Battleship Directed by Peter Berg Based on the board game by Hasbro

BIG guns. Big explosions. Big pain to sit through more than 2 hours. Battleship is a good looking videogame, except the audience doesn't have the controls. Actor-turned-director Peter Berg's Battleship is an alien-invasion actioner set in the Pacific Ocean based on the naval strategy board game by toymaker Hasbro, maker of Transformers and G.I. Joe.

NASA's high-tech open invitation to intelligent extraterrestrial life goes awry when several objects from deep space acknowledge the human message and immediately land on earth to dire consequences. One of those objects lands in the Pacific, just as a fleet of US ships led by Admiral Shane (Liam Neeson) are undertaking naval exercises.

The story centers more or less on Navy lieutenant Alex Hopper (Taylor Kitsch, who was just recently John Carter of Mars) who learns leadership, responsibility and honor the hard way when he unintentionally captains the one ship that would stand between humans and aliens.

Such a silly story when you expect the advanced aliens could simply blast away Earth's ships with their laser guns, but the aliens in Battleship are not so far ahead in technology that they also use projectiles just like we do, somewhat levelling the playing field a bit. That directorial treatment is the only thing that keeps this poorly-written, poorly-acted film from sinking. Berg infuses Battleship with enough adrenaline to make the movie as visceral and thrilling as possible. Even the camera technique reminds me so much of the TV show Battlestar Galactica—that other vintage-warship-turned-museum-turned-humanity's-last-line-of-defense—but minus all the intelligence of what was called The West Wing in Space.

I say this because Berg references BSG at least twice in Battleship: first with Japanese Capt. Nagata (Tadanobu Asano) who shares a similar name with a certain Admiral Nagala who took command of the Colonial fleet in the said TV series; second, that fighter pilot near the end of the film shares the same call sign "Boomer" as one of the main characters in BSG.

Reference to the board game? That scene where Nagata calculates the enemy position on the radar screen. Other than the BSG references, there's not much to say about this big-budgeted, shoot-those-aliens movie. At some point I was expecting Admiral Shane to "release the Kraken" but it never happened. Rihanna's in the film—nothing complex, nothing memorable either. But I have to admit, the last action scene involving the veterans is a recruitment piece for would-be heroes in the future, our navy included.

If there's anything we learned from the Scarborough Shoal standoff, it's that we need more battleships patrolling our waters. Very soon.