

# A Boater's Classic

**Dusting off the finest classics that have survived the test of time, and adding in a peppering of favorite contemporary selections, here are some of the best movies to help you survive hibernation this winter**

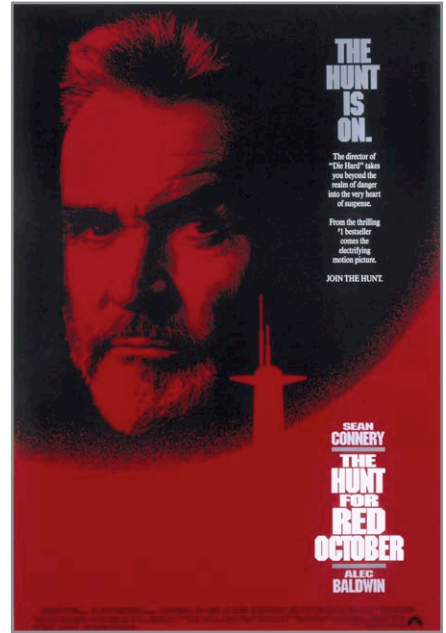
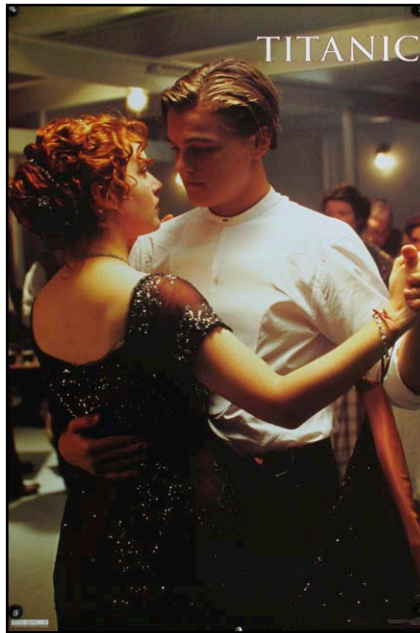
■ **Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea (1954)** Since 1907, there have been five film versions of Jules Verne's 1870 fantasy adventure novel of the same name. Of these, the 1954 version, directed by Richard Fleischer, starring James Mason, Kirk Douglas, Paul Lukas, and Peter Lorre, is regarded as definitive. The film is set in the 1860s, with a plot revolving around Capt. Nemo, a scientific genius who's invented the *Nautilus*, a precursor of the submarine. He's also developed atomic power that propels the *Nautilus*. In spite of his genius and some humanitarian beliefs, he's fatalistic and determined to kill those he believes have evil intentions toward mankind. As a result, he's been

using the *Nautilus* to sink warlike ships. Survivors of one such a ship are captured by Nemo (a palindrome for omen), and tension soon erupts. Eventually, *Nautilus* is badly damaged in combat, Nemo decides to destroy it and the island Vulcania, his source of atomic power, and plans for all on board to die on the ship. Except for Kirk Douglas's portrayal — at times excessively exuberant and childlike — there's much to recommend in this film, including superb underwater photography.

■ **A Night To Remember (1958)** This engrossing British film directed by Ray Baker is based on Walter Lord's book, *A Night To Remember*, for which he conducted interviews of over 60 *Titanic* survivors. We see views of impressive ship's interiors, equal to the social standing of its first-class passengers. Excited anticipation reigns from lord to peon, whose quarters suit their class. Crewmembers and passengers alike express arrogance in their certainty about the *Titanic's* invincibility. When the nighttime collision with the iceberg occurs, reactions of disbelief replace arrogance, momentarily paralyzing routine evacuations, additionally hampered by an insufficient number of life boats to handle the passengers. Survivors' rescues

are portrayed, revealing a gamut of human emotions — desperation, fear, generosity, greed, helplessness, heroism, omnipotence, rivalry, self-sacrifice. Once the captain and crew grasp the reality of their predicament, they behave in a more responsive manner. Here's an unflinching portrait of how passengers' social class played a central role in determining their fates. For all interested in an authentic account of the *Titanic* disaster, this is definitely a film to watch.

■ **The African Queen (1951)** This excellent adaptation of C. S. Forester's novel of the same name, "*The African Queen*" takes place at the beginning of World War I. Filmed on location in central Africa, directed by John Huston and starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, this improbable love story between a proper English spinster/teetotaler and a Canadian gin-loving, disheveled captain is filled with adventure, danger, and humor. On one of his stops, Charlie Allnut finds that marauding German-led troops have killed a Methodist missionary and laid waste to the village, stranding the missionary's sister, Rose Sayer. Rosie accepts Charlie's offer to take refuge on the old, battered, steam powered riverboat, the *African Queen*. When she discovers that his goal is merely to sail



# Film Festival

By Tom and Lili McGee

to a safer spot on the river, she shames him into pursuing a German warship. Perils, exhaustion, heroics, and love ensue.

■ **Captain Blood** (1935) One of the finest swashbuckling pirate films, “*Captain Blood*,” directed by Michael Curtiz, and taken from the Rafael Sabbatini novel of the same name, stars a youthful, vigorous Errol Flynn, an 18-year-old Olivia de Havilland, and a villainous Basil Rathbone. When Peter Blood, a physician, is wrongly convicted of a crime, he’s sentenced to slavery in the West Indies, where Arabella buys him. As Blood develops an escape plan, Spanish pirates attack Port Royale, where he’s been enslaved. Capturing the pirates’ ship with the help of fellow slaves, he gains fame as Captain Blood, a righteous pirate, then goes on to capture a ship with Arabella aboard. A heated rivalry develops over Arabella’s affections, resulting in a rousing sword fight. Victorious, Blood sails to Port Royale, to find France and England at war, and that his pardon includes a commission in the Royal Navy, where he goes on to change the world.

■ **Captains Courageous** (1937) Based on Rudyard Kipling’s novel of 1897, one focus of this film, directed

by Victor Fleming, about fathers and sons is on the men who fish near the Grand Banks of Newfoundland; many of its sailing scenes are superb. The cast includes Freddie Bartholomew, Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore, Melvin Douglas, and Mickey Rooney. A widowed, wealthy businessman invites his malcontent teenager to accompany him from New York to England via steamship. Harvey falls overboard, and is rescued by Manuel, a fisherman of Portuguese descent, from *We’re Here*, a fishing schooner from Gloucester, Massachusetts. Once aboard, Harvey tries to intimidate the captain, alienating most of the crew. The captain makes him a crewmember, placing him in Manuel’s charge. Initially, Harvey is demeaning of Manuel, then won over by his kindness and mentoring, finally regarding him as a good surrogate father. Harvey thrives as a seaman and begins to mature, until disaster strikes.

■ **Das Boot** (1981) Originally filmed in 1981, and augmented by a director’s cut in 1997, this gripping realistic film, written and directed by Wolfgang Petersen, is about life aboard *U-96*, a German submarine, during World War II. Although set in wartime, in many respects this film strikes an antiwar stance. The story is told

by a young German lieutenant/war correspondent, and begins as the submarine sails from La Rochelle, France. The voyage is filled with extreme tension as *U-96* attacks enemy cargo ships, drawing punishing return attacks. Facing circumstances that seem beyond human endurance, the captain and crew survive intact. Following several months in the Atlantic, they hope to guide their limping sub back to La Rochelle, only to learn that it is being redeployed to Italy. They enter the Med, where *U-96* encounters new attacks, nearly causing it and the crew to perish. They survive once more, and return to La Rochelle, only to be caught unprepared by a violent surprise.

■ **The Long Voyage Home** (1940) Directed by John Ford, this film, regarded as one of the finest about men at sea, and called a “modern *Odyssey*” by *New York Times*’ film critic Bosley Crowther, has a mostly male cast led by John Wayne and Thomas Mitchell. The setting is the cargo ship *Glencairn* as it sails from the West Indies to Baltimore, and then returns home to England. The main focus is on the crew, their hopes and aspirations. These lonely men see themselves as losers, drink heavily and share a wish “to go home.” When the

ship is attacked, threatening its survival, the crew fights back and reclaims some of their emotional strengths. Before the film's end, however, all hell breaks loose, crew are lost at sea; while ashore, a reckless, defiant Irish crewmember is beaten unconscious in a drunken brawl, and shanghaied to a different ship; and only one crewmember lives to go home at last.

### ■ **Mutiny On The Bounty (1935)**

The third film version of a historic event, "Mutiny on the Bounty," directed by Frank Lloyd and starring Charles Laughton, Clark Gable, and Franchot Tone, is filled with romantic adventure. Commanded by the infamous, domineering disciplinarian Captain Bligh with Fletcher Christian as second in command, the *Bounty* sails from England to Tahiti. On its return voyage, Captain Bligh's continued hostile, sadistic attitudes toward the crew reach a breaking point, and they mutiny. Captain Bligh and a few loyal crewmembers are set adrift in a small, sparsely provisioned boat, while the mutinous crew sails to Tahiti. In an astonishing feat of seamanship, Bligh survives a most perilous voyage of thousands of miles, he's given command of another ship, and heads for revenge in Tahiti.

### ■ **The Pirates Of Penzance (1982)**

A reasonably faithful version of Gilbert and Sullivan's 1879 comic masterpiece, this delightful film, written and directed by Wilford Leach, brims over with satire about British nobility, pirates, orphans, the military, police, love, and marriage. Its romantic leads, Mabel and Frederic, are sung by Linda Ronstadt and Rex Smith, with Kevin Kline as the swashbuckling, befuddled Pirate King. At the outset, the pirates are about to release Frederic, an adopted crewmember, who, on becoming 21, has fulfilled his required time with the pirates. Once ashore, he encounters a group of flirtatious sisters, and he and the eldest, Mabel, fall in love. The sisters' father, Major General Stanley, tries to cool his daughter's ardor. Discovering that Frederic was released in error, the pirates go ashore to search for him. They meet, quickly fall in love with Mabel's sisters, and encounter the Major General. The pirates' plot to kill him are thwarted by a bumbling group of singing and dancing policemen. Love prevails.

### ■ **The Hunt For Red October (1990)**

Derived from a Tom Clancy novel, "The Hunt for the Red October" is a stark reminder of the Cold War. Its large, multi-

lingual cast directed by John McTiernan includes Sean Connery, Alec Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Sam Neill, and James Earl Jones. The *Red October* is a new, nuclear-equipped USSR sub with a highly sophisticated, noiseless propulsion system. Its deeply respected commander, Lithuanian Marko Ramius (Connery), has been a member of the Soviet Navy for almost 40 years. When the Soviets direct Ramius to take the sub on a shakedown cruise, he and his hand-picked crew seize the opportunity to defect to the United States. It is discovered in Atlantic waters by the American sub *USS Dallas*. Upon learning of Ramius's plans to defect, the Soviets try to destroy the *Red October*; Americans devise a similar plan, believing the sub intends to attack the U.S. The immediate possibility of nuclear war heightens tensions, as these mighty forces confront one another.

#### More Online For Film Fans

We polled our editors and came up with a list of some of their favorite boating movies: *Deep Water*, *The Perfect Storm*, *Dead Calm*, *Jaws*, *Cape Fear*, *A River Runs Through It*, *The Riddle Of The Sands*, and *Master & Commander – Far Side Of The World*. Visit us online for reviews, and more great movie selections: [www.BoatUS.com/magazine](http://www.BoatUS.com/magazine).

### ■ **Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure (2001)**

This is an extraordinary tale of heroism and survival under unbelievably harsh, life-threatening conditions. Magnificent cinematography is partially by Frank Hurley, the expedition's original photographer. Kevin Spacey narrates; George Butler directs. Explorer Ernest Shackleton, determined to be the first to cross Antarctica via the South Pole, gathered a crew of 27 men in 1914 to sail the sturdy wooden ship, *Endurance*. An especially severe winter icebound the ship in the Weddell Sea, where it endured only a few months before being crushed by ice. Shackleton and crew took refuge in three life boats. After five harrowing days at sea, their endurance pushed beyond limits, they reached Elephant Island, knowing their only chance for survival depended on reaching a whaling station on South Georgia Island, 800 miles away. Shackleton and five crew set out to cover an interminable expanse of frigid ocean, then landed, only

to be confronted by miles of icy trails and mountains. Accompanied by two crew, Shackleton made an extremely hazardous three-day trek across crevasse-riddled terrain; they finally reached their destination, securing the rescue of the entire group.

### ■ **The Captain's Paradise (1953)**

This delightful British satire about marriage, bigamy, and one man's view of paradise is directed by Anthony Kimmins, features Alec Guinness, Yvonne De Carlo, Celia Johnson, and Charles Goldner, and takes place aboard *The Golden Fleece*, a steamship/ferry between Gibraltar and Kalik, a pseudonymously named port in Spanish Morocco. Henry St. James (Guinness) is the owner/captain of the *Golden Fleece*; he spends alternate nights in Gibraltar and Kalik. In Gibraltar, he lives in a small, neat cottage with Maud, his English wife; they have a staid marital life, eating home-cooked meals and tucking in early. In Kalik, he lives with his Latin wife Nita; they lead a more sensual life, focused around restaurant dining, dancing, and drinking champagne. Upon mixing up gifts purchased for his wives, Henry mistakenly gives Maud a bikini and Nita an apron, and as a result, learns that neither feels fulfilled in the roles he's assigned them.

### ■ **White Squall (1996)**

Based on an actual incident, "White Squall," directed by Ridley Scott, is led by Jeff Bridges who plays the captain, Caroline Goodall, and John Savage. Told in flashbacks, it follows a memoir kept by an adolescent crewmember, and takes place mainly aboard the *Albatross*, captained by Sheldon. The windjammer has been adapted to provide a yearlong, seagoing experience for adolescent boys. A strong but fair disciplinarian, Chris is an excellent surrogate father. As the *Albatross* sails through the Caribbean and south Atlantic, most of the boys overcome assorted fears. On their return voyage, they encounter a sudden, nightmarish squall, and in spite of their now solid sailing skills, the *Albatross* sinks. This tragedy is a gripping shock, which dramatically changes the film's direction; the powerful captain is rendered powerless by the squall. In a state of despair, Chris faces a U.S. Coast Guard trial where his honesty, judgment, and seamanship are questioned. The movie remains a redemptive, heroic tale.

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Movie lovers Tom and Lili McGee (psychologist and writer), who live in San Diego, California, love chartering boats in exotic locations.