



Jaws: The Most Terrifying

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INTRODUCTION

Jaws is a 1975 American thriller film directed by Steven Spielberg and based on Peter Benchley's 1974 novel of the same name. In the film, a giant man-eating great white shark attacks beachgoers at a new England summer resort town, prompting police chief Martin Brody (Roy Scheider) to hunt it with the help of a marine biologist (Richard Dreyfuss) and a professional shark hunter (Robert Shaw). Murray Hamilton plays the mayor and Lorraine Gary portrays Brody's wife. The screenplay is credited to Benchley, who wrote the first drafts and actor-writer Carl Gottlieb, who rewrote the script during principal photography [1].

Shot mostly on location on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, Jaws had a troubled production, going over budget and past schedule. As the art department's mechanical sharks often malfunctioned, Spielberg decided to mostly suggest the shark's presence, employing an ominous and minimalistic theme created by composer John Williams to indicate its impending appearances. Universal pictures gave the film what was then an exceptionally wide release for a major studio picture, on over 450 screens [2].

Considered one of the greatest films ever made, Jaws were the prototypical summer blockbuster, regarded as a watershed moment in motion picture history, and it won several awards for its music and editing. It was the highest-grossing film until the release of Star Wars in 1977. Both films were pivotal in establishing the modern Hollywood business model, which pursues high box-office returns from action and adventure films with simple high-concept premises. In 2001, it was selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in the United States National Film Registry as "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" [3].

DESCRIPTION

Plot

During a beach party at dusk on Amity Island, New England, a young woman, Chrissie Watkins, goes skinny dipping in the ocean. While treading water, she is violently pulled under. The next day, her partial remains are found on shore. The medical examiner's ruling that the death was due to a shark attack leads police chief Martin Brody to close the beaches. Mayor Larry Vaughn overrules him, fearing that the town's summer economy will be ruined. The coroner now concurs with the mayor's theory that Chrissie was killed in a boating accident. Brody reluctantly accepts their conclusion until another fatal shark attack occurs shortly thereafter. A bounty is placed on the shark, prompting an amateur shark-hunting frenzy [4].

When local fishermen catch a tiger shark, the mayor proclaims the beaches safe. Hooper disputes that it is the same predator, confirming this after no human remains are found inside it. Hooper and Brody find a half-sunken vessel while searching the night waters in Hooper's boat. Underwater, Hooper retrieves a sizable great white shark's tooth embedded in the submerged hull. He drops it in fright after encountering a partial corpse. Following a juvenile prank in which the presence of a shark is simulated, the real shark enters a nearby estuary, killing a boater and causing Brody's oldest son, Michael, to go into shock. Brody then convinces Vaughn to hire Quint [5].

Quint, Brody and Hooper set out on Quint's boat, the Orca, to hunt the shark. While Brody lays down a chum line, Quint waits for an opportunity to hook the shark. Without warning, it appears behind the boat. Quint, estimating its length at 25 feet (7.6 m) and weight at 3 tons (3.0 long tons; 3.3 short tons), harpoons it with a line attached to a flotation barrel, but the shark pulls the barrel underwater and disappears.

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At nightfall, Quint and Hooper drunkenly exchange stories about their assorted scars and Quint reveals that he survived the USS Indianapolis. The shark returns unexpectedly, ramming the boat's hull and disabling the power. The men work through the night, repairing the engine. In the morning, Brody attempts to call the Coast Guard, but Quint, who has become obsessed with killing the shark without outside assistance, smashes the radio [6].

With the Orca slowly sinking, the trio attempt a riskier approach. Hooper puts on scuba gear and enters the water in a shark-proof cage, intending to lethally inject the shark with strychnine, using a hypodermic spear. The shark attacks the cage, causing Hooper to drop the spear, which sinks and is lost; Hooper manages to escape to the seabed. The shark then attacks the boat directly and devours Quint. Trapped on the sinking vessel, Brody jams a pressurized scuba tank into the shark's mouth and climbing the crow's nest, shoots the tank with a rifle [7].

Box office

Jaws opened in 409 theatres with a record \$7 million weekend and grossed a record \$21,116,354 in its first 10 days recouping its production costs. It grossed \$100 million in its first 59 days from 954 playdates. In just 78 days, it overtook the Godfather as the highest-grossing film at the north American box office, sailing past that picture's earnings of \$86 million and became the first film to earn \$100 million in US theatrical rentals. Its initial release ultimately brought in \$123.1 million in rentals. Theatrical re-releases in 1976 and 1979 brought its total rentals to \$133.4 million.

The picture entered overseas release in December 1975 and its international business mirrored its domestic performance. It broke records in Singapore, New Zealand, Japan, Spain and Mexico. On January 11, 1976, Jaws became the highest-grossing film worldwide with rentals of \$132 million, surpassing the \$131 million earned by the Godfather [8].

CONCLUSION

Jaws was the highest-grossing film of all time until Star Wars, which debuted two years later. Star Wars surpassed Jaws for the U.S. record six months after its release and set a new global record in 1978. Adjusted for inflation, Jaws has earned almost \$2 billion worldwide at 2011 prices and is the second-most successful franchise film after Star Wars. In north America, it is the seventh-highest-grossing movie of all time, with a total of \$1.017 billion at current prices, based on an estimated 128,078,800 tickets sold. In the United Kingdom, it is the seventh-highest-grossing film to be released since 1975, earning the equivalent of over £70 million in 2009/10 currency, with admissions estimated at 16.2 million.

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