

Titanic Centenary, A Tragedy to Remember

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Just a couple of months after the Costa Concordia disaster, international filmmakers commemorate the anniversary of the historical shipwreck with the release of James Cameron's classic and the production of new documentaries and fictional series.

“Passengers fought over lifeboats, a mother crawled up almost vertical corridors in pitch blackness with her daughter, and elderly couples sobbed as icy decks slipped under water. A harrowing picture is emerging of the chaotic evacuation of more than 4,000 people from the luxury cruise ship that sank into the Mediterranean off the coast of Tuscany...” John Hooper and Tracy McVeigh of the Guardian wrote on January 14, 2012 about the Costa Concordia disaster that has given Italy a bad name.

In the same piece a passenger is reported saying “Have you seen Titanic? That's exactly what it was like,” said Valerie Ananias, 31, a schoolteacher from Los Angeles who was with her sister and parents. “They all had dark red bruises from crawling up corridors that were nearly vertical.”



Just a few weeks after that, the Costa Allegra, which belongs to Costa Crociere, the company that owns the doomed Costa Concordia, ran into trouble after an engine-room fire knocked out its power and it had to be towed to the Seychelles. 1049 passengers were left without working toilets, running water or air conditioning in a region of the Indian Ocean where pirates are known to prowl for days.

Despite the disastrous start to the year and the consequent bad publicity, Costa Crociere keeps cruising and the people in charge are optimistic about the future of the cruise ship sector, which has grown in recent years, in contrast to other tourism sectors.

Now, two months later, the spotlight leaves Costa Crociere and is on the centenary of the most famous and infamous maritime tragedy; the sinking of the Titanic, the passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912, after colliding with an iceberg during its voyage from the south coast of England to New York City. The sinking of the Titanic caused the death of 1,517, there was a total of 2200 people total, in one of the deadliest maritime disasters in history.

The countdown to the anniversary started a while back with the opening of the Twitter account @TitanicRealTime where you can follow the epic journey with day-by-day and minute-by-minute tweets as if from on board the ship itself. Yet the most awaited events have to do with the movies and TV. The 3D version of James Cameron's classic is about to be released along with two documentaries produced by the National Geographic Channel and the Italian original series Titanic Blood&Steel, that narrates the prequel of that tragedy.

Cameron's masterpiece, featuring young Leonardo Di Caprio and Kate Winslet, is now fifteen years old (indeed it was released in 1997) and it will be in theaters worldwide in its 3D version on April 6th. The date was chosen to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the ship setting sail (April 10).

The movie is the second-highest-grossing film of all time, behind Cameron's Avatar and won 11 Academy Awards total, including best director and best picture. Today Paramount Pictures, 20th Century Fox and Lightstorm Entertainment are still betting on its magic, and the conversion to 3D format, executed by 300 people Overseen by Cameron, who wrote, directed and produced the movie and his Lightstorm producing partner Jon Landau, who also produced, cost 18 million dollars.

"There's a whole generation that's never seen Titanic as it was meant to be seen, on the big screen," Cameron said to the Hollywood Reporter. "And this will be Titanic as you've never seen it before, digitally remastered at 4K and painstakingly converted to 3D. With the emotional power intact and the images more powerful than ever, this will be an epic experience for fans and newcomers alike."

We are taken back to the frozen waters of the North Atlantic Ocean by the National Geographic Society and the National Geographic Channel with two different documentaries that will be released on the National Geographic Channel and in Italy on Sky Channel 403. The first Titanic: The Final Word with James Cameron (to be aired on April 8), will show the celebrated director at work on his own forensic research on the shipwreck. Cameron, who has taken part to over 30 submarine expeditions to explore the relict up close, has brought together a team of engineers, naval architects and historians to solve the mystery of how a ship that was considered unsinkable actually sunk. The second documentary Save The Titanic (to be aired on April 9), focuses on the story of Bob Ballard, the explorer who, in 1985 found the relict, and now is fighting against looters.

Ballard starts at the shipyard in Northern Ireland, where the ship was built and reconstructs its entire story along with that of its passengers up to the moment of the tragedy. The explorer renovates his commitment to safeguard the relict as it is constantly menaced by nature, tourists and



unscrupulous recovery teams. "If the Titanic is not protected and there's no guard on duty, it will get stripped," Ballard said. "It'll get stripped until all the jewels have been taken off the old lady's body."

In Italy, Rai 1, will release, most likely on April 14, the series Titanic Blood&Steel. The international super cast includes Chris Noth of Sex and the City, Kevin Zegers of Gossip Girl, Massimo Ghini and Alessandra Mastronardi, who will soon be seen in Woody Allen's Nero Fiddled. Based on an idea of the director of Rai Fiction, Fabrizio Del Noce, and designed for the international market, the series is divided into twelve episodes and is directed by the Irish, Ciaran Donnelly. It tells the epic story of the construction of the Titanic through the personal tales of the numerous people who worked on a ship that symbolized the future, richness and power but it actually is remembered as the icon of failure, one of the most tragic tragedies of the modern world.

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