Directed by Wolfgang Petersen
Based on the novel by Lothar G. Buchheim
Original Music by Klaus Doldinger
Cinematography by Jost Vacano

Jürgen Prochnow...Capt.-Lt. Henrich Lehmann-Willenbrock
Herbert Grönemeyer...Lt. Werner - Correspondent
Klaus Wennemann...Chief Engineer Fritz Grade
Hubertus Bengsch...1st Lieutenant - Number One-1WO

Oscar nominations: best cinematography, best director, best effects/sound effects editing, best film editing, best sound, best writing screenplay based on material from another medium (that was the year that Gandhi took just about all the prizes except special effects, which went to E.T.)


HEINRICH LEHMANN-WILLENBROCK (11 December 1911—18 April 1986) (from Wikipedia): German naval officer, and a submarine commander during World War II. He was among the top ten Aces of the Deep during the Second Battle of the Atlantic against the Allies, in terms of tonnage of merchant ships sunk. He commanded four subs, most notable and successful of which was his tour commanding the U-96, a Type VII U-boat, which gained large recognition when one of its patrols was documented and publicized by an accompanying war correspondent Lothar-Günther Buchheim. It eventually would be made into a mini-series and film called Das Boot, where he was portrayed by Jürgen Prochnow... During three patrols under Willenbrock's command, U-96 sunk 125,580 tons of enemy shipping. The third patrol alone resulted in seven ships sunk, for 49,490 tons. The seventh patrol was the approximate time that Lothar-Günther Buchheim boarded U-96 and documented the boat's successes in his book Das Boot. Willenbrock earned all of his
medals during his patrols with U-96. Willenbrock left U-96 in March 1942 to be promoted to Korvettenkapitän and appointed Flottillenchef of the 9. Unterseebootsflotille, stationed in Brest. On September 2, 1944 he assumed command of U-256 and escaped the besieged Brest just a few days before the town's surrender. He reached Bergen, Norway on October 23. In Bergen he was appointed Flottillenchef of the 11. Unterseebootsflotille in December, and held the position until the German surrender in Norway on 9 May 1945. In 1982, Willenbrock accompanied Wolfgang Petersen and the Das Boot cast and crew as an advisor to the film. Afterwards, he returned to his home at Bremen, where he remained until his death. During his patrols with U-96, Willenbrock was awarded with the Iron Cross 2nd Class, the Iron Cross 1st Class, the U-Boot War Badge, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, and the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves for his achievements. He sank 24 ships for 170,237 gross register tons (GRT), damaged two ships for 15,864 GRT and damaged one ship as a total loss for 8,888 GRT.


HUBERTUS BENGSCH (10 July 1952, Berlin, Germany) appeared in 5 films and tv series, which were "Der Landarzt" (24 episodes, 1989-1992), "Das Boot" (1985), Das Boot (1981), Die Ratten (1977) (TV), and "Kyūtei Hanī" (1973).

Wolfgang Petersen, Hal Erickson, All Movie Guide: Breaking into the entertainment business in 1960 as assistant director for Hamburg's Ernst Deutsch Theatre, German filmmaker Wolfgang Petersen went on to Berlin's German Film and Television Academy. He kicked off his film directorial career in television, winning several awards in the process; his 1976 TV movie “For Your Love Only” served as the debut for actress Nastassja Kinski. Petersen's 1977 theatrical feature The Consequence, a discreetly handled study of male homosexuality which he both wrote and directed, won him praise on the international scene. In 1981, Petersen helmed Das Boot, a vastly popular wartime drama set on a German submarine; the film earned Petersen two Oscar nominations, one for directing, the other for best screenplay. Petersen made his English-language debut with the 1984 children's fantasy The Neverending Story and had his big stateside breakthrough with the blockbuster Clint Eastwood assassination thriller In the Line of Fire (1993). With his status as an A-list Hollywood director well established, Petersen next directed Dustin Hoffman and Rene Russo in 1995's Outbreak, a film that successfully played on the public's fear of the unseen threat inherent in communicable diseases like Ebola. While Outbreak was only a modest hit, Petersen scored very big just two years later when he helmed the Die Hard-on-the-President's-plane actioner Air Force One. Starring Harrison Ford and Gary Oldman, the film would go on to gross more than 300 million dollars worldwide. Anyone who thought Air Force One may have been a fluke for the filmmaker need look no further than Petersen's next film, the true high-seas adventure The Perfect Storm (2000). After back-to-back films that each passed the 300-million-dollar mark worldwide, Petersen had no problem securing a 185-million-dollar budget for 2004's Troy, a historical epic starring Brad Pitt.

Wolfgang Petersen, Audrey F. Kupferberg in Film Reference: In a review of Wolfgang Petersen's first theatrical feature, Einer von uns beiden—a suspense drama of romance, blackmail, and murder—a Variety critic noted that "After some 20 TV pix, many of them detective stories, Wolfgang Petersen is recognized as West Germany's leading action director in the Hollywood vein.

Not all of Petersen's early films fit into the action genre. The Consequence, for example, is a drama that charts the romantic relationship between an imprisoned gay male and the son of one of his guards. But Das Boot, the film which brought Petersen to international prominence, might easily have been a Hollywood-produced submarine movie spectacle. At the time of its release, Das Boot was the most expensive German film ever made; it originally was shot as a six-hour television mini-series, and was to become the highest-grossing foreign-language film ever released in the United States.

Das Boot is a breathtakingly filmed drama detailing the plight of a German U-boat patrolling the Atlantic during World War II. What is especially impressive about the film is that its scenario runs its course entirely within the tight confines of the vessel. With skill and precision, Petersen uses a Steadicam to visually capture the manner in which the claustrophobic quarters and the constant fear of going into battle affect the crew members, without allowing the lack of space to hamper his directorial style. Furthermore, the film takes on an antiwar aura in that there is an ever-present sense of the wastefulness of war, and the needlessness for the men to have to endure their experience aboard the U-boat. Ironically, Americans who see the film come to empathize with the various characters and
pull for their survival—even though, at the time in which the film is set, Germany was America’s enemy. *Das Boot* is at once an action-spectacle with a provocative point-of-view, a tremendously thrilling entertainment—and an impressive Hollywood calling card for Petersen.

The director's next noteworthy production (as well as first English-language feature) is *The NeverEnding Story*, a German-British-made fantasy about a boy who envisions the story he is reading in a book. Petersen effectively employs his skills as an action director as the book comes alive and a young hero takes on an evil wizard who has threatened to destroy the Kingdom of Fantasia. Unfortunately, the filmmaker faltered in his first two American-made films. *Enemy Mine* is a middling science-fiction tale, while *Shattered* is a just-adequate Hitchcock clone about a car crash victim attempting to patch together his life after becoming an amnesiac.

With *In the Line of Fire*, Petersen redeemed himself and proved that he is capable of making a smashingly entertaining, financially successful, big-budget Hollywood nail-biter. Clint Eastwood plays one of his best roles in a non-Eastwood directed film as an aging Secret Serviceman, haunted by his failure to come between President John F. Kennedy and an assassin's bullet in November 1963, who now must contend with a sadistic killer who aspires to murder the current U.S. chief executive. The director's follow-up, *Outbreak*, is another topical thriller, in which an army researcher (Dustin Hoffman) races to halt the spread of a killer virus. The film's limitations have to do with the script; what starts out as a credible thriller soon degenerates into a cartoon-like fantasy littered with counterfeet heroics. But Petersen's direction consistently is first-rate. By the late 1990s, the filmmaker was firmly entrenched as a director of slick, high-profile/high-budget Hollywood action-adventures. He returned to the U.S. president-in-danger theme with *Air Force One*, a topnotch thriller featuring Harrison Ford as a chief executive who, along with his family and staff, is taken hostage by Kazakhstani terrorists while on board the presidential plane. Petersen also directed one of the most anticipated movies of the year 2000, *The Perfect Storm*, based on Sebastian Junger's account of a fishing boat lost at sea in a huge storm.

**Das Boot**, from *Wikipedia*

*Das Boot* (*The Boat*) is a 1981 feature film directed by Wolfgang Petersen, adapted from a novel of the same name by Lothar-Günther Buchheim. Hans-Joachim Krug, former first officer on U-219, served as consultant, as did Heinrich Lehmann-Willenbrock, the captain of the real U-96.

The film is the story of a single patrol of one World War II U-boat, U-96, and its crew. It depicts both the excitement of battle and the tedium of the fruitless hunt, and shows the men serving aboard U-boats as ordinary individuals with a desire to do their best for their comrades and their country. The story is based on an amalgamation of the exploits of the real U-96, a Type VIIC-class U-boat commanded by Heinrich Lehmann-Willenbrock, one of Germany’s top U-boat “tonnage aces” during the war.

One of Petersen’s goals was to guide the audience through “a journey to the edge of the mind” (the film’s German tagline *Eine Reise ans Ende des Verstandes*), showing “what war is all about.” Petersen heightened suspense by very rarely showing any external views of the submarine unless it is running on the surface and relying on sounds to convey action outside the boat, thus showing the audience only the claustrophobic interior the crew would see.

The original 1981 version cost DM 32 million to make. The director’s meticulous attention to detail resulted in a historically accurate film that was a critical and financial success, grossing over $80 million ($190.3 million in 2009 prices) worldwide between its two releases in 1981 and 1997. Its high production cost ranks it among the most expensive films in the history of German cinema. It was the second most expensive up until that time, after *Metropolis.*
Plot
The story is told from the viewpoint of Lt. Werner (Herbert Grönemeyer), who has been assigned as a war correspondent on the German submarine U-96 in October 1941. In the opening scene he joins its Captain (Jürgen Prochnow), Chief Engineer (Klaus Wennemann), and the drunken crew in a French nightclub. Thomsen (Otto Sander), another crew’s captain, gives a crude drunken speech in which he mocks Adolf Hitler in celebration of his Ritterkreuz award.

The next morning, they sail out of the harbor to cheering crowds and a playing band. Werner is given a full tour of the boat and becomes acquainted with the tight quarters and the rest of the crew. As time passes, he observes ideological differences between the fresh crew members and the hardened veterans, particularly the Captain who is embittered and cynical about the war. The new members, including Werner, are often mocked by the rest of the crew, who share a tight bond. After days of boredom, the crew is excited by another U-boat’s spotting of a near-by enemy convoy. They soon locate a British destroyer but are bombarded with depth charges while preparing to attack. The explosions are deafening but the boat narrowly escapes with only light damage and they resurface safely a few hours later.

The next three weeks are spent enduring a relentless storm. Morale drops after what seems like an endless series of misfortunes, but the crew is cheered temporarily when it has a chance encounter with Thomsen’s boat. Shortly after the storm ends, the boat encounters a British convoy and quickly launches four torpedoes, successfully sinking two ships. However, they are spotted by a destroyer and must dive below the submarines’s rated limits to escape. The entire crew falls silent to minimize noise and avoid detection, and are repeatedly depth-charges. The Chief Mechanic, Johann, has a massive manic attack and has to be restrained. The boat sustains heavy damage but is eventually able to safely resurface in darkness. An enemy tanker remains afloat and on fire, so they torpedo the ship and watch as surviving British sailors desperately leap overboard, swimming towards them. Following orders not to take prisoners, the Captain gives the command to back the ship away. They start heading back towards La Rochelle with a nearly exhausted fuel supply.

The worn-out U-boat crew looks forward to returning home to La Rochelle in time for Christmas, but the ship is ordered to La Spezia, Italy, which means passing through the Strait of Gibraltar—an area firmly controlled by the Royal Navy. Fearing for their safety, the Captain orders Werner and the Chief engineer ashore, under the pretence that the Chief’s wife is seriously ill. The U-boat makes a secret night rendezvous at the harbor of Vigo, in neutral Spain, with the ISS Weser, an interned German merchant ship that clandestinely provides U-boats with fuel, torpedoes, and other supplies. The filthy officers seem out of place on the opulent luxury liner, but are warmly greeted by enthusiastic Nazi officers who are eager to hear their exploits. The Captain learns from secret agents on the supply ship that his request that Werner and the Chief be sent back has been denied.

The crew finishes resupplying and departs for Italy. As they carefully approach Gibraltar, and are just about to dive, they are suddenly attacked by a British fighter plane, wounding the Navigator. The Captain orders the boat directly south towards the African coast at full speed. British ships begin closing in and she is forced to dive. When attempting to level off, the boat does not respond and continues to sink until, just before crashing, it lands on a sea shelf. The crew must now make numerous repairs before running out of oxygen. After over sixteen hours, they are able to surface by blowing out their ballast of water, and limp home under the cover of darkness to La Rochelle.

The crew is pale and weary upon returning to La Rochelle on Christmas Eve. Shortly after the wounded navigator is taken ashore to a waiting ambulance, Allied planes strafe the facilities. Werner and some others take refuge in the secure U-boat bunker, though most of the men are wounded. After the raid, Werner exits the bunker and discovers the lifeless bodies of four crew members. He then finds the Captain, with multiple bullet wounds and bleeding from the mouth, watching the U-boat sink at the dock. The Captain collapses after the boat disappears under the water, and a horrified Werner rushes to his side.

Cast
Jürgen Prochnow as Captain (Kapitänleutnant/Kaleu/Der Alte): A 30-year-old battle-hardened sea veteran, who complains to Werner that most of his crew are boys. Despite being openly anti-Nazi, he is engaged to a “Nazi girl” (a widow of a Luftwaffe pilot). Prochnow later became one of the few German actors to establish themselves in Hollywood.

Herbert Grönemeyer as Lieutenant (Leutnant) Werner, War Correspondent: The naive, but honest narrator. Werner is mocked for his lack of U-boat experience. Grönemeyer was a popular German singer before the film and still is.

Klaus Wennemann as Chief Engineer (Leitender Ingenieur or LI): A quiet and well-respected man. At age 27, the oldest crew member besides the Captain. Tormented by the uncertain fate of his wife, especially after hearing about an Allied air raid on Cologne. The second most important crewman, as he oversees diving operations and makes sure the systems are running correctly. Wennemann later became the lead in a successful German detective series, Der Fahnder (the Investigator) before his death in 2000 from lung cancer.

Hubertus Bengsch as 1st Lieutenant/Watch Officer (IWO): A young, by-the-book officer, an ardent Nazi and a staunch believer in victory. He has a condescending attitude and is the only crewman who makes the effort to maintain his proper uniform. Raised on some wealth in Mexico by his step-parents who owned a plantation. His German fiancée died in a British carpet bombing raid. He spends his days writing his thoughts on military training and leadership for the High Command. Bengsch later became a
successful dubbing artist, providing (amongst others) the German voice of Richard Gere.

**Martin Semmelrogge as 1st Lieutenant/2nd Watch Officer (IIWO):** A vulgar comedic officer. One of his duties is to decode messages from base, using the Enigma code machine. The film started Semmelrogge’s successful film career.

**Berndt Tauber as Chief Helmsman (Obersteuermann):** Kriechbaum: The navigator and IIIWO (Third Watch Officer). Always slightly skeptical of the Captain, and shows no enthusiasm during the voyage, or any anger when a convoy is too far away to be attacked. Kriechbaum has four sons, with another on the way. He is wounded in an airplane attack at Gibraltar. Following the film, Tauber became a successful actor; one of his roles was the first HIV-positive character in West Germany television on Lindenstrasse.

**Erwin Leder as Chief Mechanic (Obermaschinist):** Johann: he is obsessed with a near fetish love for the U96’s engines. Suffers a temporary mental breakdown during an attack by two destroyers. He is able to redeem himself by valiantly working to stop water leaks when the boat is trapped underwater near Gibraltar. Speaks with a Bavarian accent. Leder appeared in the Gothic vampire film Underworld.

**Martin May as Cadet (Fähnrich) Ullmann:** A young officer candidate who has a pregnant French fiancée (which is considered treason by the French partisans) and worries about her safety. He is one of the few crew members with whom Werner is able to connect; Werner offers to deliver Ullmann’s stack of love letters when Werner is ordered to leave the submarine.

**Heinz Hoenig as Petty Officer (Maat) Hinrich:** The radiooperator, sonar controller and ship’s combat medic. He is in many ways the third most important crewman, since he gauges speed and direction of targets and enemy destroyers. Hinrich is one of the few officers that the Captain is able to relate to. Hoenig later became one of the most sought-after character faces in German films.

**Uwe Ochsenknecht as Chief Bosun (Bootsmann) Lamprecht:** The severe chief who shows Werner around the U-96, and supervises the firing and reloading of the torpedo tubes. He gets upset after hearing on the radio that the football team the crew supports are losing a match, and they will “never make the final now”. He speaks with a Hessian accent. The film started Ochsenknecht’s successful German film career.

**Claude-Oliver Rudolph as Ario:** The burly mechanic who tells everyone that Dufte is getting married to an ugly woman, and throws pictures around of Dufte’s fiancée in order to laugh at them both.

**Jan Fedder as Petty Office (Maat) Pilgrim:** Another sailor (watch officer and diving planes operator) gets almost swept off the submarine, breaks several ribs and is hospitalised for a while. Speaks with a Hamburg accent. Fedder later became lead in a successful light-hearted German police series, Grossstadtrevier.

**Ralf Richter as Petty Officer (Maat) Frenssen:** Pilgrim’s best friend. Pilgrim and Frenssen love to trade dirty jokes and stories. He speaks with a Ruhr Area accent.

**Joachim Bernhard as Theologian (Bibelforscher):** A religious officer who is constantly reading the Bible. He is punched by Frenssen when the submarine is trapped at the bottom of the Straits of Gibraltar for praying rather than repairing the boat. Bernhard is the brother of Semmelrogge and has not acted since the early 1990s.

**Oliver Stritzel as Schwalle:** The blond sailor who speaks with a Berlin accent. Along with live-action roles, Stritzel’s career has largely been dominated by voice-over work and dubbing.

**Jean-Claude Hoffmann as “Little” Benjamin:** A red-haired sailor who serves as a diving planes operator and watch officer.

**Lutz Schnell as Dufte:** The sailor who gets jeered at because he is getting married, and for a possible false airplane sighting. Schnell’s later career was dominated by voice-over work.

**Otto Sandler as Kapitänleutnant Phillip Thomsen:** An alcoholic and shell-shocked U-boat commander, who is a member of “The Old Guard”. When he is introduced, he is extremely drunk and briefly mocks Adolf Hitler on the stage of a French nightclub. Sometime after U-96 departs, Thomsen is deployed once again and the two submarines meet randomly in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. After failing to make contact later, the Captain is forced to report to HQ that Thomsen is missing. Otto Sander is one of Germany’s most prolific character actors, including the angel Cassiel in Wings of Desire alongside Bruno Ganz.

**Günter Lamprecht as Captain of the Weser:** An enthusiastic Nazi officer aboard the resupply ship Weser. He mistakes the 1WO for the Captain as they enter the ship’s elegant dining room, and complains about the frustration of not being able to fight, but boasts about the food that has been prepared for the crew, and the ship’s “specialities”. Lamprecht went on to have a successful career in German cinema and television, including a supporting role in Comedian Marmonists alongside Otto Sander.

**Sky du Mont (uncredited) as Officer Aboard the Weser:** An officer aboard the Weser whom the 2WO amuses with a comical demonstration of depth charging. Du Mont narrates the German dub of Thomas and Friends and appeared in the film Night Crossing, about an infamous escape from East Germany, as well as Stanley Kubrick’s Eyes Wide Shut.
The film features characters who speak German with regional dialects. Director Wolfgang Petersen states in his DVD audio commentary that young men from throughout Germany and Austria were recruited for the film, as he wanted faces and accents that would accurately reflect the diversity of the Third Reich, circa 1941. All of the main actors speak English as well as German, and when the film was dubbed into English, each actor recorded his own part (with the exception of Martin Semmelrogge, who only dubbed his own role in the Director’s Cut). The German version is dubbed as well, as the film was shot “silent”, because the dialogue spoken on-set would have been drowned out by the gyroscopes in the special camera developed for filming. While several actors went on to even greater success, Wolfgang Petersen established himself as a long-standing fixture as a Hollywood director and producer.

Production
Production of Das Boot took two years (1979-1981). Most of the filming was done in one year; to make the appearance of the actors as realistic as possible, scenes were filmed in sequence over the course of the year. This ensured natural growth of beards and hair, increasing skin pallor, and signs of strain on the actors, who had, just like real U-boat men, spent many months in a cramped, unhealthy atmosphere.

Production for this film originally began in 1976. Several American directors were considered, and the Kaleu (Kapitänleutnant) was to be played by Robert Redford. Disagreements sprang up among various parties and the project was shelved. Another Hollywood production was attempted with other American directors in mind, this time with the Kaleu to be portrayed by Paul Newman. This effort primarily failed due to technical concerns, for example, how to film the close encounter of the two German submarines at sea during a storm.

The final scene of the captain collapsing gives the impression that he died from his injuries, which was the director’s intention. However, the real captain actually survived and visited the submarine set and met with Jürgen Prochnow during filming.

Sets and models
Several different sets were used. Two full-size mock-ups of a Type VIIC boat were built, one representing the portion above water for use in outdoor scenes, and the other a cylindrical tube on a motion mount for the interior scenes. The mock-ups were built according to U-boat plans from Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry.

The outdoor mock-up was basically a shell propelled with a small engine, and stationed in La Rochelle, France and has a history of its own. One morning the production crew walked out to where they kept it afloat and found it missing. Someone had forgotten to inform the crew that an American filmmaker had rented the mock-up for his own film shooting in the area. This filmmaker was Steven Spielberg and the film he was shooting was Raiders of the Lost Ark. A few weeks later, during production, the mock-up cracked in a storm and sank, was recovered and patched to stand in for the final scenes. Contrary to what some may believe, the full-size mock-up was used during the Gibraltar resurface scenes; the bomber plane (a Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber) were real while the British ships were models.

A mock-up of a conning tower was placed in a water tank at the Bavaria Studios in Munich for outdoor scenes not requiring a full view of the boat’s exterior. When filming on the outdoor mockup or the conning tower, jets of cold water were hosed over the actors to simulate the breaking ocean waves. During the filming there is a scene where actor Jan Fedder (Pilgrim) falls off the bridge while the U-boat is surfaced and breaks several ribs. This scene was not scripted and during the take one of the actors exclaims “Mann über Bord!” in order to draw attention to Fedder. Petersen, who at first did not realise this was an accident said, “Good idea, Jan. we’ll do that one more time!” However, since Fedder was genuinely injured and had to be hospitalised, this was the only take available and eventually Petersen kept this scene in the film. In this scene, the pained expression on Fedder’s face is authentic and not acted. Petersen also had to rewrite Fedder’s character for a portion of the film so that the character was portrayed as bedridden. For his scenes later in the film Fedder had to be brought to and from the set from the hospital since he suffered a concussion while filming his accident scene. Fedder eventually recovered enough and Pilgrim is seen on his feet from the scene when the U-96 abandons the British sailors. A half-sized full hull operating model was used for underwater shots and some surface running shots, in particular the meeting in stormy seas with another U-boat. The tank was also used for the shots of British sailors jumping from their ships; a small portion of the tanker hull was constructed for these shots.

The interior U-boat mock-up was mounted five metres off the floor and was shaken, rocked, and tilted up to 45 degrees by means of a hydraulic apparatus, and was vigorously shaken to simulate depth charge attacks. Petersen was admittedly obsessive about the structural detail of the U-boat set, remarking that “every screw” in the set was an authentic facsimile of the kind used in a World War II U-boat. In this he was considerably assisted by the numerous photographs Lothar-Günther Buchheim took during his own voyage on the historical U-96, some of which had been published in his 1976 book, U-Boot-Krieg (“U-Boot War”).

Special camera
Most of the interior shots were filmed using a hand-held Arriflex of cinematographer Jost Vacano’s design to convey the claustrophobic atmosphere of the boat. It had two gyroscopes to provide stability, a reinvention of the Steadicam on a smaller scale, so that it could be carried throughout the interior of the mock-up. Vacano wore full-body padding to minimise injury as he ran and the mock-up was rocked and shaken. The gyroscopes used to stabilize his rig were very noisy, and most of the film had to be dubbed as the location sound was unusable.

Throughout the filming, the actors were forbidden to go out into the sunlight, to create the pallor of men who seldom saw
the sun during their missions. The actors went through intensive training to learn how to move quickly through the narrow confines of the vessel.

**Versions**

Several versions of the film and video releases have been made:

The first version to be released was the theatrical 150-minute (2 ½ hour) cut, released to theatres in Germany in 1981, and in the United States in 1982. It was nominated for six Academy Awards (Cinematography, Directing, Film Editing, Sound, Sound Effects Editing, and Writing).

The film was partly financed by the German television broadcasters WDR and the SDR, and much more footage had been shot for the film than was shown in the theatrical version. A version of three 100 minute episodes was transmitted on BBC Two in the United Kingdom in October 1984, and in Germany and Austria the following year. In 1988 a version comprising six 50 minute episodes was screened. These episodes had additional cutback scenes summarising past episodes.

Petersen then oversaw the editing of six hours of film, from which was distilled Das Boot: The Director’s Cut, 209 minutes long (3 hours, 29 minutes), released in 1997, which combines the action sequences seen in the feature-length version with character development scenes contained in the mini-series. This release also provides better sound and video quality. Petersen originally had planned to release this version in 1981, which for commercial reasons was not possible. The Director’s Cut was released to cinemas in Germany on December 11 and on April 4, 1997 in the U.S.

The uncut miniseries version, running 293 minutes (four hours, 53 minutes), was released to DVD on June 1, 2004, as Das Boot: The Original Uncut Version with enhanced video and audio quality. It omits the cutback scenes of the 1988 television broadcast and is therefore shorter. In addition to the “Director’s Cut” DVD, a Superbit version, with fewer additional DVD features but a higher bit-rate (superior quality), has been released by Columbia Pictures.

**Reception**

The film drew high critical acclaim and is seen as one of the greatest of all German films, along with Nosferatu by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Metropolis by Fritz Lang, Der Blaue Engel with Marlene Dietrich and Das Leben der Anderen by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. It is regarded at the forefront among the subgenre of submarine films.…. 

**Historical accuracy**

In the film, there is only one ardent Nazi in the crew of 40, namely the First Watch Officer (referred to comically in one scene as *Unser Hitlerjugendführer* or “Our Hitler Youth Leader”), with the rest of the officers either indifferent or openly anti-Nazi (the Captain). The enlisted sailors and NCO are portrayed as apolitical In his book *Iron Coffins*, former U-boat commander Herbert A Werner states that the selection of naval personnel based on their loyalty to the party only occurred later in the war (from 1943 onward), when the U-boats were suffering high casualties. At that stage in the war, morale was declining and this degree of skepticism may or may not have occurred. (In support of Das Boot on this subject, U-boat historian Michael Gannon maintains that the U-boat navy was one of the least pro-Nazi branches of the German armed forces.)

Even though the beginning and the end of the film occur in the port of La Rochelle, it does not correspond historically. The submarine base in La Rochelle was not functional before November 1941, and at the time of the film the port was dried up. Moreover, none of the British fighter-bombers of late 1941 to early 1942 had the range to bomb La Rochelle from bases in the U.K.; however, it is possible the fighters were carrier-based and not land based. While Saint-Nazaire was the base used in the novel, the film was changed to La Rochelle because its appearance had not changed to such a large degree in the years since World War II.

**Soundtrack**

The characteristic lead melody of the soundtrack, written by composer Klaus Dolinger, took on a life of its own after German rave producer Alex Christensen created a remixed techno version under the title U96 in 1991. The song "Das Boot" later became an international hit.

Three very prominent songs of the film were not included in the official soundtrack: “J’attendrai” sung by Rina Ketty, the Erzherzog-Albrecht-Marsch and “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” performed by the Red Army Chorus.

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Apr 13  Federico Fellini, *Ginger & Fred*, 1985
Apr 20 Michael Mann, *Collateral* 2004

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with support from the Robert and Patricia Colby Foundation and the Buffalo News