

# MARTIN EDEN

Italy/France (2019) 109 minutes

**Director:** Pietro Marcello

**Cast:** Luca Marinelli (Martin Eden)  
Jessica Cressy (Elena Orsini)  
Carlo Cecchi (Russ Brissenden)



**Screening 14th September 2022 at Swindon Arts Centre**

## Synopsis

Martin Eden, a young sailor, is welcomed with open arms into an industrial middle-class liberal family after rescuing the family's young heir, Arturo, from a violent attack. In their home, Martin crosses paths with Arturo's enchanting sister Elena, and romance blossoms. He then aspires to transcend his humble beginnings and succeed as a writer, all to be worthy of Elena's hand.

## Reviews



The entirety of the 20th century — its promises, illusions and traumas — sweeps through the audacious and thrilling *Martin Eden*. An ingenious adaptation of the Jack London novel, the film follows its title character, a humble young man as he embarks on a program of self-improvement. Martin strives to change and advance and succeeds. But his rags-to-riches path with its hard work, perseverance and bourgeois education, proves far more complicated and finally more shattering than most upward-mobility fairy tales...

The story opens when Martin, a sailor, is still rough clay. He's a beautiful and raw masculine specimen...

Marcello's boldest conceptual move is to blur the story's historical timeline, which he does through brilliant editing, archival footage and playing with the usual period cues. Historical forces swirl and churn, ebbing and flowing as Martin continues on his quest for self-improvement.

*Manohla Dargis, The New York Times*

The terrible loneliness of success is the subject of this absorbing movie, equal in some strange way to the loneliness of failure; it's also about the secret and shameful feeling that failure is the one truthful state of being, which the successful person has had to renounce.

*Martin Eden* is also about capitalism and enterprise and the great 20th-century promise that hard work and an audacious gamble on a certain career path at the start of one's life can carry anyone, however lowly born, on to riches.

And more importantly, it is about the dizzying promise that the mass communication made possible by commerce will make art itself lucrative: that actually writing novels, capturing the imagination of millions, could exalt you to heroic celebrity.

*Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian*

## Film Facts

- *Martin Eden* is a free adaptation of the 1909 novel by Jack London, author of *The Call of the Wild* and himself one of the first authors to make a fortune from writing. Marcello has transplanted the action from California to Naples, but kept the English name of his hero.
- The film was selected to compete for the Golden Lion at the 76th Venice International Film Festival where Luca Marinelli won the Volpi Cup for Best Actor.
- Luca Marinelli is known for *The Old Guard* (2020), *They Call Me Jeeg* (2015) and *Martin Eden* (2019).

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