

## Flags of Our Fathers (2006)

R1

reviewed by  
Steve Rhodes

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS  
A film review by Steve Rhodes  
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RATING (0 TO \*\*\*\*): \*\*\*

(M1SUB1S1)

"If you can get a picture -- the right picture -- it can win a war," a captain (Harve Presnell) tells the son of one of the participants in the most famous World War II photograph. FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS, an unusual story about the raising of the famous flag on Iwo Jima, is directed awkwardly but ultimately effectively by Clint Eastwood. (M1SUB1S2)

(M1SUB1S5)

Cutting back and forth in time, the movie is confusing and slackly paced at first, but it eventually gains its footing. One of Eastwood's least satisfying films, it finally works more because of the power of the story itself than the quality of the filmmaking.

This story has two equally interesting parts. The more traditional of the two involves the hellacious fighting, as American troops fight 12,000 well-entrenched Japanese troops, who wanted to fight to their death on Iwo Jima. The second and more intriguing part concerns how the famous picture came to be taken and what happened afterwards to the soldiers in the photograph. (M1SUB1S4)

The battle sequences are done with horrific realism, but the amount of spilled guts and severed heads is nowhere as intense as in SAVING PRIVATE RYAN, a film that set the gold standard for World War II gore. What the battle scenes in FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS do especially well is contrast the many boring moments on the battlefield, when it looks like the enemy is dead and the battle over, with bloody firefights which occur before, during and after these moments of false calm. (M2S1)

I especially liked the roar of the large naval guns as they pounded away, attempting to pulverize the island before the troops go ashore. My dad, who served in World War II and who was with me at the screening, liked everything about the movie, except the noise of the guns. He said that it hurt his ears. Personally, I wished that they had been even louder still, which would have been even more realistic.

The best part of the narrative concerns the placement of the two -- yes, two -- flags over the island. The people who put up the first flag were basically forgotten as the photographer of the famous photograph actually shot an image of a second and different group of soldiers putting up a replacement flag, since someone wanted to take the first flag home as a souvenir. (M3S2)

(M2S1)

Of the soldiers who raised the flag several were killed minutes later, although each of the flag raisings occurred during a lull in the battle. The three that lived, Doc Bradley (Ryan Phillippe), Rene Gagnon (Jesse Bradford) and Ira Hayes (Adam Beach), were quickly whisked back home so that the military could crack up a PR effort to sell bonds. We learn that the U.S. was just about busted financially and had almost no money to pay for more munitions. The war bond drives had become ineffective, but the American public were absolutely captivated by the heroes of Iwo Jima, as personified in the people in the photo, and were more than willing to buy bonds if these men asked.

The irony is that the guys were shy and only one of three, Doc Bradley, was actually a hero. Rene Gagnon was referred to as their unit's Tyrone Power and was viewed as capable only as a gofer or a runner. He didn't fight. He just carried stuff around, like the flag. By far the saddest character was Ira Hayes, an American Indian and a blubbing alcoholic whose behavior finally got him sent back to the front to get rid of him. Nevertheless, these three were quite effective in the necessary efforts to sell the bonds, performing in front of large crowds, where they would enact the events, as fireworks lit the sky. The spectacles embarrassed them, but they stayed with it for their country's sake.

In a long epilogue, perhaps a little too long, we find out what happened to the three. Suffice it to say that, of all of the bigwigs who promised them whatever they wanted when the war was over, none of these rich and powerful men made good on their promises to the soldiers.

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS runs 2:12. It is rated R for "sequences of graphic war violence and carnage, and for language" and would be acceptable for older teenagers. (M4S2)

The film opens nationwide in the United States on Friday, October 20, 2006. In the Silicon Valley, it will be showing at the AMC theaters, the Century theaters and the Camera Cinemas. (M5S3)

Web: <http://www.InternetReviews.com> - (M5S1)

Email: [Steve.Rhodes@InternetReviews.com](mailto:Steve.Rhodes@InternetReviews.com) - (M5S2)

Superman Returns (2006)

R2

reviewed by  
Jerry Saravia

(M1SUB1S1)

SUPERMAN RETURNS (2006)

Reviewed by Jerry Saravia

Viewed on June 30th, 2006  
 RATING: Two stars

(Continued M1SUB1S1)

(M1SUB1S3)

The late Christopher Reeve captured the essence of Superman and, more importantly, the essence of Clark Kent. Reeve played the two sides of the same coin - the mild-mannered reporter who was also the superhuman, red-caped, red-booted Superman. Suffice to say, it would be hard for anyone to top Reeve's performance because he encapsulated the man and the myth in all its glory. It was such a good performance that Reeve became typecast. Off-screen he became a different kind of hero after the horrible accident that left him paralyzed. Tough standards to live up to and newcomer Brandon Routh steps in those red boots and blue tights and comes close, but something is amiss. In fact, something is amiss with the whole movie.

(M1SUB1S5)

This Superman film is not a reimagining of the beloved comic-book hero, like last year's invigorating, darkly humorous "Batman Begins," but rather goes full-speed ahead and ~~pretends that the awful number 3 and 4 of Chris Reeve's series never existed.~~ This is a direct sequel to "Superman II," taking place five years after that

(M1  
SUB1  
S2)

film's events. Superman (Brandon Routh) has been MIA as he has been investigating the remains of his destroyed planet Krypton. Apparently, shards of that distant planet have landed on planet Earth and the Museum of Natural History exhibits one of those shards. Savvy, evil Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey) wants a shard or two of Kryptonite since it can destroy Superman, his long-time nemesis (of course, unless you have amnesia, you'll recall this was also the plot of the original "Superman"). Lex can also use Superman's earthbound home, the Fortress of Solitude, to incur his own fortress by decimating America and creating his own land that will be profitable to foreign investors. That's right, Superman fans, those shiny crystals can create lands as far the eye can see (actually, they will be undesirable rock formations but never mind). Considering how much America is hated nowadays, the notorious Lex Luthor may be onto something.

(M2S1)

But guess what has happened in five years. Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth) is married and has a son. Clark Kent shows up at the office and has his old job back, thanks to Perry White (played by Frank Langella), though he faces stiff competition from Perry's son, Richard (James Marsden), who is incidentally married to Lois. Jimmy Olson is still around, taking pictures at whim of everything in sight. Still, he faces mildly stiff competition from kids with those pesky cell phones that take far better snapshots.

(M3S1)

Now notice how little I have said about Brandon Routh or Kate Bosworth in their respective roles. The makers of this movie have forgotten some cardinal rules, which can be applied to many of today's blockbusters. Any movie, including a Superman movie, that is filled with special-effects needs something more, something that can't be special-effected. It needs attitude, personality - the quirks that we all face with in our own lives. Those elements were brought to life in the first two "Superman" films by Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder, the latter incidentally the best Lois Lane to ever walk this planet. Brandon Routh has the look but not the tone, and certainly not the personality. As Superman, he seems too iconic and placid to