

"Avatar" is an
amazing voyage!

By Judy Marker
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Highly acclaimed movie producer, director and writer James Cameron brought the highest grossing movie of all-time to the big screen in the form of "Titanic" 12 years ago this week. The academy.-award winner has gone-on to amass an amazing \$1,842,000,000.

Cameron now returns with his own sci-fi thriller, "Avatar" and the question now is will it rival "Titanic" at the box office. No stranger to sci-fi movies, he directed "Terminator 1 & 2," and "Aliens" among his impressive credits.

Now the long wait for "Avatar," written directed and co.-produced by him is finally over and in time for the holidays. It is thought to be the most expensive movie ever made with estimates ranging as high as \$400 million. Can 20th Century Fox and its investors make it back and that doesn't even include marketing costs?

With a running time of 2 hours and 42 minutes, it is a long but amazing voyage which translates to well over \$2 million a minute. Cameron has come-up with a unique and innovative story, loaded with special effects and the first film to be made in digital 3-D. In fact, it is the first multi-media movie to be playing on more 3-D than 2-D screens. It is also available in I-Max on a limited basis.

No matter how you see "Avatar" it is an impressive movie event. Cameron has made the most extensive use of live action and motion capture animation that combines to give it a futuristic and fabulous appearance. This could have an impact on future film making.

The year is 2154 and "Avatar" takes place on the planet Pandora and during what on Earth is referred to as "the time of great sorrow." Earth has become an ecological disaster and can only be maintained by a mineral known as "unobtainium." It was discovered several decades earlier and is worth billions.

The main problem for Earth, now controlled by huge corporations instead of governments is that unfortunately for the Earthlings, Pandora is an inhabited and extremely dangerous planet. Worse yet, the main deposits of unobtainium are located in the scared lands of the highly developed Na'vi people. Since the Planet's discovery, a program has been underway by the American corporation to try and make peace with the Na'vi. It is called "Avatar."

Headed by Dr. Grace Augustine (Sigourney Weaver "Vantage Point"), it works by projecting one's consciousness into a created Na'vi body that gives it full functions. The Na'vi are 9-feet tall, blue skinned humanoids who speak their own language.

In recent tries, the program has enabled the Na'vi to learn English and something about the visitors who they refer to as "Sky People," Now the program is being expanded after years of special training.

Unexpectedly, one of the Avatar Na'vi team is killed and replaced by his twin brother Jake Sully, (Sam Worthington "Terminator Salvation"), an ex-marine without any idea of what he is to do. Worse yet for the team, in charge of the main base is Colonel Miles Quaritch (Stephan Lang "Public Enemies") who is unsure about Sully. But with teammates like Trudy Chacon (Michelle Rodriguez "Fast & Furious"), Sully is confident he will be a quick learner.

While posing as a Na'vi, Sully falls in love with the Na'vi Princess Neytiri (Zoe Saldana "Star Trek") and the battle is on. Settle back and simply enjoy Cameron and film making at its best.

"Avatar" is rated "PG-13" for intense epic battle sequences and warfare, sensuality, language and smoking. Yes, it is an amazing movie, by far the year's best. However, "Avatar" at times is too long and the romance falls flats but it still receives my second highest rating of "4-J's/Don't Miss It!"