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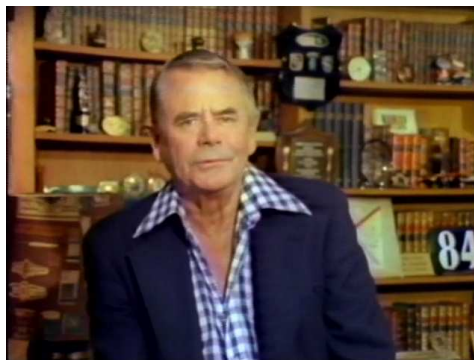
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Great White Death DVD Review: A Silly Sharksploitation Schlockumentary

After the astonishing success of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* in 1975, budget filmmakers around the world were determined to jump out into the money shower that ensued and grab a few falling coins. Some folks took the exact same premise of cinema's very first summer blockbuster and created their own version (whether it was in the water or on the land), some re-released already-made feature films that contained a man-eater in it (or at least the threat of one) and unleashed a re-titled bore upon unsuspecting moviegoers, while others copied the original film so blatantly that they were sued by Universal Pictures. The makers of *Great White Death*, on the other hand, went the less invasive (legality-wise, that is) route and opted to make a documentary on the aquatic assassin of the deep instead.

To give their educational exploitation feature as much credibility as possible, they brought in an out-of-work Glenn Ford for a good half-a-day's worth of shooting to stare solemnly (or is he just really bored?) into the camera and spew out some off-corny dialogue -- as well as the occasional outdated fact -- about sharks. Sporting one of the greatest big-collared shirts ever (which makes one wonder when this was actually filmed), Ford "hosts" this mish-mash of (mostly stock) footage culled from vaults all around the world, assembled by a Canadian crew and led by one Jean Lebel. Throughout the length of the film, poor Glenn endlessly ponders whether or not sharks are gods, demons, or both; and then proceeds to reiterate the exact same thing using all-new words. Oy.



Probably the only thing that has kept *Great White Death* from fading into obscurity altogether over the years is the inclusions of the infamous 1964 footage depicting the aftermath of Henri Bource's encounter with a "white pointer" (great white), to wit the famed diver/musician is pulled out of the water minus most of his left leg. Said footage was partially reconstructed by Bource himself for a seldom-seen 1969 doc entitled *Savage Shadows*, and he later sold it to the producers of *Great White Death* and even hung around long enough to tell his story onscreen (reportedly, it was the only way he ever made any money from *Savage Shadows*).

Several other people who had experience encounters with sharks also give brief accounts of their own ordeals, but it's Bource's limb-losing moment in history that has enabled several low-budget home video distributors since the early '80s to exploit it. I

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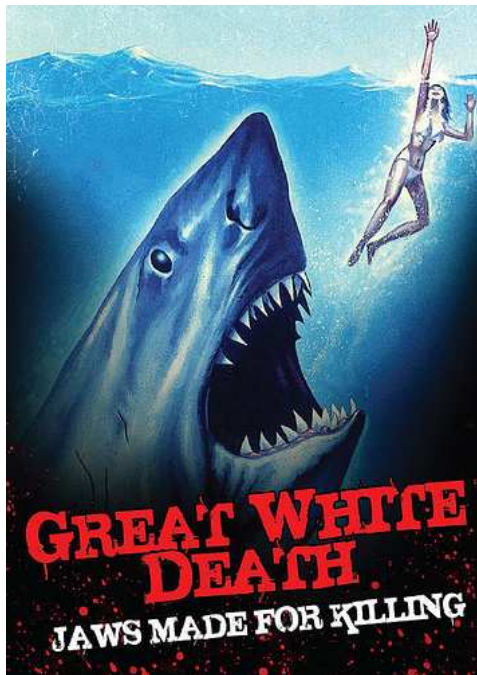
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VHS in a Woolworth's bargain bin once, as well as staring at the *Jaws*-inspired artwork from the Video Gems big box VHS in a Smith's store, too. When DVD became the norm, Troma Films -- as well as several no-name companies -- took a hand at releasing *Great White Death*, though their presentations were always taken from the original Video Gems VHS source.



As to what the original title of this one was is unknown to me at this point in time. The film boasts a video-generated second title (which it shows us twice in the same few minutes), which was presumably made by Video Gems for their initial home video release in the early '80s. Judging by the number of times Glenn says it towards the closing of the film, I would venture to say the shooting title of this sharksploitation schlockumentary was "Pirates of the Deep" -- but I shan't be placing any money on that one. Speaking of money, the tradition of small video labels trying to make a buck off of this otherwise forgettable snoozer hasn't diminished, however, as it has once again surfaced (ha-ha) on DVD;

this time by the folks at CFS Releasing, who have resurrected the wonderfully-lurid Video Gems artwork here.

Much like the previously-issued discs, this one, too, has been transferred from a VHS source (there's a faint wear line towards the top of the picture that indicates such). Video-wise, it's one of the finer VHS-to-DVD jobs I've seen, but CFS made a huge faux pas here by not syncing the audio properly (you have to build a VBR time map prior to authoring the disc, people!). Fortunately, since the movie consists mostly of narration over stock footage, it isn't too terribly distracting -- but for the moments wherein Glenn Ford or any of the several interviewees are onscreen, it's annoying, as the dialogue is off by about a second. I wouldn't expect a recall, of course (though a repressing is most assuredly in order), since this was a really low-key release from a minor label.

For sharkaholics only.

BY LUIGI BASTARDO

Posted on Monday, January 2, 2012, by [Luigi Bastardo](#)

Tags: glenn ford shark

About the author

Luigi Bastardo is the disgruntled alter-ego of Adam Becvar, a thirtysomething lad from Northern California who has watched so many weird movies since the tender age of 3 that a conventional life is out of the question. You can stalk and annoy Luigi via Insomniac Entertainment and those trendy social sites, Twitter and Facebook.

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Glee: The Concert Blu-ray Review: Fun Performances, Lame Interludes

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Justified: The Complete Second Season is the Pick of the Week

I saw PJ20 on PBS. Thought it told the band's history very well. really cool seeing the unseen old footage

Where the Wild Things Are (2009) DVD Review: An Underrated Gem

nice job ben, makes me want to watch the movie again!

The Borgias - Season One is the Pick of the Week

I don't mind the crassness but nothing really struck me as funny. I only caught a couple of episodes though so I'll have to give...

The Borgias - Season One is the Pick of the Week

Archer is very crass, but it's my favorite comedy currently with how often and how hard it makes me laugh

Contest: The Smurfs Holiday Celebration on DVD

I am entering for the smurfs dvd.

Santa Claus (1959) Collector's Edition Blu-ray Review: Who Needs LSD When You Have This?

It is! I'm going to torment my children with it this weekend, along with *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians*. :)

The Rocketeer 20th Anniversary Edition Blu-ray Review: Celebrating a Movie that Celebrates Old Movies

Didn't even know this one was out in HD. One of the few Disney films I can tolerate. Plus, anything with Timothy Dalton and based...

Santa Claus (1959) Collector's Edition Blu-ray Review: Who Needs LSD When You Have This?

This sounds awesome

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Body Puzzle DVD Review: Gory Goofy Great

A wacky half-giallo/half-horror offering from Lamberto Bava.

Posted on Friday, January 6, 2012, by [Luigi Bastardo](#)

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In the Name of the King 2: Two Worlds Blu-ray Review: Uwe Boll is Back, and Badder than Ever!

It's Dolph Lundgren vs. the Renaissance Faire rejects.

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The Left Hand of God DVD Review: Another Fine Humphrey Bogart Flick

Wait, Bogie? As a priest? Well, not quite.

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Story Criterion Collection Blu-ray Review

This is a tremendous set, and while I agree that a couple of these films are not absolutely "must own" material, taken as a whole...

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