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JACK COULD HAVE SURVIVED, SAYS CAMERON AS 'TITANIC' RE-RELEASED 25 YEARS ON

James Cameron doesn't have many regrets-after all, he has now directed three of the four highest-grossing films of all time. But if he could go back and remake "Titanic," the film that started his record streak 25 years ago and is being re-released in theaters Friday, there is one thing he would change. "Based on what I know today, I would have made the raft smaller, so there's no doubt!" said Cameron.

liner sank, if only he had shared an improvised raft with Kate Winslet's Rose. Instead, Jack gallantly gave Rose an entire wooden door to float on, condemning himself to a freezing death but ensuring she survived.

It is just one example of how the story of the Titanic "never seems to end for people," Cameron told a press conference held for the anniversary re-release. "There have been much greater

"The men who stepped back from the lifeboats so that the women and the children could survive."

'Final verdict'

Cameron put Jack's individual sacrifice to the test in a new National Geographic documentary, running experiments featuring two stunt performers and an exact replica of the film's door in a cold water tank. In "Titanic: 25 Years Later with James Cameron," the stunt actors were fitted with internal thermometers to chart how quickly their bodies plunged toward hypothermia.

While the first test confirmed Jack would have died if he had acted according to the film's plot, a second found the pair could have both balanced on the door and kept their upper bodies out of the water. "He got into a place where if we projected that out, he just might have made it until the lifeboat got there," admitted Cameron. "Final verdict? Jack might have lived. But there's a lot of variables."

Epic love story

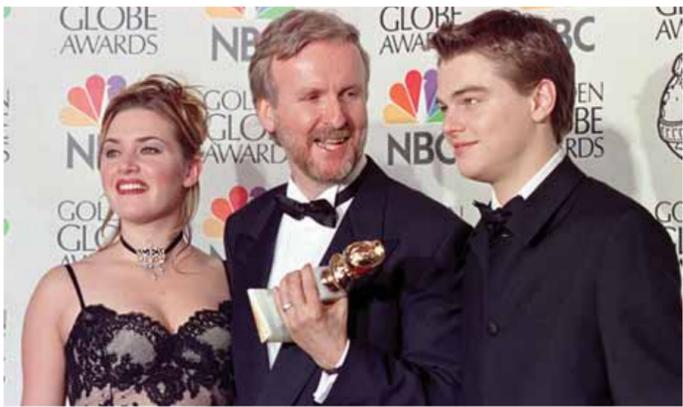
"Titanic" was first released in December 1997, and held the number one box office spot for 15 consecutive weekends. While today most films earn their biggest profits on opening weekend, "Titanic" peaked on its eighth weekend-Valentine's Day. The epic love story is now being re-released ahead of this year's Valentine's Day weekend, where it will hope to add to its \$2.2 billion total haul. "I'll grant you \$100 million of our box office (was) for Leonardo DiCaprio's appeal to 14-year-old," girls, joked Cameron. "Titanic" is currently behind

only "Avengers: Endgame" and Cameron's "Avatar," but is expected to soon be surpassed by "Avatar: The Way of Water"-again, by Cameron-which has made \$2.18 billion and is still drawing crowds.



US director James Cameron (left) and his wife Suzie Amis arrive at the world premiere of Titanic 3D in central London.

Collectively, Cameron's three monster hits have collected \$7.25 billion-roughly the entire annual GDP of Bermuda. Besides making him an extraordinarily wealthy man, the three-hour-long "Titanic" has left another important if divisive legacy. "Historically before 'Titanic,' the wisdom-which proved not to be true-was that a long movie can't make money," said Cameron. The first "Avatar" ran for 162 minutes and again "people said they wanted more," he said. "We took that to heart and we made a three-hour-and-12-minute movie for the new 'Avatar.'" "And it's doing very well."—AFP



File photo shows Director James Cameron (center) and actress Kate Winslet (left) and actor Leonardo DiCaprio (right) pose for photographers after Cameron won the award for Best Director for "Titanic" at the 55th Annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. — AFP photos

Such is the film's enduring popularity, even a quarter of a century later debates and theories continue to swirl around the fate of Leonardo DiCaprio's lead character. Fans insist Jack could have survived the icy Atlantic waters after the ocean

tragedies since the Titanic-I mean, World War One, tens of millions of people died. World War Two..." "But the Titanic has this kind of enduring, almost mythic, novelistic quality. And it has to do with, I think, love and sacrifice and mortality.



GEORGE CLOONEY TO REMAKE HIT FRENCH SPY SHOW 'THE BUREAU'

Hollywood star George Clooney is to direct an English-language remake of hit French spy series "The Bureau". The new version of the thriller that originally starred Mathieu Kassovitz will be called "The Department", and will begin production this year, US station Showtime announced on Monday. It compared it to "Homeland", another successful spy show that mixed espionage and geopolitics.

"Just as 'Homeland' elevated global espionage to new heights, 'The Department' will take viewers even deeper into a world of intrigue and subterfuge with complicated characters who struggle with their own demons," said Chris McCarthy, head of Showtime and Paramount Media.

"The Bureau" was a huge international hit for French producer Canal+, sold to more than 100 countries and praised even by France's real-life spy agency, the DGSE, for its realism. Launched in 2015 by showrunner Eric Rochant, its fifth and final season was overseen by award-winning director Jacques Audiard, known for films including "A Prophet" and "The Sisters Brothers". Clooney has previously directed the limited series adaptation of "Catch-22" in 2019. He has also directed several films including "The Monuments Men" (2014) and "The Midnight Sky" (2020).—AFP

WISH YOU WERE (NOT) HERE: PINK FLOYD'S WATERS SLAMMED FOR UN SPEECH ON UKRAINE

Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters was denounced by Ukraine Wednesday after he told the United Nations Security Council that Russia's invasion of its neighbor was "not unprovoked." The 79-year-old, who has sparked controversy before this with his stance on the war, was invited by Moscow to address the 15-member Council.

"The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation was illegal. I condemn it in the strongest possible terms," the British musician said via video. But Waters then implied that Kyiv was to blame as well. "Also the Russian invasion of Ukraine was not unprovoked. So I also condemn the provocateurs in the strongest possible terms," he said, calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Ukraine's UN ambassador hit back, playing on the title of one of Pink Floyd's most famous songs. "How sad for his former fans to see him accepting the role of just a brick in the wall, a wall of Russian disinformation and propaganda," said Sergiy Kyslytsya.

Kyiv's representative even referenced the giant inflatable pink pig that featured in many of the progressive rock band's shows. He said he was surprised the bassist had not arranged to have it floating in the Security Council chamber.

"What could it have been this time Mr Waters? Pigs with swastikas and the hammer and sickle?" Kyslytsya asked during the surreal discussion. The Council has held numerous debates on the war but has failed to take any action due to Russia's veto.

"If this is a toothless chamber, I can open my big mouth on behalf of the voices without fear of getting my head bitten off," Waters said. Russia requested the meeting to discuss arms supplied to Ukraine by the West.

US deputy ambassador Richard Mills said of Waters: "While I certainly acknowledge his impressive credentials as a recording artist, his qualifications to speak to us as an expert briefer on arms control or European security issues, are less evident to me." Russian Ambassador Vasily

Nebenzia welcomed the participation of a man he called "one of the most prominent activists of the contemporary anti-war movement."

Last September, Waters was declared persona non grata by the Polish city of Krakow after his concerts were scrapped there over his war stance. Waters had written an open letter that month saying the West should stop providing arms to Kyiv, accusing President Volodymyr Zelensky of allowing "extreme nationalism" in Ukraine and urging him to "put an end to this deadly war."

This week, Pink Floyd songwriter Polly Samson, wife of band member David Gilmour, called Waters "anti-Semitic" and "a Putin apologist" in a tweet. Waters responded by posting a statement on Twitter that said he "refutes entirely" Samson's accusation. Pink Floyd reunited last year, without Waters, to release a single in support of Ukraine. — AFP



British musician Roger Waters is displayed on a screen during an address to a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine, at UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

NOBEL WINNER MARIO VARGAS LLOSA JOINS ACADEMIE FRANCAISE

Peruvian Nobel-winning author Mario Vargas Llosa was set to join the fabled Academie Francaise in Paris on Thursday, the first member never to have written a book in French. The 86-year-old novelist, who also has Spanish citizenship, controversially invited the former king of Spain, Juan Carlos, to his inauguration ceremony. The ex-monarch has lived in exile since 2020 in the United Arab Emirates after a series of scandals, including claims that he harassed a former mistress and revelations about his lavish lifestyle and an elephant hunt in Botswana.



In this file photo Peruvian writer and Nobel Prize winner for Literature Mario Vargas Llosa smiles during a public interview at Buenos Aires' International Book Fair. — AFP

Established under King Louis XIII in 1635, the Academie Francaise is meant to guard "pure" French, which in recent decades has faced a constant onslaught from English. Last year, it bemoaned the widespread use of imported phrases like "big data" and "drive-in" and took umbrage with the common practice by French businesses of using English-sounding brand names, such as train operator SNCF's low-cost service Ouigo (pronounced "we go"). Vargas Llosa won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2010, and is the first holder of the award at the Academie Francaise since Francois Mauriac, who won the prize in 1952.

MICHAEL JACKSON ESTATE EYEING NEAR-\$1BN SALE OF MUSIC RIGHTS

The estate of Michael Jackson is closing in on a deal to sell half its interests in the megastar's music catalogue, in a deal worth up to \$900 million, Variety reported. The sale, to Sony and a possible financial partner, could include a slice of the singer's publishing and recorded-music revenues, as well as Broadway show "MJ: The Musical" and as-yet-unmade biopic "Michael," the trade title said. If it goes ahead, the deal would be the biggest yet in the burgeoning music catalogue market, which has already seen some eye-popping transactions.



In this file photo US popstar Michael Jackson addresses a press conference at the O2 arena in London. — AFP

They have included the sale of Bruce Springsteen's publishing and recorded music back catalogue for \$600 million-also to Sony-and \$400 million that Universal Music paid to buy Bob Dylan's recorded music. Last month, pop juggernaut Justin Bieber sold his music publishing and recording catalogue shares to the Blackstone-backed Hipgnosis Songs Capital for \$200 million.

Variety, which cited three unnamed sources for its report, said the identity of Sony's partner in the blockbuster deal-or even the existence of one-was not clear. Previous deals in the sector have involved investment outfits like Eldridge Industries, owned by Todd Boehly, who is chairman of Premier League football club Chelsea, and who also has a stake in the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team. Michael Jackson, who died in 2009 after decades of performing and recording, has one of the most financially lucrative back catalogues of any artist. —AFP