

TITANIC

CAMERON OVERBOARD

A **52-minute** documentary
Directed by **Jeanne Burel**
Produced by **Temps noir**

**Temps
noir**

arte DISTRIBUTION

SYNOPSIS

A popular auteur film, a project without limits, and a true cultural phenomenon, *Titanic* is way more than just a blockbuster with 400 million tickets sold and \$2 billion at the box office. Thought by James Cameron as a "metaphor for the end of the human race", the last Hollywood blockbuster of the 20th century paints an enlightening picture of both the time and industry in which it was made.

In 1997, as the year 2000 approached, the film reflected, with unsettling clarity, the political, social, and environmental upheavals of a world on the edge of collapse. Unbridled capitalism, rampant inequality, climate change denial: more than 25 years after its release, *Titanic* still resonates with current events.

Supported by rare archival footage such as behind-the-scenes clips, Cameron's notes and storyboards, accounts from his peers and filmmakers he has inspired, the documentary recreates the epic story of a landmark work and finally restores its true political and visionary significance.



A NIGHTMARISH FILM THAT SERVES AS A WARNING

In 1997, *Titanic*'s release was one of those events in life that marked a turning point and drew a dividing line within a generation itself. Whether we like it or not, the film is undeniably part of the backdrop of an era. A pivotal era where the economic, social, ecological and geopolitical challenges of a world that is on the edge of collapse all intertwine. *Titanic* holds up spectacular and merciless mirror of that time.

For James Cameron, the story of the *Titanic* is both the symbol of a dying world and the beginning of a new era. In April 1912, when the boat sank, the conventions and illusions of a world that believed itself to be as unsinkable as the famous ship, sank with it. Both visionary and nightmarish, *Titanic* represents the end of a century, a millennium even. Thought by Cameron as a "metaphor for the end of the human race", with this film, the director paints the picture of an era and captures its obsessions: "The juxtaposition of the rich and the poor... the stoicism and nobility of a bygone era... and above all, a lesson: nothing in life is certain; the inconceivable can happen."

STORY OF A FORETOLD SHIPWRECK ... THAT NEVER HAPPENED

Back in 1997, *Titanic* was considered the very epitome of an irresponsible high-budget film. News of budget overruns were making headlines, some studio executives resigned, and a commercial flop of unprecedented proportions was predicted. *Variety* came up with a daily column called "Titanic Watch" which predicted a bitter failure. However, rarely has history so decisively proven the predictions wrong. Ten days after its release in the U.S. on December 19, 1997, the film had already grossed \$120 million. On March 1, it became the first film to break the \$1 billion mark. On March 23, *Titanic* received 11 Oscars.

ROMEO AND JULIET ON A BOAT

From the very beginning, Cameron knew that in order to bring the event to life, he had to “offer the audience an emotional lightning rod in the form of two likable protagonists.” Jack and Rose were born out of this need, and *Titanic* became, above all, a love story—but not just any love story: a Shakespearean tragedy in which the two heroes are not bound by their clans, but by their respective social classes. To portray them, Cameron chose two complete newcomers: Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, who were then at the very beginning of their careers. It was a risky gamble, but time would prove him right.

THE CLIMATE THREAT

What better metaphor than the *Titanic* to illustrate a civilization heading straight into disaster, at a time when global awareness of climate change was beginning to take hold? Cameron, a scientist by training and an environmentalist by conviction, turned the story of the ocean liner hurtling toward the iceberg into a perfect climate metaphor: the vision of a world in the midst of sinking, where humanity, overly confident in progress, is the architect of its own downfall.



THE MAGIC OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Where *Titanic* truly stands out is in its unique blend of digital effects and live-action footage. The film was one of the first to use digitally enhanced stunt doubles. The digital ocean owes its realism to research conducted by the U.S. Department of Defense on the behavior of water. The result is an unprecedented sense of realism that, even today, has not aged. "In its technical sophistication and the innovations it spawned, in its opulence and the sheer extravagance of its budget, the film has become the perfect reflection of the ocean liner whose story it tells."

TITANIC MANIA

Beyond the numbers, it is the unprecedented unanimous acclaim from audiences and critics alike that would go down in history. The soundtrack became the best-selling of all time. The media dubbed this craze "Leo-mania"; no one had seen anything like it since The Beatles. On the Internet, *Titanic* was one of the very first cultural phenomena to go viral. Even today, countless memes, GIFs, and TikTok videos prove that the phenomenon has endured and that a new generation has embraced the film.



FILM TREATMENT

Like Cameron's film (which begins with its ending), the documentary will open with the 1998 theatrical release and its box office records, before looking back at the origins of this extraordinary production and then at its cultural legacy. It will draw on a wealth of archival material (behind-the-scenes footage, personal notes, storyboards, annotated screenplay) to show Cameron's mind at work. Footage shot around a large model of the Titanic will serve as a narrative thread, paying tribute to a "traditional," artisanal style of filmmaking that predated the triumph of digital technology. Several contributors will enrich the narrative: close collaborators, actors, and crew members from the film, as well as filmmakers of the new generation and film critics.

SPEAKERS

Xavier DOLAN — Filmmaker
Martin LAING — *Titanic* Art Director
Robert LEGATO — *Titanic* Special Effects Supervisor
Anaïs BORDAGES — Film Critic
Marie TELLING — Journalist
Iris BREY — Writer and Film Director

CONTACT



Joséphine LETANG
Head of International Distribution & Marketing
j-letang@arteFrance.fr



Alec HERRMANN
Head of Acquisitions
a-herrmann@arteFrance.fr



Audrey KAMGA
Sales Manager
a-kamga@arteFrance.fr
Canada, USA, South America & MENA Region



Alexandra MARGUERITE
Sales Manager
a-marguerite@arteFrance.fr
UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa
Language versions



Franka SCHWABE
Sales Manager
f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr
Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Scandinavia,
Iceland, Australia, New Zealand