

Martin Eden

A film by
Pietro Marcello



129 min Italy/France/Italian with English subtitles/2019/Cert. TBC
Venice International Film Festival World Premiere 2019 (Official Competition)
Venice International Film Festival Winner – Best Actor
Toronto International Film Festival Winner – Platform Prize

Release
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SYNOPSIS:

Martin Eden (Luca Marinelli), comes from Naples' working class, but his fate is changed forever when he defends a young boy from a beating by a security guard on the docks. The boy repays him for his kindness by inviting him into his bourgeois home, and it is there that Martin meets Elena (Jessica Cressy), the daughter of an upper-crust industrial family. It is love at first sight for Eden, seduced by her education and refinement. Martin's dream of becoming an accomplished writer is now something he hopes will elevate him to the family's social standing and marriage with Elena. He proves himself quickly as an autodidact, but grapples with politics under the influence of a left-wing journalist, Russ Brissenden (Carlo Cecchi), who guides him deeper into socialist circles. It results not only in a political reawakening, but also to a split with Elena and her elite world. However, his eventual success as a writer leads him into new problems.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [here](#)



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CAST

Martin Eden
Elena Orsini
Margherita
Nino
Maria
Russ Brissenden
Giulia Eden
Bernardo Fiore
Mathilde Orsini
Sgr Orsini

LUCA MARINELLI
JESSICA CRESSY
DENISE SARDISCO
VINCENZO NEMOLATO
CARMEN POMMELLA
CARLO CECCHI
AUTILIA RANIERI
MARCO LEONARDI
ELISABETTA VALGOI
PIETRO RAGUSA

CREW

Director
Screenplay
Editor
Cinematographer
Archive
Music

Sound Editor
Executive Producers

Production Companies
Co-Production Companies
In Co-Production with
In association with
Supported by

PIETRO MARCELLO
MAURIZIO BRAUCCI, PIETRO MARCELLO
ALINE HERVÉ, FRABRIZIO FEDERICO
FRANCESCO DI GIACOMO, ALESSANDRO ABATE
ALESSIA PETITTO
MARCO MESSINA E SACHA RICCI (ERA)
PAOLO MARZOCCHI
STEFANO GROSSO
DARIO ZONTA, ALESSIO LAZZARESCHI
MICHEL MERKT
AVVENTUROSA, IBC MOVIE with RAI CINEMA
SHELLAC SUD, MATCH FACTORY PRODUCTIONS
BAYERISCHER RUNDFUNK
ARTE
MIBAC - DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA
REGIONE CAMPANIA, FILM COMMISSION REGIONE CAMPANIA
REGIONE LAZIO - FONDO REGIONALE PER
II CINEMA E L'AUDIOVISIVO
L'AIDE AUX CINÉMAS DU MONDE - CNC
INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
MITTELDEUTSCHE MEDIENFÖRDERUNG
FONDO BILATERALE PER LO SVILUPPO DI OPERE
CINEMATOGRAFICHE ITALO-FRANCESI MIBAC - CNC
LA REGION SUD PROVENCE ALPES CÔTE D'AZUR
in participation with CNC

129 min / Italy/France / Italian dialogue / 2019 / 1.85:1 / shot on 16mm / 5.1

PIETRO MARCELLO

Born in Caserta on July 2, 1976, Pietro Marcello studied painting at the Accademia di Belle Arti and was one of the founders of the DAMM community centre in the Montesanto district of Naples. In 2007, Pietro's *Crossing the Line* was screened in the Orizzonti section of the 64th Venice International Film Festival. In 2009, he directed his first feature, *The Mouth of the Wolf*, winner of the 27th Turin Film Festival, the Caligari and Teddy prizes at the Berlin International Film Festival and the David di Donatello and Nastro d'Argento awards for best documentary. In 2011, he directed *The Silence of Pelesjan*, which was presented at the 68th Venice International Film Festival. In 2015, he directed *Lost and Beautiful*, which was screened in competition at the Locarno Festival and took home the Göteborg Film Festival's Bergman Award and the Nastro d'Argento for Best Documentary. Pietro Marcello's latest feature, *Martin Eden*, screened in competition at the 76th Venice Film Festival and where Luca Marinelli received the award for Best Actor. It then won the Platform Prize at the Toronto Film Festival where the jury commented:

"A politically and philosophically provocative story told with extraordinary cinematic invention and grace, this film reaffirms a faith that is easy to lose in 2019: that the cinema we know is an iceberg with nine-tenths still remaining to be discovered."

FILMOGRAPHY

2019: *Martin Eden*

2015: *Lost and Beautiful* (Bella e Perduta)

2014: *L'umile Italia* (Short)

2011: *The Silence of Peleshian* (Il Silenzio di Pelešjan)

2009: *The Mouth of The Wolf* (La Bocca del Lupo)

2007: *Crossing the Line* (Il Passaggio della Linea) (Documentary)

2005: *La baracca* (Short)

2004: *Il cantiere* (Short)

2003: *Scampia* (Short)

2003: *Carta* (Short)



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Martin Eden tells our story, the story of people who weren't educated by their families or in school, but on the road. It's the novel of the self-taught and those who believed in education as an instrument of emancipation, but were somehow let down by it. Going beyond this first reading, however, *Martin Eden* not only tells the story of a young proletarian who falls in love with a young woman of a higher social class and begins to dream of becoming a writer, but it also paints the portrait of a successful artist (a shadowy self-portrait of Jack London himself), who inevitably loses the sense of his own art. We loosely interpreted London's novel and took *Martin Eden* to be a fresco that foresaw the 20th-century's perversions and torments, as well as its crucial themes: the relationship between the individual and society, the role of mass culture and the class struggle. In the movie, the parable of the negative hero created by London opens with footage of the anarchist Errico Malatesta and then draws parallels with the lives and works of the *poète maudit* writers of the 1900s, from Vladimir Mayakovsky to Stig Dagerman and Nora May French. We imagined our Martin crossing the 1900s, or rather a synthesis, a dreamlike transposition of the 20th century, without time constraints, no longer in the original California of the novel but in a Naples that could be any city, anywhere in the world.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE - Martin Eden (translation Diane Gabrysiak)

Since my first film, *Il passaggio della linea*, a documentary on night trains in Italy, I have always attempted to focus my creative research on the life of the humble and the oppressed. This world is part of my own experience of life. It is also a starting point I share with Maurizio Braucci who wrote *Bella e perduta* with me and has accompanied me throughout the project of adapting *Martin Eden*. Jack London's novel was for all of us a *bildungsroman*, the book that most influenced our youth and our dreams in determining our vision of the world. I have thought about this film for a very long time, and we eventually worked on making it happen, by developing a topic around which we wrote a script, in a state of grace. With *Martin Eden*, my ambition was to cross a new line and exceed my own creative borders through fiction. In the making of this ambitious project, I never wanted to lose contact with the real, I wanted instead to start from the real.

A central theme lies at the core of Jack London's *Martin Eden*: class struggle through culture, a phenomenon that was made possible by the spread of mass education for the proletariat in the second half of the nineteenth century.

During the one hundred and fifty years, when culture was no longer an exclusive monopoly of the bourgeoisie, the character and trajectory of Martin Eden became the metaphor of these artists who, coming from more modest classes of society, betrayed their class once they had entered 'the court', to embrace the style and the cause of the bourgeoisie. Other artists decided to be faithful to their ideals, while being confronted with the consequences that often pushed them into isolation or led them to madness or to death. In the script, the story of Martin Eden begins with the final days of his life. The story is told with an elliptical narration, through a series of flashbacks recounting Martin's trajectory before he encounters success.

The film is not intended to be a simple adaptation of Jack London's novel set within a contemporary context. This would have risked defusing the reflexive power at the centre of the story. It was important to render with precision the introspective and analytical dimensions that are fundamental to literature. With this goal in mind, some passages from Jack London's book form an integral part of the film, especially in sequences led by various characters whose function is to illustrate the essential moments of the main character's life as well as his aesthetic and political thinking.

As in the *Martin Eden* novel, partly based on Jack London's biography, life and narration overlap each other inextricably. It is the same in the film, in which an imaginary layer is articulated to a layer of reality and serves to give continuity to the historical process within a single flux.

The filmic universe of *Martin Eden* is drawn from my imagination through references to painting and late Nineteenth century photography, and in the choice of locations that can offer the same kind of density and historical reflection. I decided to adapt the story in an imaginary city for which Naples, because of its colours, its relation to the sea, and the social and political dynamics, is the closest reference. But Naples is only one element in a collage: the city of *Martin Eden* is in fact a European port city, not a specific place but rather a space reflecting the spirit and atmosphere of large southern cities.

The saga that is the story of the young sailor with humble origins who, whilst trying to ascend socially, betrays his class, is an eternal story. I am convinced that this tale can still speak to new generations today. This perpetuity offers infinite possibilities of historical associations and, as I see it, it espouses twentieth century history. It is the century of great historical discoveries which brought about, on the one hand, progress and the affirmation of mass culture and on the other, the consolidation of individualistic values.

The idea was to navigate freely in twentieth century history, to draw historical, political, aesthetic elements from different periods in order to create an autonomous chronological dimension in relation to space and time, but whose closest reference would be the 1980s. The reason is not only aesthetic, it aims to exacerbate the feelings created by certain scenes and sequences, or in the characters' energy, as in, for example, the passion for socialism, the conflicts with Spencer's theories or the desire for revenge. As for the aristocracy who found a new impetus in its elitist role at the beginning of the century, the proletariat looked for a way to climb the social ladder through small enterprise in the 1950s. This is how an independent universe finds its form in a fable of the twentieth century.

This narrative device, as much as the aesthetic device, result from an intention to listen to memory, to history and to the territories of Italy and Europe of yesterday and today: to find a relation, a link from which to begin again with knowledge of the past and with determination.



LUCA MARINELLI

Born in Rome in 1984, Luca Marinelli enrolled in the city's Silvio D'Amico Accademia Nazionale D'Arte Drammatica, graduating in 2009. He has been a voice-over artist from an early age, but his acting career began in 2006. He has been cast in various theatrical roles. During a performance of a play, the director Saverio Costanzo noticed Marinelli and cast him as Mattia, the protagonist of *The Solitude of Prime Numbers* (2010). The film was shown in competition at the 67th Venice Film Festival. In 2011, he returned to Venice competition with *The Last Man on Earth*, directed by Gianni Pacinotti (better known as Gipi), with a convincing performance as a transsexual. RAI spotted the talented Marinelli and cast him alongside Paz Vega and others as St. Joseph in Giacomo Campiotti's international co-production *Maria*. His work in television continued in 2014 with the film *A Dangerous Fortune* for the German market, followed by *Trust* (2017), directed by Danny Boyle, playing alongside Donald Sutherland. He worked with Paolo Sorrentino on *The Great Beauty* in 2012. At the 2013 Berlinale, Luca was the European Film Promotion's Shooting Star as one of the top ten talents in European cinema. Other collaborations included the leading role in *Una Questione Privata* by Paolo Taviani. More recently he was in the *The Old Guard* by Gina Prince-Bythewood, alongside Charlize Theron.



JESSICA CRESSY

Jessica Cressy was born and raised in Paris. She is the protagonist of the video series *Capri Rendez-Vous*, directed by Francesco Lettieri to accompany the five new songs by *Liberato*. She worked with Simone Spada on his movie *Tomorrow is Another Day*. Jessica can be seen in a new Netflix movie to be directed by Elisa Fuksas. She also took part in the sequel *Calibro 9*, directed by Toni D'Angelo.



DENISE SARDISCO

At a very young age, Denise Sardisco moved from Sicily to Rome, where she studied acting. She continues to develop her skills and spends time in both Italy and Spain, where she's learning Spanish and studying acting in Spanish. Sardisco initially worked in theatre and television with director Daniele Vicari in *Before Nightfall* (2017) and with Marco Pontecorvo in *Carlo & Malick* (2018). *Martin Eden* is her first role in a feature film.

