Comments on Comments

S.O.S. Titanic’s historical commentary, while entertaining, is short on facts. Bruno Piola, Gregg Jasper and Randy Bryan Bigham team up to sort truth from fiction

Released in October 2020, the Blu-ray and DVD editions of the 1979 movie S.O.S. Titanic are already receiving a lot of praise from the Titanic community. The video sets, containing the theatrical version and the longer – and much rarer – TV cut, allow the viewer to experience this retelling of the sinking in the highest definition possible. Also available is a commentary audio track (on the theatrical cut only) which includes details of the real Titanic disaster. Unfortunately, what could have been an excellent source of information for those not familiar with the facts ends up being a disservice to viewers and not up to par with an otherwise very good home video product.

While we don’t critique the film itself in our comments, we do recognize its good points – the rare portrayal of life in Second Class aboard the ship, a more balanced depiction of J. Bruce Ismay and an atmospheric music score. The use of the Queen Mary as a scenic backdrop is interesting for some viewers, not so much for others. But its error-filled script, inaccurate portrayal of passengers and crew and romanticized, fictional storylines might prevent a complete enjoyment of the movie.

As to the commentator, we feel he was perhaps more of a passionate fan than a Titanic researcher. Whereas Evgueni Mlodik describes himself at the beginning of his commentary as a “historian on the RMS Titanic,” company Kino Lorber (which released the video sets) claims he is an expert on film. Given the mistakes he made and his lack of published work on the Titanic, we tend to agree with the latter. Don’t get us wrong: we believe Mlodik is knowledgeable in some areas and a lot of his comments are indeed factual and even fun to listen to. However, had he done more research, maybe he wouldn’t have made as many errors as he did in his commentary.

Below, we point out, chronologically, all the mistakes we identified on Mlodik’s audio track in order to set the record straight and prevent the spread of further misinformation. The numbers at the left indicate the timeframes in which the comments appear.

* * *

:38 – The commentator starts out with this statement: “What we’re seeing right now is a disclaimer - that all the historical figures you’re about to see in the film are 100% historically accurate. And that is almost true - let’s just say 99%.” - The disclaimer actually says the opposite. It states that the movie is a dramatization, not that it’s 100% historically accurate. And it is our opinion that the figures in the film are not even close to being 99% historically accurate.

Opening screen of S.O.S. Titanic stating that the movie is a dramatization.
3:15 – “...Bruce Ismay, the President of the White Star Line.” - Ismay was not the President of the White Star Line. He was the President of IMM and Chairman and Managing Director of WSL.

3:47 – “…John Jacob Astor and his child bride, Madeleine...” - Madeleine Astor was not a child bride. She was 18 years old when she married J.J. Astor and didn’t need the consent of a parent or judge.

![David Janssen as John Jacob Astor and Beverly Ross as Madeleine Astor at the top of the Titanic’s grand staircase. Madeleine was not a “child bride.”](image)

4:00 – “…the grand staircase that they chose to portray Titanic’s staircase, is...painted gold and green...” - The staircase in the Seaford House, used in the movie, isn’t painted green; it’s made of green marble.

5:14 – “Its sister ship, the Olympic, was built the year before and actually stole all the headlines.” - The Olympic wasn’t built the year before. Olympics’ keel was laid down in December 1908 and the ship was completed in May 1911. And the Olympic did not steal the Titanic’s headlines. The Titanic made its own headlines during its construction, launch, and the day she set sail on her maiden voyage.

5:24 – “So, as you see here, and in some other Titanic films, a lot of press is on board taking pictures, taking interviews – that actually did not happen on Titanic’s maiden voyage...” - This isn’t true. The press was on board taking pictures and interviewing passengers on sailing day. There’s a very famous picture of Lawrence Beesley in the gym, and the Countess of Rothes was interviewed as were other passengers.

7:48 – Regarding White Star employee Mary Sloan: “…I’m not sure if she was ever the maid for Madeleine Astor or if she was her stewardess.” - Sloan was a stewardess and not Mrs. Astor’s maid.

![Helen Mirren as Titanic Stewardess Mary Sloan in the Astors’ suite. She was not Mrs. Astor’s maid.](image)
8:11 – “The real Madeleine Astor was only 18 or 19 at the time of the disaster...” - She was 18. This information is readily available through a number of sources.

11:10 – “...the ship stopped to pick up more passengers in Queenstown, Ireland, now Cobh.” - Cobh should have been pronounced “Cove” by the commentator, not “Cup.”

April 11, 1912 - The Titanic at Queenstown (now Cobh – pronounced “Cove”), Ireland, the ship’s second port of call.

12:32 – “What we’re going to see right now is the glorious Cloris Leachman as Molly Brown...” “This is actually Cloris Leachman’s second time playing the unsinkable Molly Brown.” - Mrs. J.J. Brown wasn’t known as “Molly Brown” in 1912, nor was she known as “the unsinkable Molly Brown.” Margaret Brown never went by “Molly” in her lifetime. The press had started calling her “Mollie” toward the end of her life, but she never approved of its use.

Cloris Leachman as a flamboyant Margaret Brown on board the Titanic.

14:16 – “…if you look at the deck plans on the Titanic, the way to the Boat Deck for Third Class isn’t really blocked; it’s actually quite simple to get there from the Poop Deck – there’s an easy access to the Second Class Promenade that takes you to the stairwell up to the Boat Deck. But in the chaos, a lot of the stewards didn’t quite know the procedure to evacuate the passengers and lead them to the correct routes to the Boat Deck.” - There was no direct access from the Poop Deck to the Boat Deck. There were emergency ladders from the Well Deck to the Second Class Promenade on B Deck. And it wasn’t because of the chaos that a lot of stewards didn’t know the procedure – it appears that there wasn’t any procedure at all. And the route to the Boat Deck would have been a maze for Third Class passengers (especially with children) to navigate. They had no idea where to go and kept waiting for instructions.
15:05 – Regarding the filming of the Marvin wedding: “Daniel Marvin’s father did own a small production company…” “…either a few frames or the actual film still exists.” - First, Daniel Marvin’s father was the head of Biograph Studios, which was not a small production company but a major force in silent era filmmaking and where D.W. Griffith received his training. Second, there are a few frames left from the filming of the (recreation of the) Marvin wedding, but the film itself no longer exists.

Jerry Houser and Deborah Fallender as newlyweds Daniel and Mary Marvin on the First Class Promenade.

16:38 – Regarding one of the *Titanic*’s designers, Alexander Carlisle: “He later quit the project for creative differences, most likely due to the argument over how many lifeboats the ship needed to have.” - This rumor has been debunked many times. Carlisle did not quit due to an argument over lifeboats. He resigned in order to retire due to ill health.

17:05 – The commentator refers to Noëlle, Countess of Rothes as “the vampire lady.” - He is only joking, but it should be pointed out that she was not at all as the actress portrayed her in the film. Far from a sexpot or aloof glamour goddess, the real countess was a level-headed, kind-hearted woman who dressed unpretentiously.

Kate Howard as the Countess of Rothes entering the First Class Dining Saloon. The Countess did not dress like this.

17:08 – The Countess of Rothes is mispronounced as Roths. Her name is pronounced Roth-ez.

17:23 – Describing the Countess of Rothes: “She was more like the way Molly Brown is portrayed in most *Titanic* films.” - The Countess was very proper and modest as far as manners; she was not in any way close to how Margaret Brown is portrayed – big-mouth, brash, gossipy. She was pro-suffrage but was a quiet, calm, soft-spoken, elegant lady.
18:29 – “...the Cunard Line.” Cunard is mispronounced as Cunnard. It is pronounced Cue-naard.

19:15 – “I’ve got to say that Molly Brown’s outfit might be a little anachronistic. It seems almost Victorian in its gaudiness. Things got a little bit more casual and less gaudy towards 1912. They were slowly entering...the 20s.” - Her dress was a fashionable 1912 design, but more advanced than she would have likely worn. Dress styles in 1912 weren’t even close to the designs of the Victorian era and even less like those of the 1920s.

22:26 – Regarding a comment about Lawrence Beesley, author of the book *The Loss of the SS Titanic*: “He was fascinated with this young woman he saw boarding the ship in Southampton, as we saw earlier, which he called the Irish beauty.” - The Irish beauty boarded the *Titanic* in Queenstown, not Southampton, as we saw earlier.

23:44 – Describing the dancing in the Café Parisien: “There was actually no organized dancing on the *Titanic* and there weren’t really much of a dance floor, either.” - The commentator misses an opportunity to explain that there was definitely no dancing in First Class or Second Class but that there was in Third Class on the night of April 14th.

24:11 – “…the way the passengers dance, it’s almost like something from the roaring ‘20s...” - The commentator does not appear to know the history of popular dance, obviously, as the dancers were doing versions of 1910s Ragtime dances, probably the Bunny Hug, which was introduced in 1912. They weren’t 1920s dances.
“Once again, Molly Brown is wearing something that’s not quite appropriate for 1912.” - Margaret Brown was dressed in Tango clothes that weren’t far from this style in real life. She would not have really ever dressed this way, but it was basically the Tango fashion of the day for young women. She would have worn high heels, however, instead of flat shoes which were not fashionable in Edwardian era eveningwear.

24:23

26:37 – "I think she [Leigh Goodwin] is the only fictional character in the entire film.” - Goodwin is the only major fictional character, but there are other minor ones: Louise-Kate, the lady who snubs JJ Astor at Queenstown because she is a friend of Ava’s (JJ’s first wife), and the man dancing with Margaret Brown.

26:58 – “...no one could have foreseen such a freak accident as colliding with what was essentially sedimentary rock in the middle of the ocean and sideswiping against it and opening five whole compartments to the ocean.” - Actually, ship designers were well aware of icebergs and the damage they could do. And the iceberg opened six of the Titanic’s compartments, and possibly seven, not five.

28:50 – Lawrence Beesley and Leigh Goodwin are shown “...standing on the A Deck, which is the First Class.” “Technically, they should be standing over on the C Deck which is roughly the same area where the Second Class would have been.” - This isn’t correct. The open areas for Second Class passengers were the Boat Deck and B Deck.
30:07 – “I know it may sound shocking, but when the Titanic first sailed, there wasn’t much of a hoopla – no one really cared.” - Although there wasn’t nearly as much publicity as the Olympic attracted, The New York Times, The New York Herald, and other big dailies carried info and photos of the ship on their front pages the day the Titanic sailed. The Titanic was the largest ship in the world.

The Paris Herald of April 10, 1912 featured news of the Titanic’s maiden voyage.

30:37 – “At the time, there was a major coal strike happening in Europe...” - The coal strike was happening in the UK, not across Europe.

31:27 – “…the Olympic...ended up ramming a battleship...called the Hawke.” – The HMS Hawke was a cruiser, not a battleship. And the Olympic didn’t ram the Hawke - fortunately, the commentator corrects himself a few seconds later.

32:39 – “Right now, the smallest cruise ships sailing are actually twice the size of the Titanic.” - This isn’t correct. Today’s small cruise ships aren’t larger than the Titanic - not in gross tonnage, length or beam.

33:03 – In describing Madeleine Astor: “I think she kind of reveled in being a trophy wife.” - Madeleine Astor was not a trophy wife and didn’t enjoy the publicity of being married to J.J. Astor. One of the reasons for the Astors’ vacation abroad was to get away from the press.

34:24 – “Oh, day four, April 14th.” - Day four would have been April 13th. April 14th was day five.
34:30 – ”Now, Titanic did have some young boys on board that were working as the elevator boys and the bell hops, however, I don't think they were ever that young.” - Although the youngest lift attendants on Titanic were 17 years old, there were crew members, including bellboy William Albert Watson, who were just 14 years old, closer in age to the boy portrayed in the movie. In any case, ages of the ship's lift attendants are readily available in numerous credible sources.

35:23 – Describing the Titanic's propellers: “It wasn’t a two-propeller set-up; it wasn’t a four-propeller set-up; it was a three-propeller set-up. There was a propeller on each side and another propeller jammed in the middle behind the rudder, which proved to be kind of a hindrance when they were trying to maneuver around the iceberg.” - First, the third propeller wasn’t jammed in the middle. Second, it was in front of the rudder, not behind it. Third, the Titanic’s lack of maneuverability is a myth.

37:10 – “There were several passengers from Lebanon, shockingly most of whom survived.” - Lebanon did not exist as a country in 1912. It was part of Syria. And there were massive casualties among the Syrian passengers.

38:04 – ”The very first Titanic film was actually made literally three weeks after the sinking.” - Dorothy Gibson started her scenes on April 22nd, seven days after the disaster, and filming was completed a few days later. The movie was released on May 14, 1912, 29 days after the sinking.

Saved From The Titanic starring Dorothy Gibson was released May 14, 1912. This ad appeared in The Moving Picture World, May 11, 1912.

38:13 – Regarding survivor Dorothy Gibson: “She was a part-time film actress.” “...she had a complete mental breakdown, apparently...” - Gibson was a full-time actress and working part-time as a model for Harrison Fisher. She did not have “a complete mental breakdown,” but the filming of Saved From the Titanic was an emotional experience for her.

39:06 – Regarding the movie Dorothy Gibson made, after returning to New York, titled Saved From the Titanic: “Sadly, no known print of the movie survives. It was only a 10-minute-long, short film.” - Saved From the Titanic was about 12-15 minutes long, not 10. A negative was lost, but others may have survived as well as prints, but have yet to be discovered.
42:57 – “So 1998 was a really interesting year for Titanic. It was the year James Cameron’s movie came out...” - James Cameron’s Titanic was released in 1997.

43:44 – “The next one [Titanic film following In Nacht und Eis] was called Atlantic and it was made in 1929.” - The next known Titanic movie after In Nacht und Eis (released August 1912) was actually a French film called La Hantise (The Obsession) released in October 1912.

45:28 – “So, the next one [the Titanic in film following Atlantic] came out in 1943, also in Germany...” - The commentator failed to mention that the 1933 film Cavalcade included scenes aboard the Titanic.

Noel Coward’s Cavalcade (1933), which featured scenes set on the Titanic, won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

49:09 – “...Lusitania and Mauretania, which were built for speed, were nicknamed “the cocktail shakers” because they rattled uncomfortably because of how fast they were and because of how narrow they were.” - Although the Lusitania had a serious vibration problem, no credible source we know of claims the Cunarders were “cocktail shakers.”

49:48 – Comparing the Olympic and Titanic to large Cunard ships: “...the Olympic and Titanic...were very wide...” - Actually, the Olympic and Titanic were only a few inches wider than the large Cunarders, and the White Star liners were much narrower in proportion to their length than Cunard ships.

50:16 – Regarding the 1953 Hollywood movie, Titanic “...it was very heavily fictionalized and romanticized, even more than the German version.” - Really? Although 1953’s Titanic was very historically inaccurate, 1943’s Nazi Titanic was pure propaganda. The hero was a German First Officer named Petersen.

51:22 – Regarding the 1953 film Titanic: “…it actually inspired Walter Lord, a historian, to write his famous book A Night to Remember...it came out in 1956.” - Egad! The 1953 movie actually didn’t inspire Walter Lord to write A Night to Remember. He was inspired about the Titanic story while traveling on the Olympic when he was a young boy. It was his publisher who asked him to write a book about the Titanic because he knew of Lord’s interest. And Lord’s book was published in 1955, not 1956.
52:17 – Regarding the movie *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*: “...a hit film – well, not that much of a hit...” - *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* WAS a hit film, opening at Radio City Music Hall on July 16th and playing for 10 weeks to big business. By September 25th, the film set the box office record at the 32-year-old cinema by grossing over $2M dollars making it the first movie to pass the $2M mark in the theater’s history. It was the 8th highest-grossing movie of 1964 in the US.

The New York Times *ad and articles* for *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*.

54:55 – Regarding Frederick Fleet: “He had a very tragic life. He suffered major PTSD all of his life. He had a very unhappy life. He never fully recovered from the sinking and he was haunted by all of his life, it affected his marriage and eventually, after he was widowed, he committed suicide.” - Here the commentator is repeating myths and just making things up. There is no evidence that Fleet had a very tragic life, suffered from PTSD, was unhappy, never recovered, was haunted and that it affected his marriage. In Fleet’s correspondence with Ed Kamuda in the 1960s, he never mentioned any of this. He did say he was overworked, underpaid and always in debt, but that’s all. After the sinking of the Titanic, Fleet continued his maritime career for another 24 years. He did commit suicide after his wife died, but that was because his living situation with his brother-in-law had become unbearable; he had been told to move out and he could not find affordable housing.

59:18 – “This young actor is Christopher Strauli who is playing Howard Cottam, the operator on the *RMS Carpathia*...” - The wireless operator on the *Carpathia* was really named Harold Cottam.
1:00:36 – The commentator states that the original ABC presentation of *S.O.S. Titanic* opens with Cottam “…letting Captain Rostron of the *Carpathia* know of the distress…” - Actually, the TV movie opens with black-and-white footage and a bit of history about the *Titanic* by a narrator and then switches to color where we see icebergs and the *Carpathia* in motion.

*Opening sequence of the TV cut of S.O.S. Titanic.*

1:05:19 – Broadway producer “Henry Harris” was professionally known as Henry B. Harris, and that’s how he’s listed on the *Titanic’s* passenger manifest and passenger list.

1:05:33 – Regarding René Harris: “…she fell down the grand staircase and she broke her arm.” - She fell down the aft grand staircase near her cabin, C-83.

1:06:07 – The commentator finally states that Margaret Brown was not known as Molly “at the time.” Yay!

1:06:32 – “The ship’s band…did come out to play and entertain the passengers to calm them down at the grand staircase…” - The band did not play at the staircase - they played in the First Class Lounge first and later at the First Class Boat Deck entrance.

*Victor Langley as Bandmaster Wallace Hartley at the piano. The Titanic’s band did not play at the grand staircase and Hartley most likely did not play the piano.*
1:06:47 – “Here we see Wallace Hartley in the First Class area for some reason.” - The scene actually shows Lawrence Beesley, not Wallace Hartley.

David Warner as Lawrence Beesley inexplicably walking along First Class deck space.

1:07:51 – “Sadly, one child, a baby girl in First Class, Loraine Allison, died with her parents...” - Loraine Allison’s age was actually two years, ten months.

1:08:47 – “There were 12 dogs aboard the Titanic; sadly, only three survived.” - Actually, there is evidence of only 11 dogs aboard the Titanic.

1:12:17 – Here the commentator claims that the Harold Lowe/J. Bruce Ismay argument happened a “bit further aft” than where it is shown in the movie. - The commentator fails to inform that Boat 5, where the Lowe/Ismay incident took place, was located on the other side of the Titanic (the starboard side), and fairly toward the bow of the ship. To say it happened “a bit further aft” might make the viewers think this happened near the stern.

Karl Howard as Fifth Officer Harold Lowe arguing with J. Bruce Ismay, played by Ian Holm. On the real Titanic, this encounter took place on the other side of the ship.
1:12:46 – “...Eva Hart.” The commentator mispronounces Hart’s first name as “Ava.”

1:13:45 – “…someone misplaced the key to open the windows [on A Deck].” - The windows were opened by a removable crank, not a key, and the crank was not “misplaced.” It just took some time for the crew to retrieve it.

1:13:57 – “The group of people who were basically told to get into lifeboat number 4, all very wealthy, influential First Class female passengers...” - There were Second Class passengers, and possibly Third Class passengers, in this boat when it was lowered.

1:14:13 – “…someone finally broke open the windows [on A Deck]...” - The windows were not broken; they were finally opened using the crank.

Beverly Ross as Madeleine Astor in Boat 4 as it’s being lowered. It was not filled with just First Class ladies.

1:14:25 – Here, the commentator mispronounces Second Officer Charles Lightoller’s last name as “Lightoler.”

1:16:43 – Regarding Third Class passengers trying to make it to the Boat Deck: “There were some unfortunate incidents, for example, some man tried climbing over the railing from the lower aft decks onto the Boat Deck and he ended up getting, um, one of the sailors ended up sort of hitting him in the face with the back of a hatchet and that was recreated in James Cameron’s film but it was done at a stairwell and not on the Boat Deck.” - Here, the commentator appears to be mixing fact with fiction. The real-life incident he may be referring to occurred on the Boat Deck when Able Bodied Seaman Joseph Scarrott, in Boat 14, hit passengers with the tiller. In a fictional scene in Cameron’s film, the back of a hatchet was indeed used to hit Third Class passengers trying to break through a gate. There is no proof that the filmmaker based this scene on what happened at Boat 14 or any other real incident.

1:17:55 – Regarding Isidor Straus: “He was the owner of Macy’s...” - Straus was a co-owner, not the owner.

1:22:14 – “Collapsible D was rushed. There were several people from the Third Class - finally did make it onto the Boat Deck and they did rush the last boats.” - This unsubstantiated claim was made by survivor Jane Hoyt. There is no credible evidence that Third Class passengers rushed Collapsible D.

1:23:56 – “There’s also debate whether he [J. Bruce Ismay] crawled into the lifeboat [Boat C] or whether he was ordered into it.” - Ismay did not crawl into Boat C. He testified at the US and British Inquiry that nobody ordered him into the lifeboat and that he merely stepped in.

1:26:36 – “Milton Long died. If his body was recovered it was never identified.” - Long’s body was recovered by the Mackay-Bennett (no. 126). He was identified by his monogramed shirt and handkerchief, and his remains were forwarded to his family in Springfield, MA.
1:26:46 – “Sadly, over half the children in First Class died.” - All the children in First Class were saved except one – Loraine Allison - which he mentioned earlier in his commentary.

1:28:46 – “As for Captain Smith, he was last seen going into the bridge as the ship went under.” - This is a movie myth. Harold Bride saw Smith jump into the sea and several survivors claim to have seen him in the water.

1:31:49 – Regarding the fight between Margaret Brown and Quartermaster Hichens in Boat 6: “Countess of Rothes – she had a similar nasty experience with a steward in her lifeboat; lifeboat number 8.” - The Countess didn’t have a nasty experience with a crew member in Boat 8. Able Bodied Seaman Thomas Jones did, but we don’t know the identity of the man he argued with.

1:32:14 – “Only one lifeboat, with Officer Lowe, did go back to look for survivors but by the time they went back everyone was frozen. They only recovered maybe six people, one of whom died...” - Actually, two lifeboats rowed back to pick up survivors. Boat 14, with Harold Lowe in charge, picked up three or four people, one of whom died (William Hoyt). Boat 4, which was closer to the wreck site than Boat 14, also rowed back and picked up about seven or eight people.

1:33:30 – “There were some icebergs littered around, basically sprinkled around the area, but there were no huge ice shelves.” - Ice shelves? An ice shelf is a thick mass of floating ice that is attached to land. – Encyclopedia Britannica.

1:35:40 – “The people are still debating on how many people died and how many survived.” - The number of who died and who survived is no longer being debated.

1:36:48 – “He [J. Bruce Ismay] was in complete shock when he got out of Collapsible B onto the Carpathia.” - Ismay got out of Collapsible C, not B.

1:39:13 – “…no one anticipated as many icebergs in the area the Titanic was sailing through.” - It was well known at the time that there were more icebergs in the area than usual, and the Titanic received seven warnings from other ships on April 14th.

1:40:09 – “What happened to Titanic was just pure bad luck.” - It was not just bad luck. There were also outdated Board of Trade lifeboat rules, contradictory ways of commanding ships at the time (all speed ahead amidst ice), 24-hour telegraph service was still not enforced, etc.

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We have some comments about the errors made in the closing credits which are the fault of the movie studio.

The beginning of the closing credits.

“The Titanic sank with 2,220 passengers and crew. 1517 perished, 703 survived.” We now know that there were 2,208 passengers and crew. 1,496 were lost and 712 survived.

Some of the names are misspelled or incorrect:

“S. Stebbing” should be S. Stebbings
“Henry Harris” should be Henry B. Harris
“Joseph Murdoch” should be William Murdoch
“Fred Barret” should be Fred Barrett
“Katie Gilnagh” should be Kate Gilnagh
“Molly Brown” should be Margaret Brown
“May Sloan” should be Mary Sloan
“Kate Mullins” should be Catherine Mullin
“Madeline Astor” should be Madeleine Astor
“Laurence Beesley” should be Lawrence Beesley

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While we have focused on the more than 50 errors in S.O.S. Titanic’s commentary, we would be remiss to ignore some of the mistakes in the movie that might confuse viewers. A full recitation of these flubs lies beyond the scope of this article, but a few should be pointed out. First of all, on the day of the disaster, Sunday, April 14, a dateline of “Day 5, 12 April 1912” flashes onscreen at 39:11; the commentator does not mention this ridiculous error. Much later, at 1:24:44, Thomas Andrews is shown in the First Class Smoking Room and turns to look at a painting titled “The Approach of the New World.” Andrews was not inside the ship this late into the sinking, and by 1979 it was well-known that the painting in the smoking room was “Plymouth Harbour.” The commentator should have pointed this out.

As an overall observation, it struck us as especially irritating that Mlodik talked past much of the action in the film rather than explaining facts related to the people and events shown. He misses the introduction of Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Harris while talking about the Marvins and talks on and on about the Titanic leaving Southampton instead of referencing activity taking place in the Turkish Bath, the First Class Smoking Room and the Astor suite. Also, as scenes of Lawrence Beesley, the Harrises, and officers on the Bridge sail by, Mlodik chatters on about unrelated subjects. He even gives extraneous information as the ship strikes the iceberg and when the first distress rockets are fired. Elsewhere, he discusses other Titanic films instead of commenting on activity taking place on the screen. The stories about other Titanic movies are interesting, but it would have been better if these were included as an additional special feature.

In the final analysis, we feel that the historical commentary to S.O.S. Titanic fails as a well-informed, thoughtful assessment of the various events replicated onscreen and that Kino Lorber should have considered contracting with a published author who was better versed in both the Titanic disaster and social history in general. We do not aim to unduly criticize; we all make mistakes, but the sheer number made here is astonishing; these would have been substantially reduced had Mlodik consulted sources and kept notes of them for his commentary. Mlodik’s attempt, while sincere and not without some merit, was at times careless and amateurish. However informed he might be as a “film historian,” if that is even a true statement, he is clearly not an adept Titanic historian.

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Selected Bibliography


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