Titanic (3D) Written and Directed by James Cameron

I MUST admit I liked Titanic now more than I did when it first came out. Timeless as it were first shown in 1997, epic even in today's standards, still romantic, still tragic.

On the maiden voyage of RMS Titanic, Rose Bukater (Kate Winslet), a young woman stifled by her aristocratic background and by her millionaire fiancé Cal Hockley (Billy Zane), meets and falls for the spirited but struggling artist Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio). That's essentially it. Rich girl, poor boy, jealous boyfriend. And then the boat starts sinking. It'll be 100 years on Sunday, April 15th since the sinking of RMS Titanic in 1912. Quite the marketing strategy for the film to be re-released on the anniversary of a tragedy. The film was first released in Manila in February 1998. Titanic ran for about three months in the Metro. I tried avoiding it because of the hype, almost didn't see it at all. On the second month I gave in and saw it in the theaters. I thought the romance was dull and the scope of it overexposed. Today, with a few more years of understanding, I can say the same things are still true—but now I recognize that that was the point.

Sometimes we're okay with a little melodrama (Downton Abbey fan here). Sometimes we just want the main character to survive. For what is Titanic (the film), but a romantic fantasy told with a huge splash?

The characters are flat, saved by the magnetism of Winslet who earned an Oscar nomination for her efforts. DiCaprio played himself—as a boy, minus the complexities he is able to convey these days. James Cameron, king of the filmmaking world, never quite could write better than, "You jump, I jump." Avatar, the biggest box office behemoth of all time (title previously held by Titanic), had the same dialogue and character (acting!) issues.

The magic is in the editing, because we feel it. We feel it when we first see the sunken ship underwater, and a few moments later, we see it in its full glory. We feel Rose's fears, hear Jack's laughter and then see the iceberg. The entire scene of the sinking—a long sequence of intercuts between Jack and Rose's determination to survive, jaw-dropping scenes of destruction and chaos, and moments of quiet (sometimes poetic like the string quartet, sometimes outright clichéd or manipulative like the old couple huddling on their bed as the waters rushed in)—is thoroughly gripping, probably enhanced by the 3D conversion.

Titanic may well be one of the few good arguments to see a film in a theater. Those who saw the film at home in video or through cable may not have experienced it the way it should have been. The difference lies with the shared anger or a collective gasp that can only be experienced in the church of cinema.