

Rob Freese's
**DRIVE-IN
DELIRIUM!
'70s STYLE**

BEYOND ATLANTIS (1973) ♂♂♂

D: Eddie Romero. Patrick Wayne, John Ashley, Leigh Christian, Sid Haig, Lenore Stevens, George Nader, Vic Diaz. 90 mins. (VCI Home Entertainment/MVD Visual)

When thug East Eddie (Haig) catches wind that poor boatman Manuel (Diaz) has a connection to pure, perfect pearls, he leans on him to reveal where the stash is located. Eddie hooks up with petty hood Logan (Ashley) and hires sailor Vic Mathias's (Wayne) boat to travel to a lost island where bug-eyed fish people are ruled over by Nerus (Nader), the leader of the tribe. The king wants his beautiful daughter Syrene (Christian) to mate with Vic and keep the fish people's bloodline going. Dr. Kathy Vernon (Stevens) comes along, too, and realizes the island inhabitants may be descendants of mermaids from the lost city of Atlantis. Of course, Eddie and Logan are roughnecks and their greed gets the whole

group marked for death. This is an enjoyable pulp adventure based on a story by former Roger Corman director Stephanie (Terminal Island) Rothman. Romero keeps the action moving and everyone seems to be having a good time, particularly Haig and Ashley as the heavies. Once Wayne was on board, his desire to make it a family-friendly affair overrode producer Ashley's wish to beef up the exploitation aspects by having all the female mermaids go topless. (Still, the picture will not seem very PG to today's audiences, especially when one character tosses a goat into a pond full of piranhas.) The blu-ray looks fantastic. Extras include a new commentary by film historians Howard S. Berger and Andrew Leavold, liner notes by Berger, copious video interviews courtesy of Mark Hartley, trailer and TV spots, pressbook and photo gallery. 46 summers after its debut on drive-in screens, **Beyond Atlantis** rises from the depths to continue to thrill audiences.

MAKO: THE JAWS OF DEATH

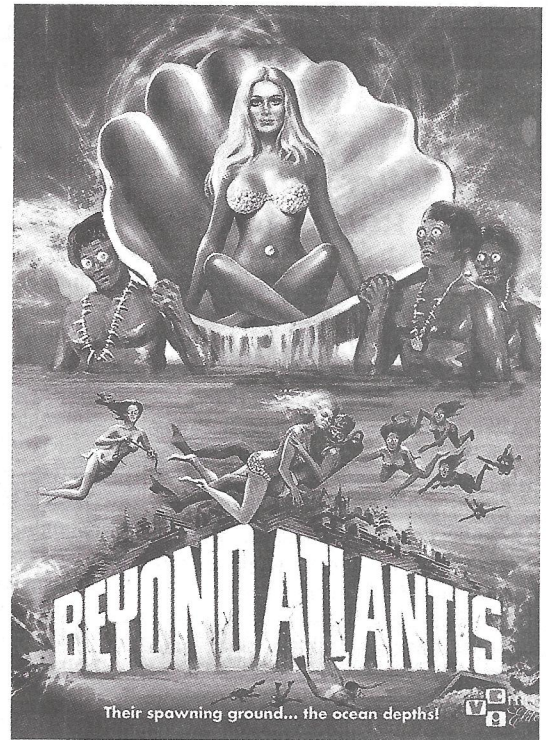
(1976) ♂♂♂

D: William Grefe. Richard Jaeckel, Jennifer Bishop, Harold Sakata, Buffy Dee, John Davis Chandler. 91 mins. (Bayview/RetroMedia)

Sonny Stein (Jaeckel) is a war vet with an affinity for sharks. When he's not feeding and talking to his sharks, he is attacking sleazy fishermen out hunting sharks for sport. Sonny has a short fuse and is prone to violent outbursts but he has a soft spot for Karen (Bishop), sort of a club dancer but instead of dancing she swims provocatively in a display tank over the bar. Scummy bar owner Barney (Dee) cons him into selling one of his sharks to put in the tank with Karen, and the nearby marine biology lab tricks him into loaning them a pregnant shark for "observation." Further enraged by two geeks who've been harpoon-fishing sharks and selling the carcasses to tourists, Sonny finally snaps and goes after everyone he perceives as an enemy, which is everyone else in the cast. Director Grefe delivers a strong drive-in revenge shocker that borrows more from his earlier snake thriller **Stanley**, as well as **Willard**, than it does from **Jaws**. Jaeckel, as always, is solid as our antihero. When Bishop turns on him, it's a heartbreaking moment, and you can't help rooting for the sociopathic dweeb. Heavy on shark and harpoon attacks, **Mako** emerges as a winner. An early '90s on-camera interview with Grefe, Italian trailer, and Super 8mm digest version round out the extra features on this drive-in classic from one of Florida's most legendary exploitation filmmakers.

THE SWINGING BARMAIDS (1975) ♂♂ 1/2

D: Gus Trikonis. Bruce Watson, Laura Hippe, Katie Saylor, Renie Radich, William Smith, Dyanne Thorne, Zitto Kazann. 90 mins. (Code Red)



Cocktail waitresses at the Swing-a-Ling bar are preyed upon by weird Kenny Rogers look-alike Tom (Watson), who follows Boo-Boo (Thorne) home and murders her. When the other waitresses arrive at Boo-Boo's apartment for a nightcap, they get a good look at the creeper. They give Lt. White (Smith) a detailed description and really talk about his eyes. Tom returns home, cuts his beard, dyes his hair, then goes down to the Swing-a-Ling and gets hired as the dishwashing bouncer. (He basically changed everything about his appearance, except his eyes, but the gals never catch on.) When he fixates on Jenny (Hippe), he ends up with her at her parents' remote country home away from anyone who can save her. This is quite the strange drive-in shocker. The "swinging" in the title hints more of frolic and free-spirited nudity than it does misogynistic murder and mayhem. (I can only wonder what audiences who saw it under its alternate title **The Eager Beavers** thought of it.) The assaults on the women are quite mean-spirited. Effort is made to establish the characters, and we find ourselves hoping Jenny, the barmaid with the heart of gold, figures out what Tom's game plan is and snuffs the little weasel. Smith isn't given much to do until the end of the film when he turns his badassness all the way up to 11. Scripted by frequent Roger Corman scribe Charles B. (Little Shop of Horrors) Griffith, this would fall into the category I refer to as "drive-in dramas," wherein the film is presented as one thing, then a shocking, out-of-left-field twist changes it into something else, and everything is played out with deadly seriousness. (These movies morphed into slasher flicks in the '80s and then erotic thrillers in the '90s.) Code Red offers the HD feature with a trailer reel of other Code Red releases. This is a solid drive-in exploitation flick definitely worthy of a look. ♂

