

Blu-Ray Review: HD Claustrophobia in Timeless ‘Das Boot’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 18, 2011 - 4:56pm

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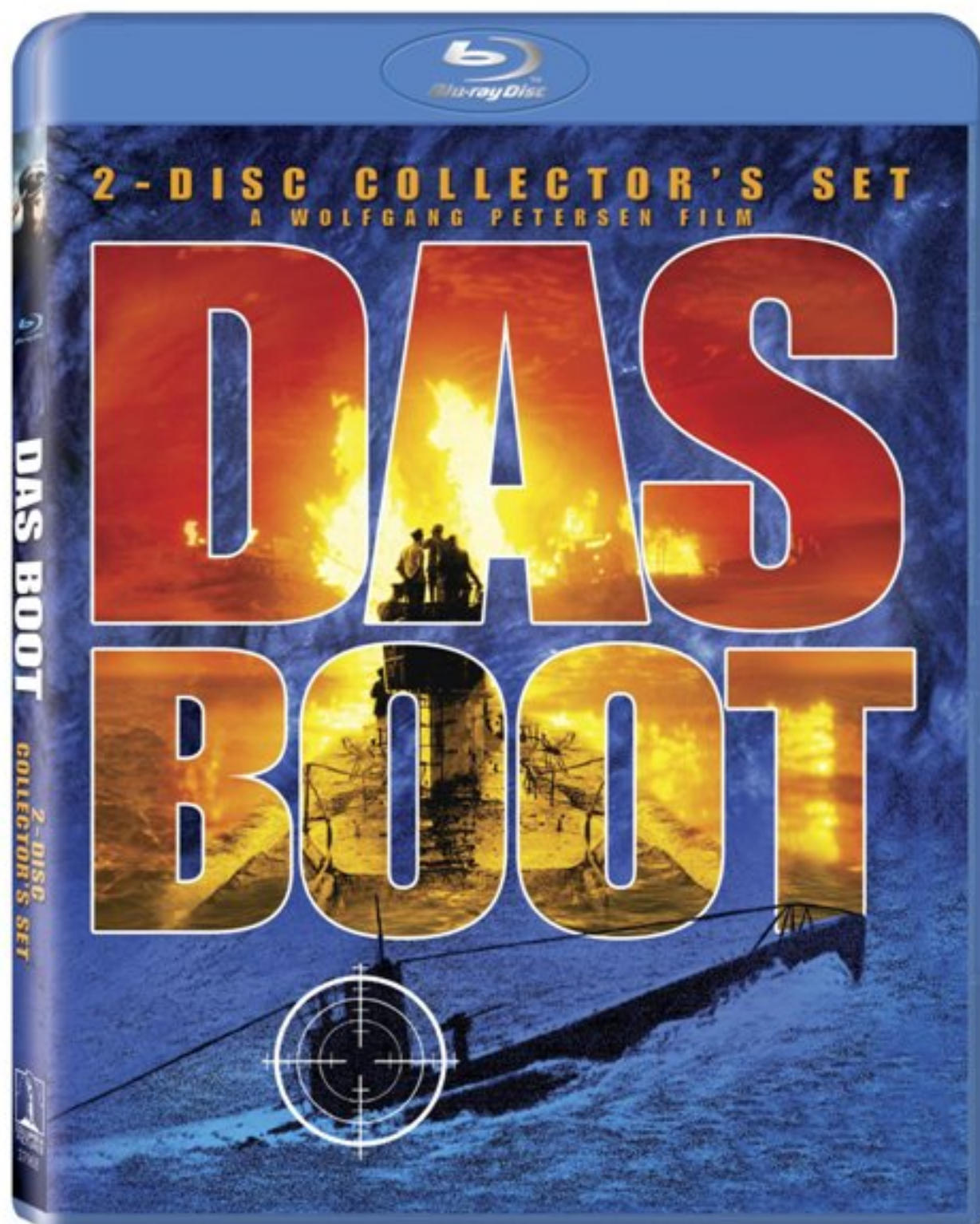
CHICAGO – When one lists the most successful and beloved foreign films ever made, strong consideration must be given to Wolfgang Petersen’s “Das Boot,” a brilliant exercise in controlled claustrophobia that places the viewer in a German submarine as air and sanity becomes in increasingly shorter supply. This timeless film was recently-released in a stellar two-disc set from Sony and it’s a must-own for fans of the hit film.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

You may not know the name Wolfgang Petersen but you almost certainly know his work as films like “In the Line of Fire,” “Air Force One,” and “The Perfect Storm” play in seemingly endless rotation on basic cable. He’s a fantastic director when it comes to how to pace an action film and he arguably did his best work in his breakthrough 1981 epic “Das Boot.” With one of the largest budgets in German history (reportedly just under \$20 million, an insane number even now much less thirty years ago), Petersen’s film became a true international phenomenon, grossing over \$10 million stateside with a reported \$80 million worldwide through its several releases.

The 149-minute theatrical version of “Das Boot” was nominated for an amazing six Oscars including Best Cinematography, Best Sound Effects Editing, Best Film Editing, Best Sound, and two nods for Petersen — Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Director. The sound design in the film is stunning, losing the Oscars to another master class in sound in “E.T.,” and the Cinematography arguably should have beaten the work on “Gandhi.” The film truly places you in a submarine as deadly inevitability crushes the hull around you.



Das Boot was released on Blu-ray on July 5th, 2011

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

How well has “Das Boot” held up? It still ranks highly with IMDB users, currently ranking #63 of ALL TIME, above widely-acknowledged classics like “Chinatown” and “Raging Bull.” This is a classic and if you haven’t seen it then you should correct that oversight immediately.

But which version? The new release includes both the 149-minute original stateside release and a director’s cut that runs approximately an hour longer. The film was originally produced for German television and included much more footage, running more like a mini-series than a film. Petersen recut the film after its initial release, claiming that this 208-minute version is what he intended all along. There’s even an original uncut version that reportedly runs 293 minutes that is not included here. The longer, director’s cut version naturally includes more character development but loses a bit in pacing. It’s worth seeing but I prefer the tighter, shorter version.

What’s really important about this release is that you can decide for yourself as Sony has wisely included both versions. And they have done so with spectacular HD video and audio. The movie looks like it could have been made yesterday, something which definitely cannot be said about most 1981 features. Special features are quality, including a new documentary, but what’s most notable is the transfer of the film itself. It’s a beauty. Pick it up and strap in tight. This ride has lost none of its power.

Special Features:

- o Wolfgang Petersen: Back To The Boat - Documentary
- o Going Deeper: Maria’s Take, The Perfect Boat - The Director’s Cut
- o Captain’s Tour - Inside the Boat
- o The Battle of the Atlantic (1983)
- o Behind the Scenes (1981)
- o Commentary with Director Wolfgang Petersen

“Das Boot” stars Jurgen Prochnow, Herbert Gronemeyer, and Klaus Wennemann. It was written and directed by Wolfgang Petersen. It was released in a two-disc Blu-ray collector’s set on July 5th, 2011.

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