the gods to a point, but has no respect for them. Indeed, his goal is to wipe every vestige of them from the face of the earth, unleashing the demonic enemies of the gods—the ghoulish Titans—to take their place. He leads his armies across the ancient world in a bloody crusade that will not stop until the gods are defeated once and for all. This juxtaposition of viewpoints makes for a fascinating dynamic, and makes it possible to view the entire film as a pro-faith vehicle.

The gods themselves are powerful, startlingly so, but not invincible. They can in fact be killed, although only with great difficulty, and while Zeus and his fellow deities are reluctant to interfere with mortal affairs on a regular basis, when they do something the effects are often literally earth-shattering. Fantasy films often portray the Greek gods as stodgy old folk who lounge around Mount Olympus doing not much of anything, but in *Immortals* the gods wield powers that are, indeed, god-like.

*Immortals* is a special film, and one of the two best action films of 2011 (perhaps surpassed only by the underrated *Ironclad*). The cast, from Cavill to Rourke and the beautiful Freida Pinto as an oracle named Phaedra who becomes Theseus’s lover and John Hurt as an “old man” who turns out to be Zeus himself, is exceptional, as are the fabulous special effects and expansive, dream-like sets. The whole is so good that not even the 3D format spoils it. If you want action in spades and a well-executed and literate story, *Immortals* delivers, big time.