

# CINEMA

## Section 3

# Overlong legend

### ■ The Legend of Zorro

Sit back and enjoy another satisfying swash-buckler in the form of *The Legend of Zorro*, which follows in the spurred footsteps of *The Mask of Zorro*.

Although it has its critics, this sequel to the 1998 film, in which swarthy Antonio Banderas first teamed up with Anthony Hopkins to learn the art of "zorro-ing", is largely thrilling and enjoyable, if slightly overlong.

The film was always going to struggle to match the power of the last one – because it had been a while since we had seen this classic hero.

Perhaps not historically accurate in places, the latest film has even been described as far-fetched but, come on, this is Zorro!

How many masked crusaders were there in California last century, who would leave their family and risk death whenever the "people toll the bells?!"

Ten years have moved on since we last saw the sparks fly between Banderas and Zeta-Jones and now they are married and have a son, Joaquin (a would-be-Zorro, played ably by Adrian Alonso, still unaware of his father's other identity).

Martin Campbell's film portrays Don Alejandro (Banderas), torn between giving up his Zorro identity to spend more time with his son and saving the state when its entry into the union comes under threat from wealthy Frenchman, Armand (Rufus Sewell).

To cap it all, he has to endure the



vineyard owner's advances to his wife after the couple split up when he refuses to stop his double life.

As you would expect, the film has some great stunt sequences and plenty of flashing sword action.

Some great comedy is provided by Zorro's ever-faithful horse, notably when he and his master enjoy a bottle. Also funny are the moments when Elena and Alejandro meet up again, still obviously

in love but refusing to back down on their principles.

Whether or not the rival men would have actually duelled using polo sticks and indeed the catholic couple would have gone down the path of divorce is debatable.

The predictable climax is also too long coming back but there are great thrills and spills along the way and one certainly leaves the cinema satisfied, if not slightly "on your guard!" – GG

## Movie trivia

■ The sequel went through many titles. It was originally called "The Mask Of Zorro 2" and then that title was changed to "Zorro Unmasked" which had been the original script title by Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio. After their script was not used the title went to "Zorro 2" then to "The Return Of Zorro" before Sony pictures finally settled on the title "Legend Of Zorro".

■ "Zorro" means "fox" in Spanish.

■ Directors Steven Spielberg and 'Robert Rodriguez' both passed on the project. However, Spielberg stayed on as an executive producer.

■ Zorro's horse is played by Adriaan, a horse from Holland, chosen because Frisian horses aren't very big. This way Antonio Banderas looks bigger compared to the horse.

## Latest Video and DVD releases

### The Descent DVD (Cert 18, Dir. Neil Marshall, Pathé Distribution Limited)

The dark is scary. Taking this as a jumping-off point, writer and director Neil Marshall has created a terrifying tale about seven women on a doomed caving expedition. On the anniversary of a traumatic event, Sarah (Shauna MacDonal) and Beth (Alex Reid) join their old friend Juno (Natalie Mendoza) with four other women for an underground adventure. Of course they get a lot more than they bargained for. The unthinkable happens - a cave-in traps them two miles under the surface and then they learn that nobody is coming to save them. As they desperately search for another way out they soon discover something very nasty lives down there with them.

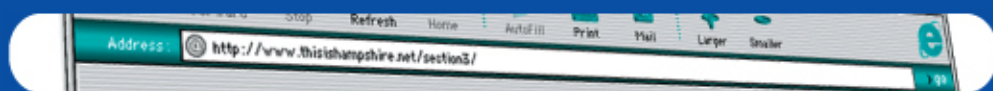
Things going bump in the dark are only the very peak of the unease so effectively

constructed in the first half. Personal tensions become a far bigger danger than the things they run into. The tightly filmed cave walls crush the screen as the women try to squirm through to the exit, taking every desperate chance they can in the treacherous caverns. These cave interiors are beautifully filmed, and the lighting keeps it sinister and primal. Most horrific of all, the women are all believable characters that really don't deserve what awaits them.

Unlike the inferior *The Cave*, released shortly after this, *The Descent* manages to keep you guessing and there are no guarantees of who will live or die. Real horror is a rare thing and it's a pleasure to see this fantastic film again. Watch with the lights on!

DVD Extras: Extended and deleted scenes, commentary, stills, Making-of, outtakes. –JN

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