

# 'Storm' flounders mightily in film adaptation

By Karen Brown

Staff writer

Directed By: Wolfgang Peterson

With: George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio

Rated: R

Let me give you the hook, line and sinker about the atrocity that is "The Perfect Storm."

Sebastian Junger's semi-fiction docudrama worked as a book, but the story was not quite complex enough to work as a motion picture.

Perhaps the movie would have been saved if it stopped fishing in the dark for subject matter. What caused me such disappointment was that there was subject matter to be delved into if someone had wanted to delve. However, the adapted version opted to keep out the most interesting part of the actual storm.

In case you're confused, the most interesting part of "The Perfect Storm" is "What makes a perfect storm?" and that this storm took place near Massachusetts' Grand Banks in October 1991.

When Junger wrote "The Perfect Storm" he used the word "perfect" because, in the meteorological sense, it's a storm that could not possibly have been worse.

There were a couple of three-minute segments of a meteorologist saying a blip about a hurricane colliding with a cold front off of the Massachusetts' mainland. The meteorologist was enraptured in his computer graphics of the white clouds while the audience was given the three-minute, overly simplified version of what was happening.

But in America, we like ACTION, not relative facts.

As far as directing goes, I had this sinking feeling that the

"Blair Witch"-style of jittery camera techniques would drive movie fans away - and I was right. After getting seasick once and barfing on the guy next to me, the camera's shaking paled in comparison to my black eye as I scrambled out of the theater for my life.

Anyway, the film did excite me at first. I mean, here is the life of sword-fishermen in Massachusetts - a life completely foreign to my own. The special effects of the 100-foot "rogue" waves were nice as was the ever-present gray shade of the ocean and all it held. These items were quite ominous and served their looming, dooming purpose that something fishy is in the air.

But 45 minutes of the same thing is no fun. The movie simply gets repetitive and silly.

The music was sappy when the the hubbies say "Bye" to the wifies but it foreshadowed dangerous events, so the audience

could be a hundred percent certain that there was going to be danger ahead. The director, Wolfgang Peterson, obviously did not want this movie to contain any ANTICIPATION.

At one point there was loud music when the crew was spearing swordfish and I swear to Allah that I could hear faint dolphin cries mixed in with the tuba solo.

I cried a river of tears for those dead fish.

The thrill of the film is, of course, waiting to see if the crew of six lives or dies, but by the end, no one cares.

My enthusiasm drifted to sea after the 10,000th wave crashed into their boat, the Andrea Gail, after the crew, desperate for money, takes the risky journey with Billy (Clooney).

There was an odd chemistry between Billy and Bobby (Wahlberg) that the rest o' the boys on the boat didn't share.

Everyone on board was doing this for money, but Bobby seemed to have a touch of faith and love for the cap'n. He stands by him through everything (even the Chinese water torture) when the crew has had enough.

In the end a voice over (VO) infiltrated my senses and Wahlberg muses how only love is the answer.

The answer to what, we don't want to know.

Even though Clooney will reel the fans in as the scruffy, gruffy swordfish cap'n he can't keep the movie patrons from upchucking due to the horrible lines that keep gushing forth like an untamed river from Marky Mark Wahlberg's unshaven lips.

Clooney's sex appeal along with Wahlberg's patchy facial hair may rock YOU like a hurricane, but I'll stay at home drowning in my own sorrow.

Grade: 1

## 'Patriot' delivers historical war epic

By Bob Thomas

Associated Press Writer

Of all the major U.S. wars, the Revolutionary War has been the most overlooked by the movie industry.

Over the years, Hollywood studios have concluded that audiences cannot connect with characters in powdered wigs and three-cornered hats who shoot front-loading muskets. Now Columbia Pictures is striving to combat that notion with "The Patriot," a big-scale epic with Mel Gibson for box-office star power, playing a respected South Carolina landowner and widower

with seven growing children.

Gibson's Benjamin Martin is unswayed by the call to arms sparked by the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. The hidden reason: a hero in the French and Indian War, he is haunted by the atrocities of which he was a party.

His teen-age son, played by Heath Ledger, is eager to join the Continental Army, but his father forbids him.

The situation changes when British troops, led by a sadistic colonel played by Jason Isaacs, invade Gibson's plantation. After helplessly watching his family brutalized and his son carried off

to be hanged, Gibson regains his war fervor.

He organizes a ragtag militia and starts a guerrilla campaign that thwarts the Brits' plans for an easy victory in the South.

The redcoats are commanded by Gen. Cornwallis (the fine English actor Tom Wilkinson), who believes the colonists can be subdued by time-worn British army methods.

The fighting sequences are offset by Gibson's returns to his family, whose lives are threatened by the vindictive colonel. There is a hint of romance with his dead wife's sister (Charlotte Selton), but most of the time she is limited to casting fond looks.

Having fought the British centuries before in "Braveheart," Gibson brings the same intensity to "The Patriot." He aptly portrays the complex nature of a warrior turned pacifist who must take up arms again.

Ledger is effective as the militiaman's son, though his character is sketchily defined.

Wilkinson's Cornwallis dominates his scenes and would almost be likable except for his snobbish pigheadedness. And Isaacs is allowed to play the sadistic colonel way over the top.

Roland Emmerich ("Independence Day") directed "The Patriot" with his usual flourish, assisted by digital magic that can make the line of troops

Please see PATRIOT on 10

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