The Three Musketeers
PG-13
113 Minutes
Rating: **

Director Paul W.S. Anderson’s new version of the oft-produced *The Three Musketeers* has a lot going for it: stellar production values, explosive special effects, exciting action choreography, and a terrific cast which includes Milla Jovovich, Orlando Bloom, Matthew Macfayden, Ray Stevenson, and Christoph Waltz, among others. Unfortunately, a credible screenplay is not to be found anywhere on the film’s list of highpoints, and it shows. Despite the aforementioned strengths, 2011’s take on *The Three Musketeers* is totally devoid of logic, or even sense.

True, many action films get by with less than stellar plots. But usually successful action movies have screenplays that compensate for this with interesting characters, unexpected twists, or exceptional re-imaginings of action clichés. Not so with *The Three Musketeers*. We barely get to know most of the characters, who are generally painted in the broadest of strokes. These are legendary characters who should be living icons onscreen—instead they are nearly intangible walking stereotypes. The only Musketeer who is given a fully realized personality is the insufferable D’Artagnan, the arrogant “young gun” out to make a name for himself and become the Fourth Musketeer. Sadly, he’s too obnoxious to carry the picture, and I couldn’t help but wish someone would skewer him every time a sword fight broke out.

Rather better are Milla Jovovich’s Milady de Winter, though her character is too anachronistic to be believable, and Christoph Waltz’s Cardinal Richelieu. Jovovich is her usual charismatic self, and her action experience serves her well in a swashbuckling picture like this one. While Waltz lacks the palpable malevolence Richelieu should ideally have, he makes up for it with a dry wit and studied performance that makes his the best role in the movie.

The story borrows liberally from James Bond films and in one virtually unbearable scene involving a pair of dueling airships (yes, airships!!!) the whole sequence is stolen nearly verbatim from Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan. What should a Three Musketeers film have in common with James Bond and Star Trek? Absolutely nothing! But nobody told our film makers, and so the whole movie is a mad amalgamation of other, generally better, movies.

Amazingly, the film nevertheless manages to be at least somewhat entertaining. The colorful sets and costumes, the well-cued (if totally implausible) action scenes, and the twin performances of Jovovich and Richelieu actually make the movie something more than a total failure. The ending, of course, hints at a sequel. Assuming there is one, hopefully somebody will remember to hire a screenwriter with a few original ideas—or at least the ability to write moderately believable dialogue.