

Titanic revisited

Raise the Titanic by Clive Cussler, Bantam Books, New York, 1976.

by Judith Pratt

Like most dust covers, the one accompanying the new thriller **Raise the Titanic** is blustering and preposterous. Hailed as a "riveting tale of suspense", this new novel by Clive Cussler is, at best, an interesting piece of outlandish fiction. It is a conglomeration of all suspense novels; it enjoys the interference of Russians, double agents, the President of the United States (who is also the sexual target in 1987 Washington female circles), a scientific organization, a secret government defense agency, the CIA, the FBI, and the traditional superbly beautiful woman. The hero, although he appears only sporadically in the first half of the book, is a hard-drinking, indestructible special projects director for the government's scientific organization, who also appears in another Cussler novel.

The novel opens in 1912, with the vividly portrayed moments before and immediately after the sinking of the Titanic off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, after ripping open its hull on an iceberg. The reader is presented with a mystery—a madman forces his way to the vault on a lower deck and seals himself inside. The author then throws the narrative into the year 1987 where byzantium, a radioactive mineral, is the focal point for the next one hundred pages. Not until the latter part of the novel does the author let his readers know why this mineral is so precious to Russians, Americans, and French, who only showed their interest in the late 1800's. Until then, byzantium is an omnipresent influence, confusing both characters and readers with its unknown powers. All that is known by the middle of the book is that

Magic guitar conquers hokey

by Don Goss

During the month of December **Los Indios Tabajaras** paid a return visit to the Cohn auditorium. Billed as members of a small South American Indian tribe, the Tabajaras, **Los Indios Tabajaras**, is composed of two Brazilian brothers, Natalicio and Antenor Lima. These self-taught guitarists, when in their youth, found their first guitar on a jungle path near their village, and, depending on which promotion literature one reads, thought it was some sort of weapon or secondly, something to eat. Upon discovery of the beautiful sounds produced by the strange object, they became first in their commitment to devote their lives to the guitar.

As their repertoire reflects their worldwide travel and tours, so did their programme. The first half of the concert consisted of folkloric and popular music, and perhaps the listening audience was pleasantly surprised to find that the brothers have excellent singing voices as was evidenced in the opening number, a Brazilian folk ballad, "Meu Piau". The majority of the performance was strictly intricate guitar work, and included "La Cumparsite", a tango-like ballad by Matos Rodrigues, "Beautiful Dreamer" by Stephen Foster, and their million selling record, "Maria Elena".

this mineral is so vital that the only supply of it in the world, on Russian territory, was mined in 1911 and sent to the U.S. via the Titanic. This, according to the author, is sufficient reason to spend money and risk lives salvaging the Titanic, two and a half miles under the ocean surface.

Although Cussler neglects to fully explain, it is assumed that the Titanic and all valuables aboard are in only a slight state of decay, due to the slow oxidation process at that depth. Using submersibles, the holes in the hull and bow (the latter caused by the ship's boilers crashing through as the vessel plunged to its grave) are patched with a new substance, Wetsteel, which solidifies ninety seconds after contact with water, and the ship is then filled with compressed air, with strategically placed valves whereby air can be released as the ship rises to the surface. While this operation goes on under two and a half miles of sea, the Russians, who have been informed via leaks in the U.S. (some of them planned purposely by the President to ease friction), are also plotting to obtain the byzantium, but without doing any of the work. They plan to merely pirate the ship away once it has been raised.

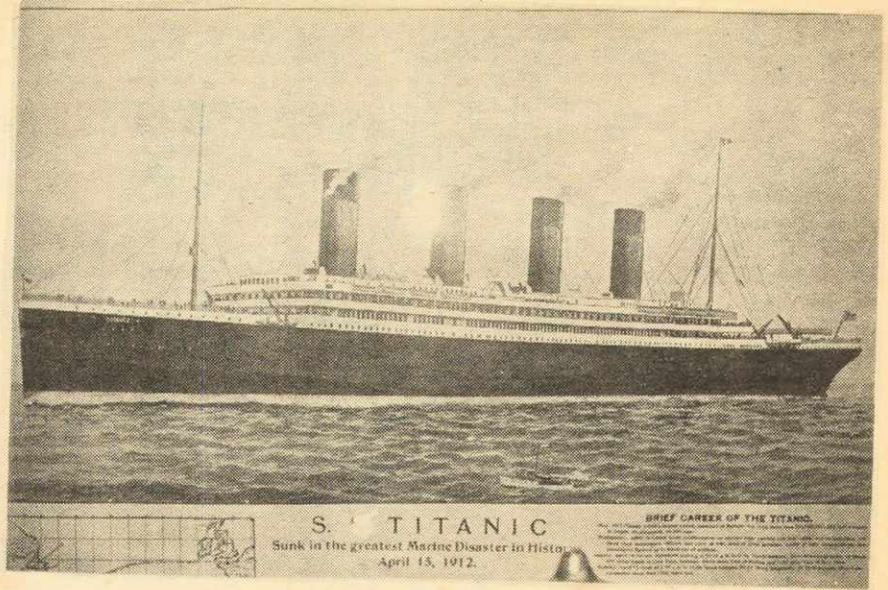
Meanwhile, murder and madness alternate, as one man is killed in a submersible, and the director of the Meta Section, Gene Seagram, married to the marine archaeologist who is also the victimized woman, approaches the precipices of insanity. Their marital problems surface to clutter the plot and add another dimension that this confusing prism does not need.

Sabotage, near-death, nerve-racking rescue; all finally culminate in the Titanic being raised amid shouts of hysterical joy. Relief, happiness, and pride and

It was in the second half of the recital that **Los Indios** proved they were more than just fine musicians—not only superior guitarists but virtuosos of the classical guitar. They captivated the audience with works of Chopin, Bach, Liszt and especially exquisite was Rachmaninoff's "Prelude Opus 3 Number 2" and a work by a Japanese Composer, M. Matsuki, "Fond Memory of Wattle Tree." One of the reasons **Los Indios Tabajaras** can produce such beautiful sounds is because they play especially crafted instruments which are capable of displaying all notes found on a piano.

The musical presentation was without fault, but a few bothersome occurrences deprived the show of some dignity, and at times appeared somewhat 'hokey'. The brothers arrived on stage dressed in flamboyant South American costume that was all 'showbiz'. If the dress didn't proclaim them exotic enough, Nato Lime narrated the entire performance in imperfect, heavily accented English which one feels was over used, and the momentary 'cuteness' soon wore off as explanations of song titles and humorous punchlines were lost.

The majesty and genius of musicianship was all that saved the concert from becoming farcical and mediocre.



S. TITANIC
Sunk in the greatest Marine Disaster in History
April 15, 1912.

BRIEF CAREER OF THE TITANIC.

the results—until a hurricane strikes and the ship is threatened with another death. The Russians attack and claim the vessel. The action which follows is somewhat ridiculous, since Cussler has neglected to mold his characters except with weak dialogue. Without introspection, all the characters seem two dimensional, and hence irrationality replaces the cunning that Cussler endows his fierce rivals with. Culprits are revealed while the hurricane rages, and all are finally saved at a significantly dangerous moment by frogmen from the United States SEAL, "an extraordinary elite group." Cussler chooses this pause to inform his readers of the importance of byzantium. With its atomic structure, byzantium is the integral piece in a defense plan, whereby any enemy missile, upon coming into contact with a protective shield formed from sound waves, would

blow up before reaching its strategic destination. "Properly processed and installed in a sophisticated defense system . . . it will make intercontinental ballistic missiles about as outdated as flying saucers." This possibility for world peace, based on indestructibility, will certainly hamper Cussler when he gropes for a new theme for his next novel.

In the course of the novel, Cussler states that, "unlike romanticized fiction, wreck-hunting in the depths can be a grueling and tedious job." By the end of the novel, it appears that, although **Raise the Titanic** is romanticized fiction, it is also tedious and haphazardly written, suggesting that wreck-hunting, in the case of the Titanic, is a preposterous and inane venture, with too infrequent bursts of energy which only partly merit it as the subject of a novel.

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