



An aerial photograph of a small motorboat on a deep blue lake, surrounded by steep, rocky cliffs. The boat is moving towards the right, leaving a white wake. The water is a rich, dark blue, and the surrounding terrain is rugged and rocky, with some sparse vegetation. The overall scene is serene and scenic.

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CAST

Martin Kove Neil Grice
Mary Louise Weller Sherry Grice
Deborah Shelton Madeline Grice
James Earl Jones Frye
José Ferrer Nereus
Lydia Cornell Barbara
Lila Kedrova Sister Anna
Sofia Seirli Sister Elena
Rania Photiou Lethe
Despina Tomazani Lethe's Mother
Spyros Papafrantziz Dionysis
Irini Tripkou Virgin
Annabel Schofield Vicki

CREW

Directed by **Richard Jefferies**
Written by **Richard Jefferies** and **Nico Mastorakis**
Produced by **Donald Langdon** and **Nico Mastorakis**
Executive Producer **John D. Schofield**
Co-Producer and Creative Consultant **Brian Trenchard-Smith**
Associate Producer **Luigi Cingolani**
Director of Photography **Aris Stavrou**
Edited by **Michael Bloecher** and **Alberto Valenzuela**
Music by **Jerry Mosely**





“TURNS OF THE ‘TIDE’”

by Michael Gingold

How does a low-budget fright flick written and directed by a feature first-timer in his 20s attract a cast including acting legends like James Earl Jones and José Ferrer? The latter was brutally honest with journalist Nancy Mills when he spoke to her about his role in a film then titled *Red Tide* in 1980. “My career hasn’t turned out the way I wanted it to,” said the Oscar-winning actor, who portrayed Nereus, mayor of a remote Greek island community with a history of human sacrifices and monster attacks. “The parts I’m playing now aren’t nearly as interesting as the ones I did 20 years ago... If I had the money to quit work right now I would never act again.”

The production that occasioned this rather harsh self-assessment was the first film produced by Nico Mastorakis following his first and only major-studio credit, *The Greek Tycoon* (1978). Then only 39, the Athens-born Mastorakis had already lived a life that would make quite a movie of its own. As an investigative reporter, he inveigled his way onto Aristotle Onassis’s yacht and broke the story of the shipping magnate’s marriage to Jacqueline Kennedy. In the music and radio business, he produced Athens’ first international pop concert, featuring The Rolling Stones, and helped launch the career of future Oscar-winning composer Vangelis (Evángelos Odysseás Papathanassiou). And he was a key player in the rise of the Greek television industry, though he frequently ran afoul of the military regime running the country, eventually leading him to switch to features (including the 1976 shocker *Island of Death* [Ta paidia tou Diavolou]) and to leave his home country.

Mastorakis turned his observations of Onassis and Kennedy into a very thinly-veiled screenplay that was ultimately rewritten (by Morton S. Fine) and produced as *The Greek Tycoon*, directed by J. Lee Thompson, starring Anthony Quinn and Jacqueline Bisset and released by Universal Pictures. It was a high-profile project that disappointed at the box office, but landed Mastorakis a three-picture development deal with Paramount. That wound up going nowhere, and Mastorakis hooked up with Donald Langdon, former head of production at Britain’s Hemdale Films and now with Raftage Ltd., to make a horror picture. As Mills recounted in a *Los Angeles Times* set-visit article in August 1980, Mastorakis said,



"It started out with my friend's boat and scuba gear. I decided to make a cheap underwater movie." (Not too cheap, according to reports at the time that pegged *Red Tide's* budget at \$4 million.)

Now Mastorakis needed a scriptwriter, and he found one in an ambitious up-and-comer named Richard Jefferies. While studying film at Valencia, CA's California Institute of the Arts, Jefferies had collaborated with future Emmy-winning *The Simpsons* (1989 -) director Mark Kirkland on an animated short set to David Bowie's 'Fame' that won a Student Academy Award in 1976. He then turned to writing horror spec screenplays, one of which led Mastorakis to hire him for the seafaring scare project. Mastorakis reportedly convinced Jefferies to write *Red Tide* for free, with the agreement that Jefferies would direct if and when it went before the cameras; the producer also wound up working on the script himself.

The film lensed on Monemvasia, a Greek town sporting medieval architecture located on an island off the south-eastern coast of the Peloponnese. That was where the film was beset by the first in a series of troubles, as the crew went on strike for two days when the producers briefly ran out of money. There were also issues with the local wildlife, as Jones revealed to Mills (in a syndicated profile of the actor) that he had to kill a large scorpion that had crawled into the bed of co-star Lila Kedrova. Jones described his treasure-hunting character Frye as "a gruff, good-bad guy. It's the kind of role Robert Shaw was becoming famous for before he died. I'd like to get some expertise in parts like this." In a separate interview with Hollywood columnist Marilyn Beck, Jones noted that Frye "certainly wasn't written for me. The first script I read included a scene in which my character has the wind ruffling his long, blond hair."

The film received further publicity the year of its production due to a rising star among its younger cast: Lydia Cornell, cast as Frye's ditzzy girlfriend Barbara, had just begun playing one of Ted Knight's daughters in the hit ABC sitcom *Too Close for Comfort* (1980 - 1987). Filling the roles of Neil and Sherry Grice, who arrive on the island seeking Neil's missing sister Madeline, were Martin Kove — a television regular who had also done genre fare such as *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and *Death Race 2000* (1975) and was a few years away from his *The Karate Kid* (1984) breakout — and Mary Louise Weller, Mandy Pepperidge in *National Lampoon's Animal House* (1978). Madeline herself was played by Deborah Shelton, who had gotten her start in a couple of Greek features and done a number of TV guest spots, and would later co-star on CBS's *Dallas* (1978 - 1991) and as the ill-fated Gloria in Brian De Palma's *Body Double* (1984).

Despite all the talent on hand, the shoot wasn't a happy experience for Jefferies. "I was just trying to keep my head above water," he told *Fangoria* interviewer Anthony C. Ferrante

in 1992, pun apparently unintended. "The movie got financed by some really flaky British outfit that caused a lot of problems. I was responding to producer suggestions for changes, which in retrospect I never should have done." Indeed, according to Mills' account, it was Langdon's idea to have Jones' character recite lines from *Othello*. Shortly after shooting wrapped, the movie wound up mired in legal troubles that put it in limbo.

Enter Brian Trenchard-Smith, the director of such Ozploitation classics as *The Man from Hong Kong* (1975), *Turkey Shoot* (aka *Escape 2000*, 1982) and *Dead End Drive-In* (1986). "In addition to filmmaking, I have been lucky enough to enjoy parallel careers as a trailer maker and film doctor," he says, and it was in the latter capacity that he came aboard *Red Tide*. He further explains the trouble the British investors were caught up in: "The film had left unpaid bills. While much of the picture negative had been transferred to the custody of the producers in London, the last weeks of shooting were frozen in an Athens laboratory until payment was made, but there were no funds left. Somehow the production company had run out of money and the Athens lab would not budge. Deadlock.

"I met with the investment company," he continues, "and proposed that a 10-minute promo reel be made from the footage they had, which would screen at the Cannes Film Market a couple of months away. Buyers generally pay a 10 percent deposit on signature, so by the end of the market they would have enough cash to pay the Greek debts and recover the missing negative. Then, with a bit more investment, they could fund postproduction and finish the movie. They told me to go ahead, but watch the pennies."

Trenchard-Smith's creative partner in this endeavor was editor Gerry Hambling, a longtime collaborator of director Alan Parker who had recently nabbed an Academy Award nomination for *Midnight Express* (1978) and would go on to receive five more. "We worked to make the footage we had as commercially appealing as possible. The 35mm promo was delivered to Cannes, and it did the trick. Buyers signed up and put money down. The Athens lab was paid and released the missing negative. Mission accomplished!"

But not completed, as it turned out, since the investors then decided that Trenchard-Smith should finish the film without the involvement of the producers or Jefferies (whose name wound up misspelled as "Jeffries" on the final print — "which shows you how little I had to do with it," the director told *Fangoria*). "I had no idea who was at fault," Trenchard-Smith says. "I only met the director briefly at the LA screening of the promo. This must have been a terrible blow to him; after being denied the chance to edit my own film *Day of the Assassin* [1981], I could relate to his pain."



Nonetheless, Trenchard-Smith saw room for improvement in *Red Tide*, starting with its title; it was he who suggested the change to *Blood Tide*, musing, "Does subtlety sell tickets? Clearly, though, subtlety was what the director was aiming for. It was well-acted. The shooting style was classical, well-composed but static. The pacing was measured. On first assembly, it was not a bad movie. It just did not seem to be very suspenseful or horrific. The problem was that it was a monster picture without a monster. The creature was talked about, but remained totally unseen."

So, he put together a four-person crew in Los Angeles, and had some specific ideas for extra scare scenes for the rechristened movie. "How about the forearm of a dead victim being picked at by a crab at the water's edge? How about shooting Deborah Shelton, who was available, waking up from a dream full of bizarre images that were either freshly created or lifted from angles not used in the cut? Fairly standard enhancements, or detractions, depending on your point of view, but I felt they might give the movie more bite."

"Some representation of the monster seemed essential," he continues, "so we built all we could afford: a clawed arm plus a separate head and shoulders intended only to be seen in very low light. We did some underwater photography with doubles off Catalina Island, then blew up the monster's head and shoulders in slow motion in a pond at the pyro guy's premises, where he was licensed to stage explosions." Shelton also came back to record an untitled end-credits tune composed by her then-husband and occasional songwriting partner Shuki Levy. (The two later collaborated on "Take It All the Way" for the Olympics-themed slasher flick *Fatal Games* [1984], around the time Levy began finding his greatest success as a composer for kids' shows like *Inspector Gadget* [1983 - 1986], *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* [1983 - 1985] and, later, various *Power Rangers* series and *Digimon* [1999 - 2003].) "Just adding another sales tool to the arsenal," Trenchard-Smith says of the song. "My doctoring probably did not make the film substantially better, but I did make it more commercial."

Blood Tide never had a chance to test its full commercial potential, in the U.S. at least. It was picked up for Stateside release by 21st Century Distribution Corp., which gave it spotty bookings beginning in September 1982. (The newspaper ads touted Shelton as "The New Bond Girl from *Octopussy* [1983]" except that – oops – Shelton had only auditioned for the title role in the 007 adventure, which wound up going to Maud Adams.) Not long thereafter, in April 1983, the movie was part of a seven-film package acquired from 21st Century by Oak Industries, which sent it to cable and subscription networks under the moniker *Demon Island*. The same year, 21st Century issued it as *Blood Tide* on VHS via its Planet Video label, and it was reissued on tape a few years later by Continental Video. And its legal troubles weren't over: In 1986, Raftage and sales agent Glinwood Films Ltd. sued 21st

Century over non-payment of their percentage of gross receipts from the North American and international distribution. *Blood Tide* then seemed to drift into public domain, issued on cheap VHS and DVD editions under inappropriately hyperbolic banners like Critic Picks and Timeless Classics.

The whole *Blood Tide* saga soured Jefferies on the filmmaking experience, and he poured his frustrations into a screenplay called *The Vagrant*, which he resurrected a decade later. It became the second feature (released in 1992) directed by *The Fly* (1986)'s Oscar-winning makeup effects artist Chris Walas, starring Bill Paxton as a man who is put through hell by a deranged derelict (Marshall Bell). Prior to that, Jefferies co-wrote William Wesley's *Scarecrows* and scripted the Walt Disney Television presentation *14 Going on 30* (both 1988). He later received a story credit on the Disney theatrical feature *Man of the House* (1995), penned the psychological thriller *Cold Creek Manor* (2003) for the Mouse House's Touchstone Pictures label and director Mike Figgis, and did uncredited revisions on producer Gale Anne Hurd and director John Bruno's Jamie Lee Curtis-starrer *Virus* (1999). When he finally got behind the camera again for the 2008 Sci-Fi Channel premiere *Living Hell* (known as *Organizm* on DVD), the press release announcing the project, not surprisingly, described it as his directorial debut.

And like many screenwriters, Jefferies also penned a number of noteworthy projects that didn't make it into production. Chief among them was *Flies*, a planned second sequel to David Cronenberg's *The Fly* which ignored the events of *The Fly II* (1989). Geena Davis was set to return as Veronica, giving birth to twins fathered by the deceased Seth Brundle, under the direction of her then-husband Renny Harlin. Other unrealized Jefferies scripts included a pair for director Chuck Russell – *The Bad Place*, an adaptation of the Dean R. Koontz novel, and *Thornwood Circle; Beware the Wickies*, a creature feature set in the 1960s that Jefferies hoped to direct in black and white; *Rendezvous*, a science-fiction epic that was bought by James Cameron; and an adaptation of Allen Hatcher's political black comedy novel *Samsonite Warhead* for producers Ridley and Tony Scott

Michael Gingold is a film journalist who has written for Rue Morgue, Scream, Delirium and Time Out New York among others, and spent 28 years with Fangoria and its website. He is the author of The Frightfest Guide to Monster Movies (FAB Press).



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Blood Tide has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with mono sound.

The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 4K resolution at R3Store Studios. Color grading and restoration was completed in 2K resolution at Silver Salt Restoration, London.

The original mono mix was remastered from the original optical negative reels.

Silver Salt Restoration: Anthony Badger, Mark Bonnici, Lisa Copson, Simon Edwards, Ray King, Tom Wiltshire

All original materials supplied for this restoration were made available by Nico Mastorakis.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**
Executive Producer **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**
QC **Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitled **The Engine House Media Services**
Design **Obviously Creative**
Artist **Graham Humphreys**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Michael Felsher, Michael Gingold, Richard Jefferies and Nico Mastorakis.





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