



BRUCE McBROOM

Sean Connery is Marko Ramius, a Russian nuclear submarine captain.

★ ★ 1/2 *The Hunt For Red October*
Oaks Four West, Plaza

This movie is undeniably fun, and moviegoers expecting anything more will be sorely disappointed. Despite involving the danger of nuclear war and deceitful Soviet diplomats, *The Hunt For Red October* is resolutely apolitical. There is action and little else.

Marko Ramius (Sean Connery) is the captain of the Soviet Typhoon submarine *Red October*, a newly designed weapon that gives the Soviets first-strike capability. Ramius is moved by his conscience to try to defect. He hopes to hand over its secrets to the Americans, thereby maintaining the balance of power.

During the maiden voyage of

Red October, his bosses in the Kremlin realize what Ramius is doing and send out the entire Soviet fleet to hunt down and destroy him.

Naturally, the United States sends out *its* fleet as well, unsure of what the hell is going on. It's half-inclined to blow *Red October* out of the water, but CIA analyst Jack Ryan (Alec Baldwin) is convinced Ramius wants to defect.

What follows is a tense undersea game of cat and mouse in which the two super-powers must stay out of each other's way while trying to track down the quietest, most dangerous sub in the world — a sub whose captain is unsure of anyone's motive and desperate to survive.

Director John McTiernan relishes the conventions of the action-adventure genre. His last movie, *Die Hard*, was a homage to '70s disaster flicks like *The Towering Inferno*. It was almost satirical in its desire to match the mood and method of those unsturdy epics. Here, too, McTiernan walks confidently and surely in the footsteps of those who have gone before.

Women are grudgingly acknowledged in a fuzzy domestic scene and quickly set aside. Men speak to each other the only way they can: predictably. "My God, you look like hell," says Jack's boss to him at one point, echoing similar lines from countless other movies. Then there is a slow, dramatic build-up in action. Events begin to spiral out of control, and suddenly the hunt is on.

That extended chase scene is the entire reason *Red October* exists, and it is handled with flair and intelligence. Part of this is due to the rich supporting cast, which includes James Earl Jones, Scott Glenn and Sam Neill of *Reilly: Ace of Spies*.

But most of the credit belongs to the lean script and McTiernan's direction. Action-adventures promise a good ride and he delivers. Is it a contradiction to say a movie is predictable, corny and not even very good but then heartily recommend you see it? I don't think so, because I've just done it.

BY MICHAEL GILTZ