JAWS:

CREATING THE MYTH OF THE MAN-EATING MACHINE

by

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May 28, 2012
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ABSTRACT

_Jaws_ (Universal Studios, 1975) set a new standard for Hollywood film production by introducing the concept of “summer blockbuster,” for a film that changed the way in which people thought about sharks. 37 years after the release of the movie, the idea of sharks as ferocious man-hunters still looms large in public opinion. This conceptualization of sharks as ruthless killers is mythical rather than factual, and this research tracks the mechanisms that propelled the idea deep into popular culture. The dissertation addresses the problematic of media constructions through a case study of the movie _Jaws_ departing from its production process, and by applying Barbara Klinger’s interpretation of “epiphenomena.” The thesis studies how cinema travels into popular culture, by following the traces of the movie into other media, and its dialogue with the surrounding texts generated by PR, marketing and merchandising; simultaneously, the thesis seek to demonstrate the connection between the movie as mythmaker and the stigmatized portrayal of sharks.

**Keywords:** _Jaws_, sharks, myth, marketing, PR, media, branding, epiphenomena, commodities, popular culture.
Acknowledgements

- First I would like to thank Prof. Jan Olsson for his knowledge, guidance, enthusiasm and dedication, but foremost, for building my character by pushing me to work harder.

- Barbara Hall, archivist and researcher in charge of the Special Collections at the Margaret Herrick Library, the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills. Her fantastic predisposition and her respect for my research, despite being a master level work, made me feel welcomed to the archival world.

- The staff at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library, for sharing their first hand anecdotes about Benchley, and for being so helpful and patient during my research.

- Dr. Mauricio Hoyos Padilla from “Centro Interdisciplinario de Ciencias Marinas” in Baja California Sur, for taking on the challenge of explaining “shark behavior for dummies” in reply to my never-ending curiosity.

In memory of Peter Benchley, a man of convictions.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a case study of the role of the movie *Jaws* (Universal Studios, 1975) in the conceptualization of sharks as man-eating machines. The study is based on primary archival materials concerning the film’s production, release, and subsequent presence in the media and popular culture. In addition, a theoretical backdrop frames the thesis. This first chapter presents a background for the study, further specifies the problem statement, describes its significance, and provides an overview of the relevant methodology. The chapter concludes by noting the delimitations of the study while outlining its key terminology.

1.1 Background of the Study

Considering the randomness of shark encounters and the low probabilities of suffering a shark accident with lethal consequences, it is easy to infer that the fear of sharks is rather unfounded.\(^1\) For decades sharks have been stigmatized with an undeserved reputation as ferocious man-eaters that has lead them almost to extinction. As a consequence of such irrational fears, conservationists and marine biologists face a colossal challenge in their quest to create awareness and save these animals. Since the early days of its release, Steven Spielberg’s movie *Jaws* has been pinpointed as a potential threat for sharks, and it is frequently regarded as the source of the “killer-shark myth” by shark conservationists and marine biologists. Such accusations even encouraged Peter Benchley, the novel’s author, to join conservationist in their efforts to revert such prevarication.\(^2\)

“Hollywood” successfully negotiates common denominators of our collective unconscious and in the process puts indelible stamps on our imaginaries. In our times, narrative propels objects, people, animals, and almost any other imaginable element into potentially marketable commodities. Consumers are attached to labels and brands, and storytelling provides an easy way to promote, sell, understand and remember commodities. Hollywood reaches larger audiences than any other movie industry. Consequently harnessing the fear of sharks animated in their portrayal in *Jaws*, in a way that forever associated sharks

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\(^2\) The first one to question the potential consequences of putting out such message was Jacques Cousteau. Shark research was scant the time, due to a combination of lack of finances and the evasive nature of these creatures. The scientific community had mixed reviews about the nature of these animals, nevertheless, the statements raised by Cousteau are in the same line of thoughts as current research about shark behavior, and their mediated argument ended in Benchley’s regret for his responsibility in the matter.
with the film. This ability is far from accidental; in fact, it is the result of a carefully studied strategy to make and globally market movies.

Blockbusters have been extensively studied in terms of their capacity for generating higher revenues, as well as their historical implication in changing Hollywood’s standards for marketing. The bulk of the literature about Jaws focuses on its status as the first blockbuster with a never before seen investment on TV advertising while setting a record for simultaneous theater release. Another group of literature offers close readings of the movie. But despite the wealth of studies, none has focused on the consequences for sharks and the mechanisms that lead these animals to become one of the most feared living creatures. The repressed significance of the monsters in American horror movies, representations of otherness, and ideological meanings at large have been the center of the shark discourse. Although some film scholars have timidly mentioned Jaws as the movie to set sharks under the spotlight, none offered an in-depth analysis. The observation about the threat is generally disclosed in the introductions to articles or books addressing other Jaws-related investigations. The interest on sharks among cinema scholars has been confined to interpretations of the shark’s representation and its hidden symbolism within the story, such as Sutton and Wogan’s description of the shark symbolizing the Vietcong or Jane Caputi’s Jungian analysis of Jaws as a patriarchal myth, were the shark represents the mother and the hunters the men who fear the threat of female power. Other studies about horror have focused on comparing adaptations to the big screen of Jaws and The Exorcist (Warner Brothers, 1973) novels, the lingering effects of horror movies and the role of music, or rather, the threat of silence, by comparing sharks to submarines as silent threats, briefly addressing the uncanny elements of the shark in the movie. What all these studies have in common is that they address the significance of the shark in the context and confine of a movie, while

3 Jaws opened in 409 theaters simultaneously across the US.
4 Antonia Quirke’s book about Jaws briefly drops the idea, and moves forward into a literature review of Jaws-related books to finally present her text that consists in a reading of the film. See Antonia Quirke, Jaws (London: British Film Institute, 2002).
this research wants to reach beyond those boundaries. Whether the shark has impact or not for some hidden symbolism is secondary to this research, as the focus is not what are the hidden mechanisms that make audiences fear sharks, but rather the marketing mechanisms that have taken the threat into popular culture.

This gap of research related to the shark and its implications in popular culture bespeaks a broader gap in the study of blockbusters as engines for cultural impact. Recently, Thomas Elsaesser has observed that “this generation of cultural capital when the cinema is considered not only money-making, but also a meaning-making machine is a phenomenon that is beginning to be studied closer, and forms one of the justifications of a ‘cultural studies’ approach to the Hollywood blockbuster.” Rather than interpreting overt and the hidden meanings of the shark or empirical audience reception, this study is focused on untangling the complex matrix surrounding the marketing of Hollywood blockbusters and its cultural impact. This recent involvement of academics in the study of the blockbusters as generators of cultural capital indicates that there is a call for research in this particular area, making this thesis and its topic current and a contribution to this new awakened interest in the field.

1.2 Problem Statement

The overall purpose of the study is to establish a relation between the movie *Jaws* and the generalized belief of sharks as “man-eating machines,” in order to understand how one original fictional idea can travel into popular culture turning into a generalized belief. The study analyses the dynamics between the text and the complex matrix of marketing and PR surrounding this Hollywood blockbuster.

The following imperatives below represent the most relevant areas to be addressed:

- Determine how the idea of sharks as man-eating machines became the axis of communication.
- Follow the message from its creation to its current status in popular culture.
- Understand how several communication channels are mobilized to deliver the message and identify patterns of reproduction.
- Explore how a text generates satellite texts, and how these refer back to the domain text.

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• Assess the reach of vertically integrated systems and their power of communication and revenue.

1.3 Materials and Methodology

The dissertation consists of a case study of the movie *Jaws*. In this section I will clarify the different stages of the research process, the materials used, and the methodology underpinning the study. I focused on this movie only and not on its sequels as I consider them to be one more product of the franchise spinning off from the original movie. The sequels hold the same added value as any other digressing text catapulted by the success of its predecessor. Therefore, the remaining three *Jaws* films will be covered as a consequence of first one. I decided to rely on primary archival sources for this study. An important approach considering that *Jaws*-related information has been extensively interpreted and reproduced by several authors using crossed references. Nevertheless, *Jaws*-related books, journals and dissertations by other scholars have been duly consulted and considered in the research process.

The research has moved across several stages. Initially there was a need for understanding sharks overall, their behavior, the role of marine research, their endangered status and other biological details that would help illustrating a panorama of the current concerns of conservationists. This aspect of the investigation worked as a personal background for further understanding the complexity of the problematics. During this stage I read more scientific related material and watched countless hours of shark documentaries to understand the breach between scientists and media. In a second stage, the recollection of written material to contextualize the research took place in two main categories, the *Jaws*-related material and the theoretical approaches adopted for this study. A third stage consisted in archival research concerning *Jaws*-related material, to finally arrive to the fourth stage in which I analyzed and classify my findings to develop the dissertation.

The scholarship consulted helped to find an appropriate theoretical framework in order to conduct the study, to contextualize the movie in a historical perspective, as well as to arrive at an informed understanding of what was already written about *Jaws*. During this stage, I also conducted a formal analysis of the film and its storytelling in order to have a
deeper understanding of how the movie was constructed. Scholars like Antonia Quirke or Nigel Andrews have contributed with their close readings of the movie. Notwithstanding this, I considered it essential to trace that knowledge and form an independent idea before taking on empirical research. This preparatory analysis has not made its way into the study, as it would be redundant to offer yet another analysis of *Jaws*; still it helped as an initial step to understand the vision and storytelling mechanisms. A perusal of all *Jaws*-related articles and books was of critical importance, not only for avoiding repetition and finding gaps, but also to optimize time and resources during the archival research.

With the theoretical framework and the historical context outlined, the following step was the archival research to consult all available material related to the movie. This research was conducted during one month at Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills, and at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library. In Los Angeles, I studied all *Jaws*-related materials from a production perspective across collections. I had access to the three drafts of the screenplay, PR campaigns, press folders, original posters, original storyboards, backstage and press pictures sent to the media, countless critic reviews, press releases, original promotional brochures, advertisements, and newspaper and magazine clippings related to *Jaws*, the studio, and the parties involved. In addition, I consulted published and unpublished interviews with Steven Spielberg, producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown, the actors, and the PR and advertising heads of Universal at the time. While in the archive, I also studied clippings about merchandising in general as well as Spielberg’s interviews for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Columbia Pictures, 1977) and *E.T: The Extraterrestrial* (Universal Pictures, 1982). I decided to extend the Spielberg research to those films that were contemporary to *Jaws*’ sequels, in a search for information about his detachment from these productions. The research conducted in Boston focused on the Peter Benchley Collection, and took me one step behind in time to the very early stages of the original novel’s production. Among the materials I had access to were drafts of the novel, private correspondence, fan mail, a diary, his personal research on sharks, contracts, collected memorabilia, photocopies from his royalty payments, and, most importantly, all correspondence between Benchley and the parties involved since the very first four draft pages.

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8 This analysis was for my understanding, and will not be included in this dissertation. That kind of analysis has been extensively done by other researchers, and it not the focus of this study.

Having amassed the materials, the complex process of analyses took place. I began by classifying the material chronologically in order to get a historical understanding of the development. The second step consisted in categorizing, finding patterns and structuring the relevant topics to present the information as graphically and accurately as possible in the limited amount of space available, without undermining any relevant observation. One area that fell on the wayside due to time limitations, was interviewing Murray Weissman. A conversation with him would have clarified a few questions that emerged after analyzing the findings. Nevertheless, I do not think that an interview would shed information to drastically change the results of this thesis, my inquiries rather relate to personal professional curiosity.

The overall intention is to present a streamlined argument for an integrated view and a clear understanding of the complex process that took *Jaws* to occupy such a privileged place in popular culture.

1.4 Scholarly Significance

The significance of this study can be addressed from different perspectives, as it is relevant not only for cinema studies, marketing and media. The general aspect of the shark myth concerns marine biologists and conservationist as well as popular imagination. On the verge of extinction, the disappearance of this apex predator could cause ecological chaos writ large. This thesis and its results will hardly stop shark finning, shark fishing, and other practices that endanger this species, but giving empirical support to the claims of conservationists might in a minimal way contribute to the battle to revert the image of sharks and create awareness of their portrayal in the media.

As acknowledged earlier, off-hand comments concerning the contribution of *Jaws* to put sharks under the spotlight have been vague, uncontextualized, and mere statements in an opening line for texts focusing on other aspects of the film. Similarly, most studies of the power of movies center on the films themselves and are, therefore, limited to their de facto audience reception. Hence, the contribution of this work relies on the analysis of all the factors involved in order to shed light on the power and reach of Hollywood beyond the moving images and their audiences, by moving towards their significance in the realm of popular culture at large. Public Relations, advertising and its interactions with the media, fan culture and other elements have mainly been neglected in previous studies as a contribution to the shark myth. This research moves beyond theoretical approaches concerning how
movies can generate a certain influence; its value lies in contrasting theory with the results of material-based research.

Foremost, this dissertation looks into this creation and dissemination of cultural content and how it progressively developed along the past 37 years. It examines the connection between *Jaws* and the shark myth “we” take for granted. Considering, once again, that Elsaesser stresses the recent upsurge in this area of research, this case study is in synch with contemporary academic research in one branch of cinema studies, and could potentially serve as a model for analyzing other mythical portrayals and cultural products created by the Hollywood Blockbuster machinery.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

Arguably, sharks carry different representations from culture to culture, and in different periods in history. Even though such assumptions are undeniable, the scope of this research focuses on the contemporary globalized conception of sharks as man-eating machines, as consequential of the mass media communication producing popular culture in our times. According to studies conducted by the Shark Angels organization, preceding *Jaws*, western cultures were unaware of shark threats at seas after overcoming the Moby Dick fear. Shark stories were a niche product of sailor and fishermen tales, but not a generalized concern. In addition, the fact that sharks were awarded a mythology of their own previous to Spielberg’s portrayal does not necessarily imply that such attributions were negative. In fact, sharks also carried positive connotations, regarded as gods, protector spirits, and reincarnation of ancestors by many cultures.\(^{10}\) Prior to *Jaws*, sharks had garnered limited screen presence, and despite presenting their potential danger, they were in most cases under the power of humans.

An interesting pre-*Jaws* movie is *Ti-Koyo e il Suo Pescecane* (*Tiko and the Shark*, Produzioni Cinematografiche Mediterranee, 1964), an Italian movie that found American release through Metro Goldwyn Mayer. Ti-Koyo, the protagonist who raised a shark as a pet, grew up in Polynesia dreaming of the day he could join the pearl divers and collect stories of his own adventures on the high sea. The story takes a turn as Ti-koyo encounters his shark at sea ten years later, and has to persuade the other fishermen, showing that it represents no danger. Even though this story illustrates an understandable respect for such formidable predator, it balances the risks by showing that humans can swim with sharks and that, even

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\(^{10}\) See Juliet Eilperin, *Demon Fish* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), for an overview about sharks and their ancient portrayals
though it might always represent a hazard to come close to a large wild animal, sharks are not particularly interested in humans as food.

*Caine* (Cinematográfica Calderón S.A, 1969), starring Hollywood celebrity Burt Reynolds, could be said to present some similarities to *Jaws*. The film was based on a novel and heavily adapted by Samuel Fuller, the director of the movie. The adventure of a gunrunner who is intercepted by treasure hunters in the Red Sea, warns about the dangers of entering the shark-infested waters. Even though sharks are regarded as a potential danger if blood would be present in the water, the hand wrestling scenes show a much more vulnerable shark. Once again, despite being shown as a potential danger the animals are more fairly represented. The promotion of the movie though was orchestrated around a deathly shark-attack to a crewmember on location, and the ad-line read “shark will tear you apart,” yet the presence of the sharks in the story is minimal. The film was a total failure, and even the director wanted his name removed from credits. Ultimately, it was retitled *Man-eater* and re-released in 2003, possibly taking advantage of the already established shark phenomena.

*Jaws* was the first summer blockbuster, and the first movie to articulate such a promotional structure that would, from then on, determine how blockbusters were to be produced, released, and promoted. However, despite being the prototype for a new way of doing business, and representing the cornerstone that cut in half the New Hollywood, the outcome of this research shall be regarded only as referential in the understanding of the mechanisms articulated for other blockbusters. In other words, even though the arguments raised in this discussion might shed light to how cultural capital is produced by blockbusters, each case study might raise new and particular aspects that worked differently for each specific case.

### 1.6 Definition of terms

Three key critical concepts frame this dissertation. The first is Justin Wyatt’s *high concept movie* (HCM), used to describe “the most market-driven projects in Hollywood, [that] are narrated as much by their marketing as by theirs ostensible story.” *Jaws* is among the movies that Wyatt presents as part of his analysis. Despite reservations about the extent to

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11 Elsaesser demarcates two periods in the New Hollywood. A first and more experimental one, compared to the European cinema of arts, and a second one post *Jaws*, in which the idea of combining well crafted movies with mass audiences and large profits was born. See Elsaesser, *The Persistence of Hollywood*, 238, 239.

which he applies the concept, I fully agree that *Jaws* offers a paradigmatic example meriting deeper analysis. The second concept is Thomas Elsaesser’s idea of *the pinball machine* (PM), a metaphorical concept used to describe the benefits of vertical integration and synergy in generating cross-promotion, optimizing the revenue of a movie.\(^\text{13}\) And finally, the most important concept for understanding the articulation of the myth in popular culture is Barbara Klinger’s interpretation of Stephen Heath’s concept epiphenomena.\(^\text{14}\) This term highlights the digressions from original texts produced by merchandising and other external elements to the movie, and how they orchestrate a dialogue between the original text and the subtexts resulting from such digression. In other words, the term epiphenomena translates the cultural implications of the text, arranged in a HCM-fashion, and the consequences of its passage through the so-called PM, and its digressive realm of discourse. This brief introduction of the key concepts will be further developed and contextualized below.

### 1.7 Possible Outcomes

In the following chapter, I will present a theoretical framework for the study that will include not only the three key terms, but also an overview of other theoretical aspects considered relevant for situating the overall findings. Chapter 3 presents the findings from the archival research. The chapter will provide a discursive account of the practices that shaped the emergence of the man-eating machine myth.

The overall intended outcome of this dissertation is to establish a clear connection between the conceptualization of sharks as man-eating machines that inhabits popular culture, and *Jaws* as HCM and digressive PM. The study will track the different mechanisms articulated in marketing, exhibition and spin-offs across cultures and time.

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2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

“... a film can leave a deep imprint, appealing directly to one’s consciousness and feelings. A film can change people’s lives and their worldview, it can have very personal and private meanings, but it can also attach itself to various public discourses and ideologies in order to dominate, transform and distort their perception.”

Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener

This chapter provides a theoretical overview of the most relevant elements framing the dissertation. As mentioned in the introduction, the three key terms that outline this study will be explored here. These terms are HCM, PM and epiphenomena. Yet, a broader theoretical discussion will offer a better understanding of the ideas and areas that drive this study, making the results of the research more accessible.

Given the title of this thesis, it is imperative to take off from the very own definition of myth. According to Raymond Williams, the word came into English less than two hundred years ago, from the already existing Greek word “mythos”—meaning fable, story or tale. From mid-nineteenth century, “the short use of myth to mean not only a fabulous but an untrustworthy or even deliberately deceptive invention became common, and has widely persisted.” In Mythologies, Roland Barthes describes the myth as “a semiological system, which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system.” This “metalanguage” of cultural meaning is described as a “type of speech” conveyed by a discourse, not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which the message is uttered. For Barthes, these discourses are not confined to oral speech; written speech, photography, cinema, reporting, sports, shows, publicity can all reference mythical speech. In other words, what Barthes is trying to describe is the cultural meaning ascribed to objects by popular discourse, and how these are communicated not only by words, but by images and other forms of

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16 Raymond Williams, Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 211.
18 Barthes, Mythologies, 131-133.
representation. He also pinpoints that the action of the myth is stronger than rational explanations, making it hard to see through it.\textsuperscript{19}

One of the key concepts for this thesis is Justin Wyatt’s HCM, coined to categorize those films whose narratives can be simplified to one sentence and one striking image. This reduction makes them eminently “marketable.” The term is used in the film industry to denotate those movies more likely to break box-office due to their emphasis in the style of their production and its integration with marketing and merchandising. The marketability of the movie is given by a presold premise such as a remake or an adaptation of a best selling novel, stars and a topic that can generate a national trend.\textsuperscript{20} In order to encourage marketing, the movie needs to present a simple and easy to communicate idea, hence, narrative plays a primordial role.\textsuperscript{21} The narrative of a HCM is the result of two important components: the simplification of the characters and the story into one formulaic sentence, and a strong match between image and music.\textsuperscript{22} The narrative proposed by Wyatt seems similar to the Disney formula of fairy tale narrative, a successful model of simple storytelling that clearly differentiates good from evil while providing an “easy to follow” structure with a positive closure.

Carl Plantinga agrees that Hollywood’s successful rapport with audiences relies on its “hyper-coherent storytelling” and its capacity to “offer movies as packaged experiences, commodities designed to engage audiences affectively and emotively, providing a pleasurable and/or thrilling experience.”\textsuperscript{23} In other words, Hollywood manufactures the “happy meal” of entertainment by providing easy to understand plot-driven movies, merchandising and even theme parks to extend the experience outside the cinema. The simplification of narrative provides the appeal for broader audiences; after all, simplification is a natural process of the brain for understanding and making sense of the world. These

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 155.
\textsuperscript{20} Wyatt, \textit{High Concept}, 7-15.
\textsuperscript{21} In similar fashion, but from a cognitive perspective, Noël Carroll uses the term \textit{Hollywood International}. He argues for a necessity of hyper-coherent storytelling to approach broad audiences in what he calls \textit{Hollywood International}. In this manner the power of movies relies on popular mass media films. He attributes success in this respect to two elements: \textit{widespread engagement} and \textit{intense engagement}. \textit{Widespread engagement} refers to the features of these movies that make them highly accessible for broad audiences, meanwhile \textit{intense engagement} relates to the features that enable the movie to depict situations with a high degree of clarity. As an aspect of the Hollywood International schemata comes the \textit{erotetic narrative}. A structure based on micro and macro questions that are to be answered in the development of the story, in order to keep the spectator’s interest, provide congruence and finally deliver \textit{closure}. \textit{See} Noël Carroll, “The Power of Movies,” in \textit{Theorizing the Moving Image}, ed. Henry Breitose and William Rotherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78-93.
\textsuperscript{22} Wyatt, \textit{High Concept}, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{23} Carl Plantinga, \textit{Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator’s Experience} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 7, 185.
narrative structures based on children’s fairy tale books are appealing to broad audiences, not only children but also adults who have been exposed to such stories since childhood. Undoubtedly, *Jaws* can be described in one sentence as the quest of three men to kill a man-eating shark in a feeding frenzy at a summer resort. Furthermore, there is no doubt that its striking poster and haunting music fully and evocatively capture the movie while unleashing wild fantasies of horrendous death. According to Wyatt, “the marketing campaign of *Jaws* indicates the direction which film marketing would follow during the next decade.”24 Given this, the production process of his paradigmatic example deserves a closer look for understanding how the shark got trapped into this “high concepting.”

Regarding discussions about the potential impact of fiction for “viewers”, Joanne Cantor’s empirical study about the lingering effects of horror movies deserves attention. Her findings “reveal that scary movies have an overwhelming tendency to stay with the viewer for a long time, long after the viewer understands that the lingering response is to some extent irrational.”25 In her study, *Jaws* ranked first with a record of 83% of the viewers reporting effects on *walking life*.26 Moreover, “65% of the effects involved interferences with swimming, not only in the ocean, but also in lakes or pools.”27 Cantor’s study is an important contribution illustrating the impact of movies on viewers; nevertheless, it is quite limited for showing how the generalized impact can live on in popular culture. After all, *Jaws* proved that a film could not only make millions and have an indelible imprint on its viewers, but that it could also precipitate a national pop cultural ‘event’.”28 Hence, keeping in mind that for this dissertation we are not looking only into the effects that a movie can have on its audiences, but instead how an idea presented in a movie can take more or less permanent hold in popular culture by generating a myth.

Not primarily focusing on the film’s narrative, Barbara Klinger emphasizes the operational system working around films. In her interpretation of Stephen Heath’s concept of epiphenomena, Klinger proposes to examine digressions in order to understand the dynamic between the social spectator and mainstream films. The goal of these epiphenomena is not related to coherent interpretations of the film, but rather “to produce multiple avenues of

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26 The author uses the expression “walking life” in reference to everyday life, being awake and conscious.
27 Cantor, “I’ll Never Have a Clown In My House,” 289, 292.
access to the text that will make the film resonate as extensively as possible in the social sphere in order to maximize its audience.”  

Her argument lays in the inter-textual agencies within mass culture that work to structure reception beyond textual boundaries. In other words, Klinger focuses on disruptions of the narrative into highlighted ideas within the text that are communicated and/or spread in the form of other products or discourses beyond the original text, reaching beyond the film’s audience and into society. This fragmenting of the text is part of the commodification process that in turn produces “a distracted viewer, turned into only those aspects of the text that this process has delegated as valuable.”

This dialogue between the film and popular culture is key for understanding how a movie, in this case *Jaws*, traveled beyond its audience into popular culture.

From a related perspective, Thomas Austin analyses blockbusters as a cult phenomenon by introducing the concept *dispersible text*, describing the dialogue between movies and popular culture at large. This concept evolves around three fundamental characteristics: “a centrifugal dynamic of aperture and extension via satellite texts, mirrored by a centripetal force which refers consumers from these texts to the film, and a further impetus to buy spin-off goods after leaving the cinema.”

In other words, a film enters popular culture through advertising, tie-ins, interviews, and other texts that the movie itself generates, consequently attracting an audience that is exposed to these texts and leaves the cinema encouraged to buy the merchandising from the movie. At this point it is important to start devoting closer attention to merchandising as carrier of these called satellite texts.

For Alisa Quart, part of the overwhelming success of *Jaws*—and subsequently of *Star Wars* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1977)—was their innovation in kid-oriented marketing, a practice that took off in the ‘80s. She remarks how these youth-oriented blockbusters could sell enormous amount of tickets as well as a large varied assortment of ancillary branded products.

Although I completely agree with Quart in how *Jaws* mastered merchandising unleashing the awareness of satellite products as a vast source of revenue, the practice of merchandising was far from starting with this movie. As a matter of fact, licensing tie-ins was common to Disney since 1928, when the first licensees started producing Mickey Mouse related products. *Snow White* (Disney, 1937) was successfully licensed in the 1930s, followed by *Jungle Book* (Disney, 1967). Yet, the mouse was not the first to hit the mark either. Felix

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30 Ibid.
the Cat was already the focus of a large range of merchandise in the mid 1920s. Despite their early involvement on this practice, Disney did not master the practice until 1984 when they took over their own merchandising, achieving their peak of success with *The Lion King* (Disney, 1994). In the early ‘70s, a sudden trend for monster-related merchandising emerged inspired by Marvel Comics’ successful introduction of monster villains. Dracula, King Kong, Frankenstein and other classics joined the bandwagon. Considering the contemporary set up for the outcome of *Jaws* in 1975, this monster-merchandising trend arguably might have opened a gateway for Bruce to enter the market. However, given the immense variety of *Jaws*-related tie-ins, Quart is surely right about the effect of *Jaws* within the merchandising industry, as it reset the focus on the potential income of goods associated with a film and redefined the role of merchandising as a central element to the movies that could be more profitable than the original film itself. By focusing on younger audiences, Hollywood expanded the age range of viewers thus making a film more profitable. This merchandising trend would secure a standardized practice in the 1980’s. For further understanding of the importance and magnitude of *Jaws* it is necessary to draw upon the panorama of marketing present at the time in Hollywood. The movie did not only unleash the tie-in fever and reset the way in which movies were advertised and premiered in theaters out of the blue. Still, *Jaws* played a critical role in redefining a Hollywood in dire financial straits.

Since the onset of television, Hollywood struggled to find its way back to profit searching for new forms of vertical integration and synergy that would bring back the revenues and power of the studio era. According to Thomas Elsaesser, the first half of the New Hollywood was characterized by low budget movies that relied on gore, porn and violence. This reinvention of the *auteur* in the New Hollywood opened the scenario for new young directors to experiment. This gave directors like Steven Spielberg more freedom. The second half of the New Hollywood was marked by the success of *Jaws*. For the studio, the movie served as the prototype for the shift in the industry towards a new organization that

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34 For more information about horror merchandising in the ‘70s see Linda Francke, “Creep Chic,” *Newsweek*, November 4, 1974, 86. See also “Putting a Scare Into Sales,” *Forbes*, November 1, 1974, 44, 46; For articles about the merchandising boom in the ‘80s see also Harlan Jacobson, “Toyland,” *In Cinema*, December, 1980, 18, 20, 22.


guaranteed large profits: “the studio system stabilized itself around saturation booking, coordinated release dates and the targeting of public holiday weekends,” in addition, “the industry talks of money and profits of merchandising and franchising, of tie-ins and spin-offs, of secondary markets and residual exploitation rights at once.” Consequently the blockbuster turned into the symbol of a newfangled vertical integration in the audio-visual entertainment industries. Cinema turned into a service supported by commodities, functioning as a billboard for the secondary market and broader entertainment industry.

In order to explain how this New Hollywood-system worked, Elsaesser introduced the concept PM. “You launch with quite force the little steel ball, shoot it to the top, and then you watch it bounce of the different contacts, pass through the different gates and whenever it touches a contact your winning figures go up.” Basically, Elsaesser is illustrating the cross-fertilization between the movie and its tie-ins, serving as cross-promotion, and multiplying revenue in an exponential way. The secret for its success consists in owning as many contacts as possible guaranteeing the increase in the revenue. Before the 1948 Supreme Court’s resolution against vertical integration, Hollywood’s studio system guaranteed profits from production, distribution, and exhibition. Ever since, studios were scouting for novel ways of bringing in larger profits. During the ‘70’s there was a surplus theaters in relation to the amount of movies released. The common practice for acquiring the rights to exhibiting a film in a certain market occurred as a result of a bidding process. “During this auction process, exhibitors competed for rights on the basis of written bids. A typical exhibitor’s bid consisted in: a guaranteed amount of money that would be paid prior to the opening of the film, weekly percentage share, advertising contribution, the minimum and maximum amount of time the film would play in the theater, and a list of competing theaters that had to be prohibited from exhibiting the film at the same time.” In a previously unthinkable strategy for multiplying profits by reducing risk investment, Universal decided to ask the theaters to pay a share of the national advertising campaign for Jaws, while also allowing competing theaters to premiere the movie, a practice that was to become standard from then on.

Jaws portrays the archetype of HCM, combining the formula “the book, the look and the hook,” a triangulation based on a best selling novel, a striking image that captures the argument, and a marketing campaign to attract audiences and guarantee larger profits. Elsaesser explains how “the blockbuster is engineered for maximum meaning, which is to say

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37 Ibid., 277.
that culturally it is a collage of very different elements consciously chosen and deliberately put together in a particular manner.” These elements that are brought together can now be exploited in a separate manner. That potential success supported by a never before seen marketing strategy perpetuated the film’s life span and spread it across borders generating a money-making success unleashing a vortex of texts that referenced back to the movie in the form of digressions, epiphenomena. Successfully articulated, I propose, these elements create blockbuster ideas that linger in popular culture across time and borders. Klinger’s contribution, particularly, is of paramount importance for the theoretical framework of this thesis, as her line of reasoning works beyond the boundaries of the movie to focus on the dispersed satellite phenomena.

The following chapter will present the results of archival research concerning the production process that turned Jaws, and therefore the shark myth, into a timeless popular culture icon. I will thus analyze the shark’s commodification and the epiphenomena surrounding Jaws. By delving into the historical materials from the production, release and subsequent dissemination, I will show how this movie carved deeply into the collective imaginary through marketing and media.

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3. CREATING THE MAKE-BELIEVE MACHINE

“None of man’s fantasies of evil can compare to the reality of Jaws.”

The publicity of Jaws began two years prior to the release of the movie. 1973 was the kickoff for more than a decade of proactive Public Relations activities—in the spirit of “epiphenomenality”—to relentlessly promote Jaws. For the movie, Steven Spielberg reconstructed Peter Benchley’s novel by simplifying characters and narrative, and by setting the focus on the shark; the epiphenomena around it pushed this one notch further, disrupting the entire narrative to zoom in on sharks’ ferocious threats to human beings. Consequently, the movie and the idea of the man-eating machine were perpetuated in time and spread around the world by Hollywood’s PM, looking to extend its profitability and afterlife in popular culture. In the following section we will discuss the first steps in this journey to success.

3.1 Based on a Best Selling Novel by Peter Benchley

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, holding on to a presold premise such as an adaptation of a best selling novel is one of the several requisites that Wyatt suggests for a film to qualify as a HCM. Jaws achieved its status as a bestseller almost immediately after hitting the stores, although the process might not have been precisely what one would expect. Unlike other movies based on best selling books, the process of the movie Jaws began almost simultaneously as the process of turning the novel into a hit. Both book and film worked in parallel to achieve its success with a close joint venture between the parts involved. It was in Universal’s best interest to make of the novel a worldwide success, similarly it was in the editors best interest to make of the film a huge success in order to sell more books. Notwithstanding, novel and movie share little in terms of narrative despite the close relationship between their parts and their contemporary release. This process of adaptation was intimately related to the auteur freedom of filmmakers reining the New Hollywood.

40 Dialogue from Jaws’ trailer, 1975.
41 Wyatt, High Concept, 7-8, 15.
Peter Benchley was no stranger to the literary world. He was the third generation of a respected dynasty of writers. His sense of responsibility, discipline, and perfectionism was the result of a well-taught lesson by his father Nathaniel. He hence had his own agent at age 21. His interest in sharks started when he was 14, after his first encounter with these creatures on Nantucket Island, off Cape Cod, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{42} Even though he never pursued a career as an ichthyologist, he knew many renowned marine biologists and scientist with whom he shared time both as a diver and as a friend. On several occasions, the author explained that the inspiration for 	extit{Jaws} came in 1965, when a giant Great White shark (GWS) was caught off the coast of Long Island. The idea haunted him. What if the shark would take it back on the fishermen? What if these animals would seek revenge?\textsuperscript{43}

The four pages of the “shark novel” that he submitted to Roberta Pryor—his agent in New York—opened with the girl attacked by the shark under the moonlight, and continued with a description of the characters and their emotional relations.\textsuperscript{44} The promising brief made Thomas Congdon, Jr. pay $1,000, and he asked Benchley to submit 100 pages for an option representing the publishing company Doubleday/Bantam.\textsuperscript{45} Betty Prashker, vice president of Doubleday, was one of the first to notice the potential of the shark within the novel, and did not hesitate suggesting some ideas to enrich the story. “Benchley’s shark passages are marvelous [… ] couldn’t the frame of the story be the hunt for the shark? All the action could take place during the Fourth of July weekend, with the death of the woman as a kind of prologue,” she suggested.\textsuperscript{46} However, he kept the shark as a small part of a story framing the misery of human relationships. According to 	extit{Washington Star}, Bantam finally bought the property for $400,000 and turned it over to Doubleday to publish the paperback, a common practice that ensured leading magazines to review the book.\textsuperscript{47} It was 1972 when the

\textsuperscript{42} Tom Rhodes, “Jaws Author Eats his Words to Save ‘Misunderstood’ Sharks,” \textit{The Sunday Times London}, August 8, 1999, 23.


\textsuperscript{44} The draft returned with promising comments from the publishers’ readers. “Great adventure tale of man against nature. Moon, Hooper and Brody are excellently written parts, with good dialogue, and conflicting motivations. The shark killings are gruesome enough to satisfy the most carnally inclined audience and the love interest, between Hooper and Ellen, I found erotic. This material speaks best of itself, and I feel confident that there will be no lack of offers for it.” See the synopsis submitted by Benchley for full comments, in the Peter Benchley Collection at Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library.

\textsuperscript{45} Nelson, “Peter Benchley, 65,” B.11.

\textsuperscript{46} Quoted from a letter from Thomas Congdon to Peter Benchley, dated June 1, 1972. For full letter see appendix point 12. For further information consult Peter Benchley’s correspondence in the Peter Benchley Collection at Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library.

long writing process commenced. The emblematic title was, doubtlessly, an excellent choice in terms of marketing. It is concise, easy to remember, convenient to associate to tie-ins, and its impact is as straightforward as a full-speed shark attack. The title was something Benchley struggled with for a long time, having to refer to it as “the shark novel” during the writing and editing process. *Jaws* was one of the many options he considered.

There are several versions regarding Bantam’s investment for the book. According to Marilyn Bender’s article “Record Fall Pray to ‘Jaws’,” *The New York Times*, August 31, 1975, F3. The sum would rise to $575,000 for the paperback. My assumption is that the difference might be Benchley’s payment of reported $175,000, which added to the $400,000 mentions sums a total of $575,000.


Around the world, the title was changed to better suit the local audiences. The chart has been copied from an undated article in *Variety*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Local title</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Der Weisse Hai</td>
<td>The White Shark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Les Dents De La Mer</td>
<td>The Teeth of the Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Dødens Gab</td>
<td>Jaws of Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Tappajahai</td>
<td>The Killer Shark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Les Dents De La Mer</td>
<td>The Teeth of the Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Der Weisse Hai</td>
<td>The White Shark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>Der Zomer Van De Witte Haai</td>
<td>The Summer of the White Shark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Meltooth</td>
<td>Jaws</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>Lo Squalo</td>
<td>The Shark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Hai Sommer</td>
<td>Shark Summer</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Tubarão</td>
<td>Shark</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>Tiburón</td>
<td>Shark</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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Film producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown read the manuscript for the novel and agreed that it seemed highly commercial. They entered a fierce bidding contest in which they tried to convince Peter Benchley that they were the right ones for the job.\(^49\) Sealing the deal demanded the big effort of personally convincing the author, whose skepticism against Hollywood ran in the family. A strong involvement in writing the script and a 10% royalty share were some of the author’s demands to which an enthusiastic David Brown agreed. In 1973, the Hollywood producers signed the rights for taking the story to the big screen. The news hit the media in April via press releases announcing their participation in the production of the movie as well as announcing the release of the novel in February 1974.\(^50\) From the moment Brown and Zanuck signed the rights to the novel in 1973, every single aspect related to the book and the movie was communicated.

The novel took off way in advance of hitting the bookshelves. With the persistent negotiations of Thomas Congdon, Universal got involved in promoting the novel. In February 1974, when the book was released, Congdon and Brown joined forces, getting support from Murray Weissman—Universal’s chief of motion picture press department. The strategy was to support the publisher’s press actions by giving the book to key opinion makers in business and media, and getting money from Universal for promotional spots for the book.\(^51\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Switzerland</th>
<th>AsFrance/Italy/Germany</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Tubarao</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>Tiburón</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Jaws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^49\) “David and I both received the book manuscript along with a few other people in the business. It was right off Peter Benchley’s typewriter. We read it immediately because we had advance word that it was something special. Independently, as we were reading it, we both decided that it was highly commercial. Within 24 hours, we were well into negotiations, and we found ourselves in the middle of a fierce bidding contest. We did everything. We got down on bended knee. We made a lot of promises.” (Richard Zanuck)

“We tried to sell Benchley through his agent, since we didn’t know Peter at that time, that we were the best men to make the picture. That’s all we could do because the other people had as much money and financial resources as we did.” (David Brown)


\(^51\) Betty Shapian was Doubleday’s publicist at the time. This memo is part of Peter Benchley’s correspondence for the book publishing, hold in the Peter Benchley Collection at Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library.

MEMO TO: David Cathers
FROM: Tom Congdon
The success of the novel was in the company’s best interest. “Big books make big movies”—explained Clark Ramsay—director of advertising and public relations at Universal—to Los Angeles Times—“our first concern was to help all we could in getting Benchley’s novel on the bestseller’s list.” For this purpose, David Brown, Richard Zanuck and Peter Benchley embarked on a nationwide tour for the book, giving radio and TV interviews, and making

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**RE: Jaws**

Following your good suggestion, I phoned David Brown of Zanuck-Brown this morning.

1. He’s delighted to hear that our Betty Shapian is going after the tonight Show, and others, and he said that he’d be happy to have her call Murray Weissman, publicity chief of Universal, for whatever backup assistance she may desire. Brown is phoning Weissman today to tell him he may be hearing from Betty.

2. Brown is pleased with the way we’re publishing the book, especially the Today Show TV spots upcoming and the triple attention in the LA Times. I said okay, how about getting the big guy at Universal uncork some ad money? He said, ‘Right’. Absolutely. I’ll phone him today.

3. Brown says Universal isn’t buying books with any real hope of affecting the bestseller status of JAWS. It’s just that he and others at the studio want to give books to all sorts of business contacts and they figure it’s better to buy them retail and have them count in the tally. Laudable notion.

several appearances at bookstores around the country. Graphic advertisement was placed in the form of private letters between companies, in order to promote the achievements of the novel and generate expectations for the movie.

The novel attracted foreign interest rapidly, and Pryor’s letters to Benchley announced new deals all over the world. The contracts to publish the book abroad were flying in. Argentina, Brazil, Turkey, Denmark, Japan, France, Sweden. Even in Russia, were no official deals were made, fans were offering to translate the novel for their flourishing market of books. The novel took over the world, opening the way for the movie to follow its success, not by chance, but by the early involvement and support of the studio. Best selling novels might make blockbusters, yet studios can also make best selling novels. But can novels be directly translated into scripts?

3.2 From Novel to Script: The New Fish in the Tank

Novels turn into scripts through major adaptation to make them more fit for the screen. Narrative, the manner in which a story is told by way of different cinematic elements, plays a critical role in Hollywood movies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, simplifying a narrative mirrors how our brain naturally makes sense of situations. Furthermore, storytelling is one of the first modes in which we learn to make sense of the world.

53 “In an unusual move, Zanuck and Brown have been closely involved in promoting the paperback, although there are no direct financial ties between book and pic. The pair recently returned from a six-city tour sponsored by Bantam. Instead of the usual film-oriented p.a., they took the route normally used by authors, appearing in bookstores, radio-TV talk shows and interviews with some literary editors.”


“Dear Dick and David: With the tremendous first sales reports received from our paperback edition of Peter Benchley’s JAWS, I hasten to advise you that seldom in our thirty year history has a book taken off with such strong sales velocity. Today, less than a month after publication, JAWS is maintaining the fastest sales rate of any book Bantam has published since THE EXORCIST. We have just gone back to press with four reprints to make a total of 3,000,000 copies of JAWS in print. Another printing may be required in a day or so. This initial response convinces us that JAWS is a publishing phenomenon and that your production for Universal based on the book will be the most eagerly awaited motion picture of 1975.

Sincerely,

Oscar Dystel – President.”

55 For contracts and further details visit the Peter Benchley Collection at Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library.
Storytelling structures have been present since the early days of cinema. In *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, David Bordwell presents an astute analysis of the different techniques in Hollywood’s storytelling. Screenwriters at large, he claims, consider the *Three-Act Structure* as the optimal design for evocative storytelling. In such a model, act 1 introduces the problem faced by the hero, and ends with a crisis or major conflict; act 2 portrays the protagonist’s extended struggle with the problem, and ends with a personal challenge for the hero; and, finally, act 3 shows how the protagonist solves the problem.\(^{56}\) The first step for the major adaptation of the novel was reducing the multiplicity of plots into one linear story. According to Stephen Bowles, “the shark occupies only a few scant pages in the novel and serves only as a catalyst to provoke certain character relationships.”\(^{57}\) The main story in the book is the marital crisis between Agent Brody and his wife, Ellen Brody, as she starts an affair with Hooper, the marine biologist brought to town to catch the shark. Controversial issues of class, the economical impaired summer resort, and corruption are also in the spotlight. The shark plays a secondary role bringing all characters together. The film, in contrast, has ignored everything in the novel “that does not directly concern with the threat of the shark…”\(^{58}\)

In the chapter *Fantastic Biologies and Structures of the Horrific Film*, Noël Carroll explains that the effectiveness of the monster should be clearly demonstrated in the first lethal encounters with humans, but as films are “narrated from the point of view of humanity,” their survival is the morally correct outcome.\(^{59}\) This theorization frames *Jaws* to perfection. It’s opening scene, also illustrating the initial pages of the original novel, begins with the shark’s lethal attack under the moonlight. Significant changes were made to the end in the

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Kristin Thompson proposes a reviewed model of storytelling relevant for the New Hollywood. The structure has four acts and an epilogue organized as follows:

1. **The Setup**: Defines the character’s world and motivation, within the first 30 minutes.  
2. **The Complicating Action**: Focuses or recasts the central goals, introduces new situations complicating the attainment of the goal. This section last approximately another 30 minutes.  
3. **The Development**: Defers and delays the main action via subplots, and suspenseful actions.  
4. **Climax**: Following the *darkest moment*, the protagonist is forced to take action.  
   - **Epilogue**: Confirms the stability of the situation.

Thompson’s model, some argue, merely divides the second act into two parts, giving more detail to the formation of the narrative. Nevertheless, Thompson’s model is a theorization after observing the New Hollywood’s narratives from which *Jaws* represents, as we have seen, a prototype. Therefore, I consider that both structures work with the movie, and shall not make a difference for this dissertation.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 211, 209.  
\(^{58}\) Ibid., 211, 209.  
\(^{59}\) Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 141.
adaptation from Benchley’s novel to the screenplay, reflecting the importance of closure in narratives oriented to global audiences. Stephen Bowles emphasizes this changes made to the end of the story:

In the book Quint kills the shark by harpooning; in the film Brody kills him by exploding an oxygen cartridge. Hooper is killed in the book while in the shark cage; he escapes to shelter in the film. Quint is entangled and drowned in the ropes attached to the shark in the book; he is severed and devoured by the shark in the film.60

The change of the shark’s death was particularly upsetting for Benchley. The author felt that it was ridiculous to make people believe that the animal would chew and take an oxygen tank in its mouth to finally explode in the air after a gun shot.

Setting the focus on the evil shark was clearly a good move regarding storytelling and audience engagement, yet there was one aspect of this change that proved problematic. The shark they originally needed to cast for small passages was now the main character. Ever since the first negotiations to acquire the rights for the novel, the producers were planning to train a shark, in similar fashion as the dolphins in Flipper (Metro Goldwyn Mayer Television, 1964-1967). Eventually, Peter Benchley was skeptical about the movie getting done.

I didn't think that they could do it because I knew you could not catch and train a Great White, and I thought the technology wasn't good enough to build one. But Universal went ahead with it, although they had trouble getting a director. They finally settled on a 26-year-old unknown, who knew nothing about the ocean.61

The 26-year-old director was Steven Spielberg. He had worked with Richard Zanuck and David Brown before in The Sugarland Express (Zanuck/Brown Productions, 1974). Brown and Zanuck asked him to avoid any “artsy stuff,” and encouraged him to tell a straightforward story, but soon they understood that Spielberg had his own plan in which that was already a given.62 Spielberg was no film graduate, his grades in high school were not enough to enter UCLA, and he couldn’t afford to pay tuition fees at USC. Instead he

60 Bowles, "‘The Exorcist’ and ‘Jaws’,” 211.

“We told Mr. Spielberg at the start that we did not want any of that artsy stuff, a lot of fancy zooms and optical reflects. The story was to be told straight, with a beginning, middle and an end. But Spielberg was ahead of us. That was already his plan.”
chose California State University, in Long Beach, and he graduated with a major in English. Despite his lack of formal training in cinema, he had an outstanding understanding of popular culture and its audiences that gave him a unique rapport with the industry. “I always play two roles. I play the audience and jump back on stage and play the director, and jump back in the audience and sit with my arms folded, wondering how would I like to see it,” he explained concerning his role as a director. Spielberg was keenly aware of the audience and what the audience wanted. He has a knack for storytelling, he understands the business, and he is in love with movies and their power to manipulate audiences. Some even proclaimed him “an expert at extracting a complex range of emotions from that new hero/villain.” Moreover, David Brown observed: “Mr. Spielberg found new things for our shark to do that they were never designed to do.”

Spielberg had grand plans for the shark and for the script. The romantic novel had no commercial potential or appeal in Spielberg’s eyes, and he didn’t hesitate in taking matter into his own hands and modifying what he felt would be more efficient for the story’s impact and box-office appeal. Spielberg explained, “if I made the picture about the effects of one shark attack on the socio-economic decline of a community that is bent on summer dollars to avoid winter welfare, I think Dick Zanuck, David Brown and I would have been the only three people to have gone to that movie.” Spielberg was young, talented, self-confident and had his own vision of how the movie should turn out, a vision that didn’t really coincide with Benchley’s.

Peter Benchley wrote the first draft of the screenplay. The following drafts were written by two studio-writers, and once Spielberg was on board, his friend Carl Gottlieb took over the job of re-writing and making last minute changes in dialogues during the shooting. For Spielberg, the story needed to be simple, straightforward, focusing on the shark, and be

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63 “‘I couldn’t get into UCLA,’ says Steve, ‘because I only had a C average in high school. You needed a B-plus. I couldn’t afford tuition at USC, so I went to Cal State Long Beach and majored in English.’” Quoted from: Joyce Haber, “The Man Who Bit the Bullet on ‘Jaws’,” Los Angeles Times, July 13, 1975, T 31.
65 “Director of the 9th Era,” Esquire, February 1975, 71.
larger than life. For Benchley, the shark was only one more element within the story, as his main concern was to strive for realism, therefore, Spielberg’s one-dimensional adaptation of the characters did not satisfy his expectations. In reply to Spielberg’s comments, the novel’s author made public his discomfort in an interview with Los Angeles Times during the shooting at Martha’s Vineyard:

Spielberg needs to work on character. He knows, flatly, zero. Consider: He is a 26 year-old who grew up with movies. He has no knowledge of reality but the movies. He is B-movie literate. When he must make decisions about the small ways people behave, he reaches for movie clichés of the ‘40s and ‘50s. […] But, really, what Spielberg had to say in Newsweek was just too much. Where does this kid get off pretending to be an expert on sharks? And why does he find it necessary to bad-mouth the novel? 68

Benchley did not hesitate to voice his disagreement and concerns about the script’s lack of realism and credibility. In a succession of letters to David Brown, he meticulously pinpointed those passages that he found problematic. 69 Most of these concerns were ignored.


69 The following are some passages to illustrate the tone of the missives that Peter Benchley sent to David Brown. Each letter was three-pages-long, approximately; the selected summary shall provide an overview. To access a complete versions of the letters refer to Peter Benchley’s Jaws correspondence hold in the Peter Benchley Collection at Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. The first letter is dated February 20th, 1974.

Dear David:

1) I detect the fine gothic hand of Mr. Spielberg in the opening shot – from within the gullet. I disagree with the idea for three reasons: it’s hokey; it sets an unrealistic tone for the picture; and it detracts from the surprise element in the first shark attack.

4) On page 5, the horseshoe crab business is wrong. They don't hang around out of the water -- not that far onto the water, at least -- and it's unbelievable that a pack of them would somehow have discovered the remains and taken to treating on them. Furthermore, horseshoe crabs don't scuttle: on sand they move about as fast as a heavy turtle. A couple of another type of crab (blue crab, perhaps) might be credible.

5) Also on page 5, it is impossible that the remains would have been carried that far up the beach, beyond or atop a dune. The tidal reach on the Atlantic is nowhere near that of the pacific. Unless there was a hurricane the night before, that body wouldn't be more than twenty feet from the waterline.

6) Page 14. If Quint's mate is going to be black, why not avoid the cheap ethnic joke inherent in the name O'toole and seize the opportunity for verisimilitude! Native blacks on the vineyard, Nantucket, long island and eastern Connecticut are mostly portuguese. A name like Santos, Lopez or Silva would be much more appropriate. Also, such a man would not speak in the Tom accent he's given here. He would either have a strong 'down-east' or Massachusetts accent or a colorful hint of Europe.

7) Page 16 (and subsequent). This is an entirely personal reaction, but a $10.000 first asking price (let alone a later $50,00 deal) seems outrageously high for Quint. It leads me, as a reader, to wonder --- Christ, for that money why don't they import a team of shark-hunters from Australia?

Lacking concrete answers, Benchley stroke back with another letter the 15th of April 1974, in which he alleged being tired of the “stupidness” behind the re writing, and offers his collaboration for the process.
Overall, he was upset about the lack of realism, and how the characters were cut off leaving the story flat. Unfortunately for Benchley, Spielberg’s vision was on the “money-making” side, in tune with studios’ concerns. Benchley was hence pushed out of the screenwriting. According to David Brown, “Steven's Spielberg's instinct for hit movies was to have someone you care about. In the novel, the wife of Chief of Police was cuckolding him with the ichthyologist. Steven said, ‘You can't have three people on a boat being pursued by a killer shark, where one of them would like to see the other dead.’” On the contrary, Benchley preferred to eliminate Ellen’s character from the story instead of reducing her to such a meaningless and stereotyped role.

What turned *Jaws* into a universal, hyper-coherent narrative that could be appealing for audiences beyond age and culture was the hand of a young director who was not afraid of striving for his vision. Spielberg’s ability to manipulate storytelling and his ambition to make a movie for large audiences paid off. At the time “Universal [was] experimenting with new campaigns,” explain the producers, “far from giving up on the film, they’ve tried to find ways of making it succeed. So the work of a young and new director is not necessarily short-changed. Because Steven Spielberg is invaluable to us and to Universal Studios, where he’s

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Dear David:

As I mentioned on the phone this morning, I am deeply troubled by some things in the final draft screenplay of "Jaws." I fear that if they were ever to appear on the screen, the picture would be hooted at -- not just by shark-freaks, but by general audiences, too -- as an insane farce. Furthermore, I think they detract for the suspense of the film.

[...] I am aware that 1) film is a director’s medium, 2) my part in the entertainment has long since technical ended, and 3) you may well decide to make this letter in a paper airplane and skim it off the top of the tower. But if I did want to convey these points, if only to vent my spleen. As I have said (and said, and said), I would be willing --- nay, eager – to meet and work with Steve, should he deem it helpful.

The third letter was sent the 18th of October 1974.

Dear David:

As you suggested I’ve gone through the script again and have located about a dozen minor inaccuracies which, if uncorrectable in looping, will be noticed by perhaps half of one percent of your audience. If they’re easily fixed, so much the better.

2) P.39, bottom: Hooper's speech is a bit ignorant. He would never mistake a great white's bite mark for isurus glaucus, which is a mako. Unless the other Latin name is a typo, he's pronouncing the name, which should be charcharinus longimanus. And longimanus is an awfully unlikely candidate, too. It's a pelagic white-tip that is rarer even than a Greenland shark in shallow eastern waters. He could conceivably mistake the bite for galeocerdo cuvieri (a tiger). This is really a tiny point, but if he's going to be so knowledgeable, he might as well be correct.

3) P. 49, two points: It is absurd for Brody to state (and Hooper to concur) that most shark attacks take place in three feet of water, around ten feet from the beach. That's a wild, insupportable generalization. Second, I continue to believe that mentioning the famous 'rogue' theory is confusing and misleading. And the 'rogue' theory, such as it is, doesn't have anything to do with Territoriality.

70 Untitled, *Empire Magazine*, Undated, 80.
under contract, that his films get top attention.” Left out of the screenwriting, Benchley was still credited according to the contract.

By eliminating all subplots and by simplifying characters, Spielberg placed the focus on the shark. To emphasize its danger, Quint’s character was enlarged and given a new prominence and profile as the shark’s nemesis engaged in a mythical confrontation within the basic successful formula of good vs. evil, simple, straightforward and unforgettable. Through this process the novel was turned into a goal-oriented, plot-driven HCM.

3.3 Meet the Villain: Bruce Superstar

In order to simplify the “good vs. evil” hypercoherent narrative of the storytelling, characters needed to undergo major changes. According to Carl Plantinga, narrative elicits emotions and seeks to sympathetic response or not, since “sympathetic or antipathetic emotions arise from the spectator’s assessment of a narrative situation primarily in relation to a character’s concerns, goals, and well being.” The characters in the novel were more complex, and so were their lives and relationships. Sophisticated Ellen was tired of her husband Brody, a grumpy police officer with no ambition and too keen on alcohol. The shark attack brings to town a handsome and young marine biologist, Hooper, who starts an affair with Ellen. In a controversial interview with Newsweek, Spielberg explained: “Peter Benchley’s view of his book was not my view of the movie I wanted to make from his book […] Peter didn’t like any of his characters, so none of them were very likable. He put them in a situation where you were rooting for the shark to eat the people in alphabetical order.” The novel strives for realism, meanwhile the movie searches for different resources to magnify the “good vs. evil” confrontation, turning Agent Brody into a hero. For the movie, the characters were simplified. Agent Brody is an honest police officer with a beautiful family working hard to fit in the community. Ellen is a perfect wife and devoted mother, almost invisible to the story. Brody and Hooper develop a close relationship working as a team to fight the shark and the town’s corrupt authorities. Even Quint’s character is a stereotype of a lonely war-veteran turned shark fisherman searching for revenge. In this equation, the shark takes center stage as the counterpart to the Brody, the film’s hero. The shark is the villain; it represents evil and is

72 Plantinga, Moving Viewers, 72.
74 It could be also argued that the shark is presented as Quint’s nemesis, but considering the moral take and final battle, the hero is clearly Brody.
constantly referenced pinpointing the ruthless killer attributes. A group of heroic noble men go in a quest to hunt a ruthless man-eating shark that has attacked innocent people (including a child) in a summer resort. This simplification of narrative into one clear sentence is precisely what Wyatt proposes for HCM films. The reduction of a complex novel of human relationships into a movie about a shark that threatens a summer resort was the key element that helped *Jaws*’ success, not without causing some trouble on the way. While the shark is all bad, the humans are all good.75

Doubtlessly, narrative has a primordial role in character construction, and in the emotional response audiences invest towards them. Just as sympathy can be created through narrative by using certain tools such as insight or close ups, antipathy and the creation of “the monster” can also be achieved through cinematic means. Noël Carroll explains how monsters are constructed in movies, pointing out that the basic feature for the infamous evil is to be threatening and dangerous, and have the capacity—for example—of triggering “certain enduring infantile fears, such as those of being eaten or dismembered.”76 Similarly, David Brown believes that the fear in *Jaws* is of being eaten and being out of one’s own element, a fear he claims “was tapped [SIC] by accident.”77 Just as the human characters were modified to create sympathy, the shark was left no space to do so. On the contrary, it was portrayed in a brutal feeding frenzy at all times. One striking feature about Bruce is its resemblance to real GWS in terms of size. We are not talking about an oversized monster as King Kong, or alien creatures we have never seen. Sharks exist, and Bruce is claimed to be merely a half meter bigger than the largest registered GWS. The idea of encountering these man-eating creatures in real life doubtlessly boosts its powerful impact. Spielberg recently declared: “I learnt that lesson, fear comes from normal characters, from things that are imaginable.”78

The shark was a celebrity from the very beginning. The original idea was to transport and train an Australian GWS. In the end, the solution was to manufacture three mechanical sharks: a full one, one to be shoot from the right side and another one from the left side. A consuming five-months process. As is widely known, the mechanical sharks were as

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75 Even Quint, who can be regarded as an unsympathetic character gets some understanding from the audience when revealing his motivation for hating sharks after his experience in the Indianapolis. A story/scene added for the movie. This anecdote anchoring to reality was dismissed by survivors of the incident who reported that sharks were feeding on corpses and not on those who were alive in several interviews to the media after the movie was released.

76 Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 43.


78 Interview from the documentary *Science-fiction et paranoïa. La culture de la peur aux Etats-Unis.* (Wichita films, 2011). Directed by Clara Kuperberg and Julia Kuperberg.
uncooperative as their fleshy counterparts, which resulted in Spielberg showing the shark as little as possible, replacing it with Williams’ haunting score. However, what hasn’t been discussed is the expectation created by the studio around the shark. Rumors about the use of real sharks flourished in the media and journalists were even kicked out from the set for trying to sneak views of the mechanical sharks. Bruce was a big secret. “Look, we don’t talk about the shark. The shark’s off limits, y’hear. [sic],” said the PR department to Oui’s journalist, who found the truth behind such secrecy from the driver when expelled from the set: “Damn thing don’t work [sic].” Not only there were no real sharks, but the mechanical ones were not working. These unexpected malfunctions might have been boom for Spielberg creating suspense and a more believable terror.

Scant articles in defense of sharks were written, but they passed unnoticed as a drop in an ocean of shark paranoia. Overall, the ferocious power of Bruce resulted in a sustained media construction that was necessary for the movie’s success. The need to consistently communicate sharks as a lethal threat was of singular importance for the studio in order to set the stage for success. Bruce could not be friendly; the role was to be lethally threatening in order to represent the brand, therefore all PR efforts exaggerated its merciless danger. Once the movie was released, Bruce gained the discursive spotlight in magazine featuring him as a celebrity. His popularity grew to the point of being awarded the honor of 1975’s summer star in a 10 years recollection of the big acting breakthroughs published by Los Angeles Times in 1986. Recently, a Swedish TV show called Vad Hände med? (Acne Production, 2011) embarked in the search for finding what happened with Bruce after Jaws, as they generally do with other stars that have disappeared from the spotlight after a major success. The interesting point of these two examples is showing how the mechanical shark climbed to celebrity status on par with real celebrities.

3.4 Orchestrating the Shark

As important as the storytelling itself, music plays a major role in framing the story by providing sound elements that will help the viewer decode the actions. According to Kathryn
Kalniak, “narrative is not constructed by visual means alone. By this I mean that music works as a part of the process that transmits narrative information to the spectator …”

Opening music anticipates the movie’s argument and subsequently it refers back to the menace when played in other contexts.

The genius behind the creation was John Williams, who was brought into the project by Spielberg. The two of them worked closely concerning the music. A collector of soundtracks and a keen clarinetist himself, Spielberg even played in the recordings of *Jaws.* In 1999, after decades of collaboration, Spielberg explained their working dynamic: “John and I sat together and listened to a lot of Vaughan Williams and Stravinsky, and then we went off and composed on the piano. Before he orchestrates he asks me to come over, I sit with him, and he plays the entire score on the piano, and I’m able to make comments, changes or whatever right there, which is really a luxury.” The teamwork paid off, and the soundtrack was turned into a major success winning Williams an Oscar, a Grammy, and launching his superstar career. In several interviews Spielberg claimed that without Williams’ ominous score, *Jaws* would have only been half as successful.

Williams’ biggest challenge was to illustrate with music what we cannot see on screen. His music was the element that replaced the absence—or better said malfunction—of the mechanical shark. Scott Essman explains that even though character-based themes in film music were not new, Williams pioneered character as a way to envisioning entire scores. Obviously, this non-diegetic music represent a piece of information that the actors do not have, this access to different levels information is known in literary theory as *epistemic imbalance.*

Danger strikes any time, anywhere. Dissonance is a key to monster’s music composition. Under careful analysis, the theme intersperses the dissonance of threatening sounds — that will cue the shark’s presence—with joyful melodies that could outline a cheerful summer holiday. The Ostinato in *Jaws* consists of an E followed by an F, played by six cellos and three basses: da-dum. “I was looking for something that would describe the

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88 The one to introduce dissonance to horror movies was Franz Waxman in *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal Pictures, 1935). See Cooke, *A History of Film Music,* 99.
shark to the listener in an unconscious way. [...] The music would have to be very, very primal, unstoppable,” said Williams. 89 Initially, Spielberg had his reservations about the score.

He begun playing this very primordial, repetition of the lower notes. I thought he was fooling around. I mean ‘da da Dah da Dah da.’ I begun to laugh, and John said, ‘oh, no, this is serious. I mean it. This is Jaws.’ And I listened to it again and it grew on me. It wasn’t something that exploded as a correct choice. At first I thought it was too primitive. I wanted something a little more melodic for the shark.

The characteristic of the music that Spielberg refers to carries the primal characteristic of the primitive shark “that has survived millions of years without fear, without passion and without logic.” 90 The music in Jaws cues alertness and fear, while creating suspense. Noël Carroll claims that working towards an effective narrative, there is a need to introduce horror/suspense “in early onset scenes.” He further explains that, “suspense accrues as the audience is made aware that the monster is stalking an innocent, oblivious victim.” 91 That is precisely what Spielberg and Williams achieve in the opening scene, when the shark devours the woman while the infamous score orchestrates the massacre under the moonlight. From that moment on, every time the score plays, the threat of the shark and its ferocious presence is suggested. Moreover, this very primitive characteristic compliments the image and supports the single idea of the HCM. As Wyatt explains, “High concept films based on simplicity and abstraction of images, provide the ideal vehicle through which to market films through music. The music complemented the image without overwhelming the familiar, generically based narrative.” 92

The MCA soundtrack was a top seller tie-in, but furthermore it put an indelible mark in popular culture, used over and over to cue threat and fear on TV and in everyday life. Alissa Quart points out that the practice of finding broader audiences that buy tie-ins lead the studios to increasingly engage in synergetic cross-marketing enterprises such as the sale of soundtracks. In the ’70s, ’80s and ’90s, the sale of soundtracks was an established and prioritized practice, ranging from pop bands to symphonic music. Film music found its way into popular culture with emblematic scores. Among the most famous to travel into popular culture were Bernard Herrmann’s Psycho (Shamley Productions, 1960), John Williams’ Star

90 Excerpt from the trailer.
91 Noël Carroll, The Philosophy, 139.
92 Wyatt, High Concept, 139.
Wars (Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1977), Nino Rota’s The Godfather (Paramount Pictures, 1972), Bill Conti’s Rocky III (United Artists, 1982) and Lalo Schifrin’s legendary Mission Impossible (Paramount Television, 1966-1973). Yet some risk picking Jaws as the second most popular score in history after Psycho. According to Film Score Monthly, the score is “among the most recognizable character-based theme music in motion picture history.” Benchley described its popularity as follows: “If I’m elected pope and win the Nobel Prize, at my funeral they’ll still play the John Williams music from Jaws,” and actor Roy Scheider believed that the Jaws theme was as popular as the US national anthem. John Williams’ masterpiece was simple, lurid, and unforgettable.

The celebration of soundtracks in popular culture took Williams to play with some of these successful scores at concert halls on several occasions. This music, before considered not sophisticated enough due to its popular culture status, opened a new source of income for the elitist concert halls. Williams himself expressed that orchestras in the past were reticent to play film music in concerts. Michael McManus claims that “film music has the power to draw large audiences to the concert halls,” and Leonard Slatkin—son of two prominent Hollywood Studio musicians and director of the National Symphony Orchestra—emphasized that the concerts were not “pop concert” events and that the distance between concert and film music is narrowing.

The shark theme constitutes one of the most spread texts digressing from the original, due to its power to elicit fear by signifying the threatening presence of evil. The soundtrack turned into a money making machine just like the film and the score traveled beyond the movie into popular culture as a signifier of menace in an array of context, thus contributing significantly to the epiphenomena around it.

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93 See Mark A. Graves and F. Bruce Engle, Blockbusters, a Reference Guide Into Film Genres (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 220.
3.5 A Picture Worth a Thousand Words

As discussed previously, besides being reduced to one sentence, HCM are ideally represented by a single image. The reduction to one image is key for the marketability of the product. As Wyatt explains:

High Concept films lend themselves to merchandising and marketing by their abstraction of a key image from the film and through the manipulation of this image to extend the ‘shelf life’ of the motion picture. The image, which is replicated through the advertising materials and product tie-ins, can be seen as the expression of the most commercial elements of the high concept film.  

The promotion of *Jaws* was carefully shaped as to have a logotype with a specific font and a singular image that represents the movie: a shark with its wide-open jaws in attack mode. Michael Danesi explains that the promotional techniques of Logo-Power, a basic feature of the twentieth century, are based on the premise that the appeal of a product increases if it is associated with a distinguishing symbol. This is not merely a movie poster, it is also a logo, as *Jaws* has become a brand of its own beyond the featured film itself.

For the hardcover edition, Doubleday decided to go for the title *Jaws* on black with no picture, but their partners at Bantam thought it could be misleading and not representative of the content of the novel. “[…] I saw the dummy of that idea and thought it could be a book about dentists,” explains Bantam’s art director Len Leone. As an alternative, he suggested the idea of a shark and a woman for the cover. The changes were made, though Bantam’s executives were not so keen on the design. “They put a shark on, but a toothless one, a not very exciting beast of the sea. Then we asked them to put a girl in it, but they put a little tiny girl you could hardly see, and she was wearing a black bathing suit out of the ‘30s.

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They package these books for mature men and women in rocking chairs in the bible belt.”

It was simply not enough for Leone’s vision. The man to “juice up” the imagery was Roger Kastel, who charged $2,750 to immortalize the man-eating machine propelling towards the vulnerable naked girl. “He gave the shark teeth and a menacing expression, tore the bathing suit off the girl while concealing her body with surf, enlarged both shark and swimmer, and put it all in living color.”

"The only guy who is upset by the present logo is the artist who painted it. He was bought out by Universal, and he's now seeing his work on everything from cups to T-shirts and pantyhose," suggested Benchley. Kastel was however modest and attributed the success to the movie itself, though he expressed his wish to have kept the original piece.

According to Leone, “the picture shakes people up because of the serious problem that the young lady has. It's beauty and the beast thing. The beast isn’t going to be kind on that lady on top.” Leone’s observation is indeed accurate. In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes defines the range of meanings available in an image, and obvious to everyone, as the Studium. This unified and self-contained meaning of the image can be taken in at a glance. We see the picture, we see the shark and we see the girl, we can anticipate her death, a horrible one we are reminded of over and over each time we confront the image.

Representing another digressing text from the original.

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
105 “That was all a year ago, and I don’t much think about it. I did see the political cartoon in Time magazine, but I didn’t know there were others. I don’t know if there’s anything special about the picture, it’s just a good movie. I guess it’s nice to realize that it’s gone that far.” “It was on display in the window of Brentano’s in New York for a while. But I don’t know where it is now – either Bantam or Universal has it. I had somebody ask to buy it, but I don’t have it. You know, he said, I kind of wish I could have it back, but I think I’ve seen the last of it.” See original quote in “A Picture Worth a Thousand ‘Jaws’,” n.p.
106 Ibid., n.p.
Peter Benchley believed that the cover certainly increased the sales of the book. The image was so powerful that Universal used the graphic to develop their campaigns, creating a unified impact. Universal’s publisher explains that the company usually develops their own artwork, but that the design was so terrifying, with a readily identifiable menace that characterizes the film immediately. “You know it is a terror packed film,” said producer David Brown. And even competitor Joseph Hyams, vice president of advertising and publicity at Warner Bros. recognized the genius in the imagery and described it as “a fantastic piece of graphics.”

Summing up the marketing from scholarly perspective, Thomas Schatz assets that both “the provocative poster art and Williams’ pulsating, foreboding theme conveyed the essence of the film experience and worked their way into the national [and globalized] consciousness.” Leone’s creative vision was to be one of the key elements in the promotion of *Jaws*. In HCM-fashion the story was reduced to one simple idea and the idea was reduced to one shocking image destined to be timeless and emblematic. The poster and the image of the shark became phenomena in themselves. There was no need to watch the movie in order to understand the gist of the story or to feel threatened by that dangerous-looking monster.

According to *Newsweek*, “The movie’s Great White shark became a national symbol overnight, a cliché by the morning after.” As soon as the image reached the media, cartoonists all around the country appropriated it. Political cartoonists were the first to understand Bruce’s potential. Suddenly the shark was turned into any imaginable threat. Inflation, Congress, energy crisis, undercover security operations, oil profiteers, the CIA, Reagan, hand-gun legislation, taxes, Eastern Division clubs about to eat the Yanks, higher fuel costs, communism, and, of course, Fidel Castro disguised as the shark. It is a major challenge to put in words the magnitude of this visual cornucopia. In a single week multiple newspapers would make a reference to the movie on their comic stripes, and the appropriation went on uninterrupted for months. The PR and advertising department at Universal took advantage of this to further boost the phenomenon. Their printed Ads for the movie featured the cartoons in full-page spreads in *The New York Times* with titles such as

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“Jaws fever!”¹¹³ Or “Everybody’s enJAWing it!”¹¹⁴ Non-political cartoonists also chipped in. Classic comic stripes such as Peanuts and Garfield were emulating the image, the movie or merely sharks.

Figure 5. Jaws-inspired cartoon. Jim Davis, Garfield. Published in Press Telegram, 6th November 1986, C11.
Figure 6. Jaws-inspired cartoon. Dunagan, Tell it Like it is. Published in New York Daily News, 18th July 1975, 92.
Figure 7. Jaws-inspired cartoon Dunagan, Tell it Like it is. Published in New York Daily News, 5th August 1975, A.

Los Angeles Times became a recurring comic strip publisher with references to the movie, and the section “Tell It Like It Is,” drawn by Dunagin for the New York Daily News frequently published Jaws-related humor. The shark was any enemy, any threat, and it soon escalated to the most evil creature imaginable.

Popular magazines alluded to the image on their covers. MAD Magazine dedicated its cover to Jaws in its edition of January 1976 and the poster design could be emulated without the shark, like in Playboy’s cover of December 1975. On June 25th 1975, with a 7 pages spread and the title Super Shark, Bruce made it to the cover of TIME.

Murray Weissman refers to the event as the cornerstone for unleashing the “sharkmania.” “I guess it’s like Beatlemania a decade ago, except that the Beatles popularity was largely concentrated in a particular age group, while sharkmania seems to know no bounds,”\footnote{Getze, “Jaws Swims to Top in Ocean of Publicity,” G1.} said
Clark. And he added, “from then on, every shark attack in the nation made news. Shark symbols were used to sell everything from speed-reading courses to real estate. Ice cream parlors renamed their flavors, ‘sharklit’ and ‘finilla.’”

The popularity of the image grew to the point of being immortalized and is still referenced to this day. The 2010 shark accident in Sharm el Sheikh was anchored to *Jaws* by Swedish and British tabloids, yet the shark references are not used only for shark-related incidents. The Swedish publication *Affärs-världen*, for example, recently used it to illustrate the article “Horror on the Stock Market” [My translation] referring to the slump for Swedish bio-technic stocks.

### 3.6 Water, Blood, Action: Release the Shark

The status of *Jaws* as the first summer blockbuster might be one of the most discussed aspects about the movie in academia, particularly the scope of theater opening and never before seen TV ad campaign. Ascribing its success to only these two factors would be highly reductionist. The PR campaign that took off in 1973 paved the ground for that impact by creating audience expectations, which clearly were satisfied judging for the results of this well-constructed movie. The emphasis here will be in the studio’s articulation of the PR and Ad campaigns that set the standard for such grand openings. Drawing upon the amount and type of communication spread in the media is relevant in order to track the shark myth in popular culture, as this discourse forms opinions beyond the actual moviegoers.

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116 Ibid., G1.
When shooting at Martha’s Vineyard begun in 1974, journalists were invited to make interviews on location. According to Universal’s public relations specialists, this was another attractive feature inspired by the location itself. Martha’s Vineyard is an exclusive summer resort and the PR team was savvy in bringing in journalists with all costs paid to spend a couple of days in paradise, an invitation that was hard to refuse. More than 200 interviews were conducted during the shooting. “About three times normal, even for a big movie at the time.”

In addition, Clark Ramsay estimates that 200,000 to 300,000 press releases were sent out to communicate diverse aspects of the movie. David Brown explains the strategy:

> Our theory is that you can’t create publicity from unpublicizable gush. In the case of *Jaws*, as you know, we had the world’s press arriving at Martha’s Vineyard. Seventy personalities, among them Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor, Mike Wallace, and Dick Cavett, stood on the set just to see what was going on. Time, Paris Match, German television came in by every boat and plane. The real problem is what to do when shooting ends…

This constant flow of information and the large amount of interviews on set helped selling books while creating expectations for the upcoming movie. When the shooting was over, the producers hit the road on a sixteen cities—twelve days road tour hitting everyone in the media. According to Richard Zanuck,

> Usually, there’s a dead period between the end of shooting a film and its premiere. We’d got plenty of publicity per the shooting at sea off Martha’s Vineyard and we deliberately decided to sustain the flow of interest in it by using the book, then a paperback best seller, to keep us alive till the film was ready.

Keeping the story alive and communicating the characteristics of the product are essential practices in long-term PR campaigns for positioning brands. The operative factor lies in repetition.

An important innovation in the release practice pioneered by *Jaws* was the simultaneous openings in a phalanx of theaters nationwide. To support such a massive release, Kaleidoscope films, LTD was in charge of making 9 different versions of the TV spots. Two

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119 Ibid., G1.
120 Zanuck, “Dialogue on Film,” 51.
of them were 60 seconds, five were 30 seconds and two were 10 seconds. The spots targeted different audience segments and were strategically placed in prime time shows to reach them all. “The commercials ran 25 times and reached a total of 211 million homes. […] Male-oriented TV shows got male-oriented ‘Jaws’ commercials; female shows got female ads, and so on.” Ad-lines were repeated incessantly in millions of homes.

- “None of man’s fantasies of evil can compare with the reality of JAWS.”
- “It is as if God created the devil and gave him JAWS.”
- “It lives to kill. A mindless eating machine it will attack and devour anything.”

“We tried to buy 30-second spots (commercial) on every prime-time television show on all three networks for June 18, 19 and 20,” said Clark Ramsay, “we couldn’t get them all—maybe 80 or 85%.” To support the TV campaign, giant brochures in 4 colors were sent to the media and business partners. The cover announced: “The Nation’s No. 1 Best-Selling Book now the Screen’s Super Thriller. Opens Nation-wide on June 20th.” The centerfold described: “Backed by the Biggest National prime-time T.V Spot campaign in Motion Picture History!” 211,260,000 homes were reached with prime-time T.V spots. One of the striking features of the promotion of Jaws was that not only the film as a product was promoted. They manage to communicate and build a promotional campaign of the promotion itself and its status as unprecedented, multiplying and extending the coverage.

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122 To consult a full transcript version of the trailers refer to the material in the Margaret Herrick Library at The Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills.
124 Ibid., G1.
125 Extracted from the Jack Atlas papers Jaws-promotion. To access this material refer to the Margaret Herrick Library at The Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills.

23-Prime-Time 30 Second Spots.
Tuesday, June 17th
8:00 to 8:30 pm HAPPY DAYS ABC/ 8:00 to 8:30 pm ADAM – 12 NBC
Wednesday, June 18th
8:00 to 8:30 pm THAT’S MY MAMA ABC/ 8:00 to 9:00 pm TONY ORLANDO AND DAWN CBS/ 8:30 to 10:00 pm WEDNESDAY MOVIE OF THE WEEK ABC/ 9:00 to 10:00 pm CANNON CBS/ 10:00 to 11:00 pm BARETTA ABC/ 10:00 to 11:00 pm PETROCELLY NBC
Thursday, June 19th
8:00 to 9:00 pm WALTONS CBS/ 8:00 to 8:30 pm SUNSHINE NBC/ 8:30 to 9:00 pm BOB CRANE SHOW NBC/ 9:00 to 11:00 pm THURSDAY MOVIES CBS/ 9:00 to 11:00 pm THURS. NIGHT AT THE MOVIES NBC/ 10:00 to 11:00 pm HARRY-O ABC
Friday, June 20th
8:00 to 9:00 pm NIGHT STALKER ABC/ 8:00 to 9:00 pm WE’LL GET BY CBS/ 8:00 to 8:30 pm SANDFORD & SON NBC/ 8:30 to 9:00 pm CHICO & THE MAN NBC/ 9:00 to 9:30 pm HOT L BALTIMORE ABC/ 9:00 to 11:00 pm FRIDAY MOVIES CBS/ 9:00 to 10:00 pm ROCKFORD FILES NBC/ 10:00 to 11:00 pm CHRISTIE LOVE ABC/ 10:00 to 11:00 pm POLICE WOMAN NBC

126 Jack Atlas papers Jaws-promotion. To access this material refer to the Margaret Herrick Library at The Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills.
Included in the press kit distributed to all exhibitors was a catalogue with the twelve different advertisement formats for printed press, and seven pages illustrating the layout options for the Ads from which they could choose. The controversy erupted when the exhibitors were to cover a part of the costs of the national advertisement campaign. Up to the moment, they were demanded to participate in advertising by buying promotional spots in local TV. One of the arguments for the exhibitor’s discontent at the time was Universal’s revenue from movie rentals and tie-ins, from which theaters received no share. Many exhibitors saw Universal’s terms as coercive and abusive, but played along as soon as they had watched the movie.

The pressbook contained:

- A synopsis of the movie.
- Biographies of the actors, producers, author and director.
- Short quotes from the script.
- Two pages with snapshots of the film narrating some relevant passages.
- A detailed description of different tie-ins.
- A form to order copies of the radio/TV commercial.
- A shark-fact sheet. In addition to it, the studio handed in a ten pages recollection of “Facts About Sharks” describing the goriest recounts of shark encounters.  
  127
- A collection of “behind the scenes” pictures at Martha’s Vineyard.
- Pictures: scenes of the movie and plenty of shots of the mechanical shark and its Australian fleshy cousin in their most threatening poses.

If this campaign was missing anything, nature provided it. A shark accident on the coast of Florida hit the news on July 15th. Not even their good planning could see that one coming.  
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For the international marketing campaign, Zanuck, Brown, Spielberg, Benchley and the actors embarked, once again, on promotional tours that took them around Europe, the Orient, and South America.  
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In November 28th 1975, Jaws began its foreign openings in

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127 Peter Benchley, author of Jaws and co-writer of the screenplay supposedly gathered these background notes. The cover clearly stated: not for publication. Even so, the tendentious information worked as inspiration for the journalists. See the pressbook at the Margaret Herrick Library at The Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills.


five cities in Australia; Japan joined on December 6th and 42 additional nations for Christmas with more than 700 openings.\textsuperscript{130} Jawsmania took over the US in 1975, and the world in 1976.

In most markets around the world, Jaws established its undisputed supremacy for box-office honors, with the only exception of Italy.\textsuperscript{131} In Mexico, the movie broke all existing box-office gross records, opening in 62 theaters in 22 cities.\textsuperscript{132} In West Germany it was also a record-breaker attracting over 3,000,000 patrons, and in France it surpassed the million dollars during the first week of its premiere in 16 theaters.\textsuperscript{133} Even Cuba joined the shark phenomenon. Fidel Castro interpreted the film as a Marxist tale.\textsuperscript{134} The leader of the Cuban revolution expressed his admiration for the film as an example of how far capitalism will risk the citizen’s lives to make money, in reference to the town’s Mayor, and boasted that pirated prints of Jaws were satisfying the Cuban desire for cinematic entertainment, from which the studio would obviously receive no profit.

In addition to all the communication generated from the PR department, as soon as the movie hit the screen critics begun flooding newspaper and magazines with film reviews and interviews. Reviews were mixed; some questioned the artistic wherewithal of the movie, and referred to it as a B movie with a large budget. However, the great majority emphasized the well-achieved terror in hands of movie brat Spielberg. But one of the critics hit the mark when questioning the rating of the movie. The PG rating given to the movie seemed inadequate for some critics that considered the film too violent for children, especially since a child is killed by the shark in the story. Renowned critic Charles Champlin strongly argued against the resolution, publishing several articles, interviews and opinion columns that created a rumor of confrontation between the journalist and the producers of Jaws.\textsuperscript{135} This

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure11.png}
\caption{Promotional picture included in the press book for Jaws.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{130} A.D Murray, “Domestic Box-Office Past $150,000,000 in 23 Weeks; See Strong Foreign Bite,” Variety, 3 December, 1975, 1.
\textsuperscript{134} Mary Murphy, “ ‘Apocalypse’ Next for Coppola,” Los Angeles Times, October 25, 1975, A8.

discussion resulted in hundreds of pages of interviews, analysis, and angry fan mail that indirectly contributed to the popularity of the movie, as well as the haunting idea of devoured children by sharks.

3.7 The Shark as a Commodity

The discussion about the role of Hollywood in triggering consumption goes back to the early days of cinema. In fact, “promoting consumption became a conscious strategy within the movie business, indeed a necessary and logical part of its development.”\textsuperscript{136} George Mitchell explains how the political and economical elites supported Hollywood practices when they perceived its potential role in stimulating trade. During the 1920s and 1930s Hollywood was not only flogged for its escapism from everyday life, but also considered a tool promoting consumption by presenting the audience with products that idealized a certain lifestyle to dream about. In her study of Batman, Eileen Meehan suggests that we must understand blockbusters “always and simultaneously [as] text and commodity, intertext and product line.”\textsuperscript{137} In the case of \textit{Jaws}, the shark, obviously, has been turned into a commodity. \textit{Jaws} is a trademark, and the shark is its mascot in similar fashion as Ronald McDonald represents the hamburger brand, or Mickey Mouse Disney. In the branding process of \textit{Jaws} the shark is their image. Michael Danesi argues how “people react to symbols emotionally, seeing in them meanings that reach far beyond their specific terms of reference, so to speak.”\textsuperscript{138} In other words, when people see Mickey they see more than a cartoon mouse, it refers to childhood, fantasy, dreams, and other happy memories associated with Disney. Similarly,
when they see Bruce, and consequently any other shark, they see a death threat and their own vulnerability.

Robert Sklar pinpoints how “the promotional rendering of a monster shark attacking an unwary swimmer became part of a merchandizing bonanza that accompanied the film and ultimately launched a theme-park attraction.”\textsuperscript{139} Bringing back the concept of the PM, the movie and all elements surrounding it helped the cross-promotion generating an increase in the profits. Irrespective of this, as Elsaesser explains:

The challenge is to own not only the steel ball, but also as many of the contacts as possible because the same ‘ball’ gets you more and more ‘points,’ that is profits. The contact points are the cinema screens and video stores, theme parks and toyshops, restaurant chains and video-arcades, bookstores and CD record shops.\textsuperscript{140}

Owned by the MCA part of Universal, the soundtrack was also bringing in the cash flow while mirroring the movie’s promotion based on the shark threat. Having lost territory by losing the theaters, the studio was taking steps back in by making the theaters cope with part of the advertising investment. Now it was time to supply the demand of shark-related

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure13.png}
\caption{Promotional picture of the first Jaws toy to illustrate the press release.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure14.png}
\caption{Jaws towel ad, The New York Times, 2\textsuperscript{nd} August, 1975.}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{140} Elsaesser, \textit{The Persistence of Hollywood}, 277.
products as a result from the successful branding.

On July 28th, 1975 the Jawsmania phenomenon arrived to Newsweek. The text described the fascination for shark products that ranged from “shark-emblazoned T-shirts to real shark jaws.” An article in Variety reflected upon promotional tie-ins and merchandising as “often more significant as an advertising tool than a source of revenue.” Capitalizing on this trend, Universal developed an extended list of merchandising products and licenses for the movie. In only 8 weeks, the Jaws T-shirts sold nearly 500,000 units, 2 million plastic Jaws tumblers, 200,000 records and around 100,000 items of other Jaws products.

The first toy was announced at the end of 1975, to arrive to shelves in 1976. This simple shark game was the first of many child-oriented merchandising from the Jaws franchise. Authentic shark teeth in a gold chain were available for sale at $290, T-shirts ranged from $3.95 to $8.50, swimsuits for $23 and knee socks for $1.75.

Shark teeth pendant sellers guaranteed “Jawsmania,” 16.

Greenberg, “Product Merchandising,” 64.


“Merchandising rights to Jaws are proving nearly as lucrative as the box-office performance of the Universal film which, in 11 weeks, has grossed more than $124 million in fewer than 1,000 theatres. The film’s unprecedented success has spawned runaway sales of items ranging from Jaws T-shirts to shark’s tooth jewelry, all licensed by Merchandising Corporation of America, Inc., a Universal subsidiary.

The Jaws T-shirt has sold nearly 500,000 units in a record eight weeks. ‘The Jaws Log,’ a Dell paperback book by Carl Gottlieb, co-author of the film’s screenplay, is now in its seventh printing with sales nearing 1 million copies. Also on the bestseller list is the original Peter Benchley novel from which the film was adapted, with 9 million copies sold to date.

More than 2 million plastic Jaws tumblers have been sold. Jaws music score album sales through MCA Records are nearing 200,000. Other merchandising includes beach towels (100,000 sold), bike bags, blankets, costume jewelry, shark costumes, hosiery, hobby kits, inflatable sharks, iron-on transfers, games, posters (two varieties), shark’s tooth gold charm, shark’s tooth necklace, sleepwear, kiddie sweaters, swim towels, swimwear for women, ties for men and a water squirter.”

success in combat, fortune in life, and love if wearing the ivory white teeth “taken straight from the jaws of a deep-sea monster.” “You’ll experience a shiver of delight when you place it around your neck, aware of its previous history as one of nature’s most frightening weapons.”145 For those who dared, the Jaws beach towel was available, and it was advertised as: “If you’ve got the courage we’ve got the JAWS towel.” “If you are brave…take it to the beach! Or play it safe and use it at home.”146 Fear, threat, danger, and power were all emotions used by ad lines in reference to the shark. In addition to the Jaws products, celebrities associated with the success appeared in ads for brands with shark/Jaws references. Peter Benchley participated in a Rolex campaign next to a picture of a GWS. In the presence of the Great White…time suspends itself.”147

Only one month after its release, Newsweek identified the movie as responsible for moral panic at the beaches. “Sharkmania has magnified shark consciousness and multiplied shark scares.”148 Summer resort owners complained about a decrease in tourism as a consequence of the newborn paranoia. The problematic attracted large media coverage, unintentionally working as promotion for the movie as well as the shark thread.

That same day, a one-page article entitled “A Nation Jawed” appeared in TIME magazine. Opining that the blockbuster phenomena had turned the shark into the most feared creature in the world, the author recounts the arduous task lifeguards faced when bringing peace of mind to the hundreds of tourists hysterically reporting false sightings of sharks. “There is no way that a bather who has seen or heard of the movie won’t think of a Great White shark when he puts his toe in the ocean,”149 declared a lifeguard to Time magazine. Sharks were everywhere, but mostly, in people’s scariest fantasies.

146 Quoted from ad see The New York Times, August 8, 1975, n.p.
147 Quoted from Rolex advertisement, see Wall Street Journal, November 21, 1975, n.p.
148 “Jawsmania,” 17.
One of the most successful tie-ins to perpetuate *Jaws* in popular culture emerged in 1976, when Bruce got his biggest live performance with the *Jaws* ride at Universal Studios. Theme parks are family attractions and perfect platforms for selling merchandising to captive audience already transported to the magical world of fiction (the brand world) enabling hybrid consumption supported by child demand. More or less instantly, pictures of Bruce’s live performance were all over the media, as journalists covered the story with detailed description of the encounter. Studio-printed ads offered a chance to experience “a real shark attack.” Needless to say, the *Jaws* ride is still one of the top attractions at Universal Studios. The classic greetings from Bruce trying to take a bite from the tram is still working, and a merchandising store designed as belonging to Amity Island greets guests with a large shark hanging in the entrance and the legendary sign: “Welcome to Amity Island.” *Jaws*’ merchandising remains a top-seller at the park. T-shirts, key chains, shark hats, postcards, magnets, and soft puppets run head to head against the merchandising from today’s biggest and most recent attraction *King Kong 3D*. And curiously, any unbranded shark product can be considered *Jaws* merchandising at the store, despite lacking the official logo. These parks represent a seamless system of promotion and sale of tie-ins by transporting people into the movie’s world.

As the penetration of the brand skyrocketed in popular culture, copycats emerged and Universal entered legal battles to protect their product.\(^{150}\) Steve Adler, vice president of Merchandising Corp. of America called “Jawbilia” the hottest thing in merchandising. “[…] It’s so hot, in fact, that everybody wants to get into it—one way or another.”\(^ {151}\)

The studio has licensed a whole line of spin-off products, posters, T-shirts, beach towels, shark’s tooth pendants – and independent entrepreneurs were scrambling aboard the gravy train. A ‘Jaws’ discotheque opened in the Hamptons, with a fake shark made of wood, wire and shower curtains for atmosphere. A Georgia shark


“Universal Pictures and the Merchandising Corporation of America, manufacturers of ‘Jaws’ T-shirts, have sued a Woodland Hills clothing manufacturer, charging misappropriation of the logo used for the film in the printing of T-shirts. The suit, filed yesterday in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleges that Keepers Industries Inc. engaged in unfair competition by applying to its T-shirts a picture of ‘a shark ascending through the water towards a swimmer.’ The plaintiffs asked for unspecified damages and a permanent injunction against the sale and distribution of any items with the ‘Jaws’ logo without authorization.”

fisherman, who once sold fins to Chinese restaurants at 15 cents a pound for soup, discovered a sudden market for jawbones at $50 the set.  

Ralph Ferguson, owner of a marine supply store near Los Angeles’ harbor reported a sudden increase in the demand of shark jaws that for years had collected dust in his warehouse. According to the man, his stock of 15,000 jaws was down to 5,000 dwindling fast. Trips to Australia for cage diving were offered for $4,000 with the promise of “getting attacked by the shark.” Moreover, fishing spured, particularly among young people. “Everybody thinks it’s terrific to kill a shark,” expressed a concerned Benchley, predicting that such self-indulgence could lead sharks to extinction. Sharks were also finding their way to the table. According to Preston Batistella, a shark meat salesman from New Orleans, his sales of shark meat increased from 60,000 lbs. in 1973 to 300,000 in 1975. And even the Fisherman Council took advantage of the trend releasing posters with the Jaws image to encourage fish consumption: “Get Even, Eat a Fish.” Everybody latched onto the shark trend hoping for a share in the frenzy created by Universal. Even though Jaws and Bruce were copyrighted material, nobody could stop people from using sharks for revenue with the same promotion. The boundaries between Bruce and sharks at large were increasingly blurred.

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152 “Jawsmania,” 16.
154 “Shark a la Mode,” TIME, January 12, 1976, 55.
155 “The movie broke business open,” said Glenn Frankel, captain of the Blue Water, which sails out the Montauk Marin Basin here. “I would say we had a 50 per cent increase this season of people chartering boats to go out after shark and other big game.” Captain Frankel said in previous years maybe one or two boats went after shark. This past summer, at least 15 boats were chartered regularly.
157 “Shark a la Mode,” 55.
158 Poster available in the Peter Benchley Collection at Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library.
3.8 Turn On the TV

Doubtlessly, the role of television is paramount for the film industry. It became one of the most important channels for movie-advertising campaigns implemented during the New Hollywood era. Additionally, television offered opportunities to watch movies at home, not least in the wake of the VCR, thus giving films an extended commercial life. This manner of releasing movies by enhancing and extending their profitable cycle through television has remained an almost unaltered practice. The habit of watching feature films on television was no novelty. It started as early as the mid-1960s, when studios licenced their libraries for broadcasting, later selling broadcast right for new releases. Yet, television at the time represented a clear competitor for the film industry, providing the comfort of watching movies at home, a practice that was about to change with the emergence of the VCR and the shift towards the blockbusters. The most fascinating aspect of this practice is that it shaped the way movies were shot to fit the box. According to Bordwell, by the mid-1980s most directors shot in this fashion. Given Spielberg’s experience in television before shooting the movie, one could state that Jaws was TV friendly from the very conception.

Raymond Williams drew attention to the cultural role of television as the “provision of centralized entertainment and in centralized formation of opinion and styles of behavior.” Underwriting his contention, television plays a fundamental role in spreading the myth of sharks as evil killing machines. Thus, the medium represents one of the many ways in which Jaws’ ideas have travelled beyond its narrative proper through the portrayal in sensationalistic news reports and the broadcasting of more or less tendentious shark documentaries in the cable era. In the same way as cartoonists did with the shark poster, TV shows were replete with Jaws references. As a way of illustration, American comedy show Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-) put on a Jaws inspired sketch introducing a character called “the land shark,” a shark pretending to be a delivery man, tricking women into opening their doors to eat them. The land shark character premiered in the first season of the show, but returned in several seasons in at least nine appearances. More recently, the TV series

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161 “Jaws II” (ep # 4. 01, 1975), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-).
“Jaws III” (ep # 6. 01, 1975), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-).
“Opening Monologue” (ep #23. 01, 1975), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-).
“Trick-or-Treating Land Shark” (ep # 6. 02, 1976), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-).
“Lucky Lindy” (ep # 22. 02, 1976), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-).
“No Funny Ending” (ep # 11. 03, 1977), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975-).
The Mentalist (CBS, 2008–) featured Patrick reading the novel Jaws and quoting it in his search for shark facts. Similarly, Family Guy (Fox, 1999–) offered direct references to the movie and poster in several episodes. The premiere of Jaws on HBO was accompanied by massive promotional campaign including full-page ads in newspapers, and a supporting press campaign.

The rise of special programming dedicated almost completely to sharks, such as Shark Week (Discovery Channel, 1987–) or Shark Month (National Geographic/Animal Planet, circa 2007–), do little to erase the footprint of fiction despite the opportunity provided by their large audiences. Shark Week reports about 60 to 100% above average ratings. This demand for shark-related content might seem beneficial for undoing the myth of sharks as eating machines by providing more accurate scientific information about these mysterious creatures; this has not been the case. The amount of shows needed to cover one week or one month of programming leads to recycling of a wide range of material, and not necessarily the most updated shark research. A vast majority of the shows are “shark-attack” related, and even the sympathetic testimony of the victims towards the nature of these creatures, along with the voice over narration, music and editing do not lead up a positive message. On November 25th, 2011, National Geographic world premiered the show Shark Attack Experiment Live. It was backed by a worldwide media campaign and two minute spots in the channel announcing a countdown to the show with a cliff hanger tendently insinuating the danger the divers were being exposed to in this experiment. Still the purpose of the show was to prove that sharks are not man hunters. The show was done in cooperation with shark-conservation groups from South Africa who offered themselves as bait for the experiments. Unfortunately, press releases for the show printed in the media across the globe promised the potential viewers an exhilarating thrill: to “witness a shark attack live.” Consequently, it is worth asking, what is the point of premiering positive shark-related content with a massive campaign reinforcing the myth? Needless to say, the promotion will...

“Closing Credits” (ep # 19. 03, 1977), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975–).
“Opening” (ep# 1. 08, 1982), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975–).
“Weekend Update” (ep #2. 27, 2001), Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975–).
“Always Bet on Red,” (ep #11. 04, 2012), The Mentalist (CBS, 2008–).
“Brian Griffin's House of Payne” (ep #15. 08, 2010), Family Guy (Fox, 1999–).
“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Fonz” (ep #18. 04, 2005), Family Guy (Fox, 1999–).
Shark Month features both in National Geographic and Animal Planet.
reach far more viewers than the actual show, demonstrating, once again, the powerful reach of digressions from original texts, as analyzed by Barbara Klinger.

3.9 Keeping the Shark Alive

Advertisement, sequels, copycats, tie-ins, shark fever, and fandom have kept Jaws in the media and, consequently, in popular culture almost uninterruptedly since the very first publications in 1973. For Tom Shone, “what is most striking about ‘Jawsmania’ today, however, is what a grassroots operation it was, driven not by the studio but by private profiteers, pirates, or just entrepreneurs with a single goofy idea.” Though I concede that the role of piracy was key in generating digressive texts, I still insist that the phenomena was driven by the studio through a product that was strategically put together and an exceptionally orchestrated promotional campaign. The tendency to use the shark as a threat to create products and increase sales through shark marketing is still a current practice.

Officially, Jaws as a brand became a major franchise, and so did sharks. The movie produced three sequels, all without Spielberg. At the time, he did not believe in sequels and saw them merely as a way to profit from an already successful product adding no new creative value. Benchley was also left aside after the first movie. As soon as the studio announced its intention to produce a sequel, he suggested several ideas for its screenplay, but received no answer. The studio treated the sequels as tie-ins meant to bring in the audiences already captive by Jaws as a brand. Despite not having the same box-office success, sequels were more profitable in terms of tie-ins with the merchandising boom of the ‘80s. With the exception of Jaws: The Revenge (Universal Pictures, 1987), all sequels enjoyed worldwide media coverage, and thus extending the power to the shark myth. Among an avalanche of copycat movies, L’ultimo Squalo (Great White, Film Ventures International, 1982) even hired Murray Weissman to design the PR campaign. For the promotional strategy, Weissman mailed production notes, feature stories, desk calendars and a fake shark-theme newspaper called The Shark Gazette to two hundred newspapers and TV stations; shark food recipes were distributed in theaters were the movie was exhibited, and in addition they hired shark attack victims and a fisherman who claimed killing over two thousand GWS for the

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talk show circuits.\textsuperscript{169} Academy Award winner Verna Fields, now promoted to Universal Production vice president, saw nothing to worry about in this movie, as she trusted audiences in recognizing when a rip off was coming along.\textsuperscript{170} This was only one of many shark-threat spin-off films.\textsuperscript{171} Yet, the profitable life of the original movie was not over when the sequels appeared. Its release on VHS was another record setter, and with the DVD premiere, the studio found the perfect excuse for releasing collector’s editions celebrating every five-year anniversary. Television, VHS, DVD, as well as anniversary editions were all perfect opportunities for putting \textit{Jaws} back in the spotlight with large media coverage. Interestingly, the 30\textsuperscript{th} anniversary collectors edition of \textit{Jaws} on DVD includes an interactive platform with shark information, attacks statistics, and updated information describing shark behavior more accurately, in a clear awareness of the present situation of this species facing extinction. Videogames were, and still are, a big tie-in for \textit{Jaws}. Most recently, \textit{Jaws Unleashed} (Majesco, 2006) was released for Xbox and PlayStation, and even an iPhone app version of the game called \textit{Jaws Revenge} (Fuse Powered Inc., 2011) was launched, making reference to the shark-killing arcade in the movie anchoring the tie-ins. In the game, the user controls Bruce through different challenges that include eating swimmers, divers, fish, and birds to satisfy his ferocious appetite.

Fans played a significant role in keeping \textit{Jaws} alive by turning it into a cult blockbuster. Nowadays, “rather than ridiculed, fan audiences are now wooed and championed by cultural industries, at least as long as their activities do not divert from principles of capitalist exchange and recognize industries’ legal ownership of the object of fandom.”\textsuperscript{172} Fans represent a captive audience and a free legion of enthusiastic promoters. Acknowledging fans is a key strategy for perpetuating success. In the 25\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the movie, Universal released a collector’s edition of \textit{Jaws} in VHS and DVD, and asked Brown,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{170} Verna Fields won an Academy Award for the editing of \textit{Jaws}.
\end{itemize}
Benchley and others to participate at a movie viewing at the Radio City Music Hall in New York. More than 4,000 people showed up to the sold out event. Likewise for the 30th anniversary, the movie and Gottlieb’s book *The Jaws Log* were re-launched. In addition, Universal hosted a celebration at Martha’s Vineyard, the “Jawsfest.” Posters on the beach across the American coastlines caused, once again, controversy and panic among beachgoers. Needless to say, each of these releases, celebrations or TV appearances of the movie represented a chance for the shark myth to create havoc in the printed press. “Fans, for better or for worse, tend to engage with these texts not in a rationally detached but an emotionally involved and invested way.” This pilgrimage of the fans is not the only trace of the *Jaws*-aphilies; webpages dedicated to the movie, thousands of *Jaws* inspired YouTube videos, memorabilia collectors, a fan-made documentary about *Jaws*’ fans called *The Shark is Still Working* (Finatic Productions, 2007), and the book *Memories From Martha’s Vineyard* reflect the efforts of fans to keep the movie alive by developing their own tie-ins that refer back to the original text.

All these satellite texts carry the shark threat message to different contexts, reaching people that never had and probably never will see the movie, but still recognize its argument and share the ultimate horror fear: being devoured alive by a shark. There lies the power of epiphenomena. Meanwhile, all these reference work as cross-promotion increasing the power and the profits of the brand, making the high concept blockbusters larger than life and leaving an indelible print of their decontextualized message in popular culture.

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173 See Joyce J. Persico, “Out of the Water 25 Years After Scaring the Living Daylights out of Beachgoers With ‘Jaws,’ Author Peter Benchley Tries to Make Amends With Sharks,” *Star Tribune,* July 11, 2000, 1E.


4. CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter I presented a detailed discursive analysis of the journey that took sharks’ image as ruthless human hunters around the globe and deep into popular culture. For this I have discussed the movie’s production, its satellite texts and the mirroring between these that produce a sustained loop of promotion. In the final chapter of the dissertation I will reappraise my methodology, and summarize the results and their implications.

4.1 Statement of the Problem

As stated in the opening chapter, the overall aim of this study is to establish a causal relation between the movie *Jaws* and its epiphenomena, and the generalized conceptualization of sharks as “man-eating machines” in the popular imaginary. By recognizing the dynamic between the text and the complex matrix of marketing and PR surrounding this Hollywood blockbuster, I illustrated how a fictional notion can travel into and inform popular culture, as a generalized belief. A comprehensive analysis of all the stages of the production and marketing was critical for a clear understanding of the dynamics involved. I have thus

- Determined how the idea of sharks as man-eating machines became the axis of communication.
- Followed the message from its creation to its current status in popular culture.
- Showed how several communication channels were mobilized in order to deliver the message and identify patterns of reproduction.
- Explored how a text deconstructs into satellite texts, and how these refer back to its original.

And finally,

- Assessed the reach of vertically integrated communication systems and their power of communication and revenue.

4.2 Review of the Methodology

As outlined in the introduction, this dissertation offer a case study of the movie *Jaws* and its role as creator of cultural capital by shaping and spreading the myth of sharks as ferocious man-eaters. The time frame for this study ranges from 1972 up until today in terms of a discursive process. However, the initial steps of this investigation presented a flashback in
order to contextualize all purely shark-related research before the material pertinent to this study of *Jaws* and its franchise.

This case study was framed by a theoretical toolbox, but it relies heavily on archival material to flesh out the theoretical terms. The vast amount of archival materials is a key discursive resource illuminating the decision-making processes, the behind the scenes struggles to optimize the product, and its subsequent success. In addition, the newspapers and magazines provided a solid understanding of the repercussion in the media at the time. The most rewarding aspect of the rich materials consisted in the dialogue between products, texts, ideas, and reactions through the established timeline.

Despite the vast amount of text written about the movie, consulting primary archival material as the main source of information was indispensable for developing this study.

### 4.3 Summary and Discussion of the Results

There is an undeniable connection between the movie’s portrayal and our prehensions of sharks. Carefully looking into the unraveling of the processes facilitate the understanding of the success and chain of events that cemented the film’s fame and the shark’s portrayal in popular culture through the *Jaws*–phenomena.

The studio helped in creating a successful novel as a prerequisite for the film. The studio’s involvement and the early buying of the movie rights played a paramount role in catapulting the book to success. The then recent success of *The Godfather* and *The Exorcist* offered Hollywood filmmakers a template for the New Hollywood summed up as a gateway for spreading *Jaws*, as a HCM and franchise to popular culture. Adaptations from best selling novels still work, big books make big movies. Creating a formula from the very outset instead of guessing, picking and negotiating the acquisition of an already successful novel’s rights seemed a good strategy. Already as a short draft, *Jaws* had all the potential elements to attract broad audiences. Thomas Congdon, editor of the novel, was meticulous in his feedback to Benchley. In their

![Figure 17. Bantam’s store display for the paperback edition.](image)
correspondence he frequently requested revisions that would target the story to a certain audience, in order to make it more suitable for a broad spectrum of readers. The affair between Ellen Brody and Hooper was meant to attract women interested in sensual romance novels, the heroic male quest catered to men’s taste, and the shark story framing the drama was directed to younger audiences.\textsuperscript{176} The novel and the joint venture between the publishers and the studio was a concerted strategy for creating a bestseller and then blockbuster. Unified forces articulated a PR campaign approaching the media from various flanks, optimizing the coverage and, therefore, the profits. In addition, the potential of the shark theme within the overall story was early grasped by Doubleday’s executives. The paperback’s design, that later turned into the movie poster, articulated a promotion with store displays and extensive press communication that paid off, catapulting the novel to the best selling lists and triggering global interest in translating the book.

Spielberg’s role as a director was not deliberate, but it turned out to be one of the cornerstones for the success of the movie. Evidently, he was a young prodigy with a clear vision of the future of Hollywood. His understanding of storytelling, love for films, and his working experience in TV became key production assets. Even so, his clear focus in simplifying the story to fit a formula with Disney roots in spite of reservations from the author, found support from an industry in search of a new direction. Spielberg convinced the Hollywood moguls and they provided resources to support him back. The direction of the project spearhead by Spielberg was instrumental for its success and offered a blueprint for productions to come. Spielberg’s use of storytelling and his ability to master tie-ins turned into his own trademark as a director and as a producer.\textsuperscript{177} Unfortunately for sharks, it was that same vision that singled them out as unrivaled villains. Spielberg was convinced that the shark theme was the story’s main strength. For him, the rest of the novel was disposable. In that spirit, he and the team of writers provided a whole new dimension to the shark, extended his role in the story and magnified his threat as the archenemy.

The potential problem of exposing sharks as portrayed by the movie has been controversial since the film’s opening. Although Peter Benchley wrote his novel out of

\textsuperscript{176} Even though the book includes explicit passages of sex and adult dialogues, Peter Benchley received a profuse amount of correspondence from children as young as 9 years old. The letters referred specifically to the novel and often included illustrations of the shark. The author was also the target of rage mail due to “unnecessarily obscene” vocabulary of his novel, and some teachers even expressed their discontent for being unable to include his novel in their schedules due to the high tone language and the sex scenes. Nevertheless, that didn’t keep children away from reading it.

\textsuperscript{177} \textit{E.T} (Universal Pictures, 1982), \textit{Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom} (Paramount Pictures, 1984) and \textit{Jurassic Park} (Universal Pictures, 1993) are three celebrated blockbusters in terms of presence in popular culture through their tie-ins and spin-off.
admiration, with no harm intended, and downplaying the shark to a secondary role that arguably could gained a modicum of sympathy from the audience, the much needed focus on this animal as a villain represented a threat in the eyes of shark specialists who did not hesitate in pointing fingers at the author. The media battle between Cousteau and Benchley is evidence of such a concern. The author was hence trapped in a crossroads of interests, but he had no saying concerning the movie since the rights were sold to Zanuck and Brown. After the first draft for the screenplay, the author was literally set aside from the production. As the shark was destined as evil incarnate, Bruce was turned into the protagonist of the story and the success of the product relied on him creating fear. Whether this resonated with the nature of sharks was left out of the equation, irrespective of the author’s apprehensions. Shark facts drowned in the discourse of the movie.

Tie-ins represented a major element in the release of the film, for its profits and its presence in popular culture. When Steven Spielberg closed the deal to direct *Jaws*, he printed T-shirts with a shark and the title of the movie, and gave them as a gift to the producers. They frequently used the T-shirt on set. *Jaws* was not only a movie. Moreover, it was a brand that manufactured toys, clothes, beachwear, soundtrack, books, videogames, attractions at amusement parks and three sequels. It built a franchise in which each product served simultaneously as a promotion for the other product. The book sold the movie, the movie sold the toys, the toys referenced back to the movie that sold the soundtrack that promoted the park attractions that kept the movie alive allowing the outcome of the sequels and so forth.

Even the sequels of the movie were treated merely as a part of the franchise. This ingenious moneymaking strategy kept the shark myth alive.

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178 Benchley kept tied to the movie by contract in the credits as a co-writer of the screenplay with a 10% profit on the revenues of the movie.
Obviously, the role of the media was essential. Newspapers supported the enterprise from the first moment, but the focal point was the shark’s image. As soon as the poster hit the news, cartoonist journalists fell in love with the monster shark threat. The shark illustrated uncountable number of cartoons referencing not only the movie, but also any imaginable threat; a trend used by the PR department to recycle the promotional campaign and further skyrocket the film’s revenues. Journalists saw the potential of the story and also expropriated the shark myth for their own editorial purposes. The coverage that *Jaws* achieved in the media was unprecedented, there is no question about it, but in the same way as cartoonists decontextualized the shark for their own purposes, the media became mesmerized by the idea of a real life monster. Ever since, shark accidents are guaranteed headlines, and the sensationalistic stories hark back to *Jaws*. The face of the brand was the shark, and as so it was branded, with all characteristics needed to make it profitable. Sharks’ status as the primitive surviving dinosaurs is a real feature that serves the mythology of a larger than life threat that can survive anything. There is no place for vulnerability. Sharks thus became overexposed and unfairly referenced in order to sell more newspapers.\(^{179}\)

With such a grand pop culture phenomenon, it was predictable that fans would begin to flourish all around the globe, and they have had an important role for keeping *Jaws* alive. A fast YouTube search will reveal thousands of fan videos, from excerpts of the movie, to sophisticated homemade short films. The most impressive feature of *Jawsmania* is its timelessness. Young children recreate the shark hunt with their Legos despite the generational breach. *Jaws*’ fans have also been involved in the production of documentaries, books and tours to Amity Island.\(^{180}\) This fan structure has gotten the studio involved in several activities to support this dedicated group of “free promoters.” The interest in and impact of *Jaws* can also be measured in the uncountable *Jaws* references in TV and movies. This demand for shark-related content has lead TV channels to create shark specials, and filmmakers to copycat the shark thread in uncountable movies.

The concern for sharks and the truth about their nature is slowly coming to light, but it just takes one shark accident to plunge the media all over again with *Jaws* references and “eaten alive” headlines, that bring the game back to its departure. The concern and growing pressure from shark conservationists has lead Universal to include an interactive video in the

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\(^{179}\) With 20 yearly deaths by dog attacks compared to the 5 to 10 by all species of sharks, it is curious that dogs are not covering the front pages as serial killers. Not to mention the 1000 deaths by crocodiles or the 300 hundred by elephants. Furthermore, the media fails to pinpoint that most deaths are due to bleeding after the injuries and not by being “eating alive”.

\(^{180}\) Amity Island is the fictional name given to Martha’s Vineyard (the movie’s location) in the film.
30 th anniversary collector edition DVD, in which the narrator carefully explains that “even though the shark in Jaws focuses on hunting humans, in reality there have only been a relatively small amount of shark attacks on humans. These attacks are generally a case of mistaken identity. And even though the attack can be fatal, in most cases the shark spits out the offending taste and swims away.” And in conclusion how “sadly men have hunted the ocean to such an extent that even the future of the Great White is under threat.”

Previous studies have indicated that the success of Jaws relied on its pioneering release pattern. This study has shown that the success of Jaws relied on the articulation of a more complex matrix of elements, in which its advertising budget and theater opening system were only one small part in the big Hollywood machinery. Doubtlessly, a great idea and a well-made product were essential, but vertical integration, synergy, and franchising were guarantees for keeping the movie and the shark myth alive.

As mentioned before, this sudden interest in blockbusters as creators of cultural capital is an understudied phenomenon. An interesting research concerning marketing would be those movies that fail despite having the Hollywood machinery backing them up.

Arguably, my study has shown a correlation between Jaws’ portrayal of the shark and the generalized idea in popular culture of these animals as human flesh hunters. The power of repetition cannot be stressed enough. Repetition and constant exposure are the strongest elements in the creation of the myth underpinning popular cultural. Jaws offer the prototypical case in this respect.

181 Voice over from the Bonus track DVD of Jaws 30 th anniversary collector edition.
REFERENCES

I list here only the books and articles that have been mentioned in the thesis. This bibliography is by no means a complete record of all the works and sources I have consulted. It indicates the substance and range of readings upon which I have formed my ideas, and as an elemental reference for those reading this work.

Archives Consulted

Core Collection and Jaws Special Collection in the Margaret Herrick Library, the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills.

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Snow White (Disney, 1937)
Space Shark (Nu Image Film, 2005)
Spring Break Shark Attack (CBS, 2005)
Star Wars (Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1977)
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   Ti-Koyo e il suo pesce cane (Tiko and the Shark, Produzioni Cinematografiche Mediterranea, 1964)

Up From the Depths (New World Pictures, 1979)

TV Series

Family Guy (Fox, 1999–)
Flipper (Metro Goldwyn Mayer Television, 1964-1967)
Mission Impossible (Paramount Television, 1966-1973)
Saturday Night Live (NBC, 1975–)
The Mentalist (CBS, 2008–)

Vad Hände med? (Acne Production, 2011)

Videogames

Jaws Revenge (Fuse Powered Inc., 2011)
Jaws Unleashed (Majesco, 2006)

Websites


Appendix


Ever since the departure of President Nixon, America’s cartoonists have hungered for a visual symbol to feed on. Last week they found one. Inspired by the ad campaign for the movie "Jaws," they latched onto sharks like eager Ahab— with the widely varied results shown here.
2- A few *Jaws*-inspired non-political cartoons.


3- List of tie-ins, included in the Jaws pressbook.

**MONEY MAKING “JAWS” TIE-INS**

**“JAWS” WALL PLAQUE/POSTCARD X**
This new, dimensional postcard is mounted on special 1/4" thick backing for recycling as an attractive wall plaque. It’s the full color, charging, open-mouthed shark but now dissected out in the shape of his massive head. Featured at the Universal Studios Tour Center, the plaque/postcard have found a new use as a pencil holder. Just drive the pencil tip into the ugly fish and it stays like a harpoon! Something new and different.

**“JAWS” SWIM TOWEL X**
It’s shark action on a beach-pool-bath towel. The great white shark from the best-selling novel strikes again in exciting color. The 23" x 47" fringed quality product by Cannon Mills features the billboard art and lettering of the screen’s new super thriller “JAWS” from Universal. Designed for full wrap-around action, this new towel is expected to be the new rage of the summer.

**AUTHENTIC “JAWS” SHARK’S TOOTH X**
The conversation this summer will be sharks... and “JAWS”... and sharks, and the conversation piece has to be the “JAWS” shark’s tooth hanging from a durable steel-plated neck chain. Full size teeth are fading as the mystery of the authentic (absolutely not a reproduction) killer’s tooth is told. Quinting from Peter Benchley’s No. 1 super-thriller, “There’s supposed to be a superstition about these things, that if you keep it with you, you’ll be safe from shark bite.” (First Edition, p.131). Mounted on a “JAWS” 9” x 7” illustrated card and polybagged, it’s “what’s cookin’” in the summer of ’75.

**“JAWS” TEE SHIRT X**
The only authorized “JAWS” tee shirt is now available! Here is the relentless terror of the attacking shark, in new, dramatically bold full color artwork... the green, murky water... the blue gray hide... the block caustic open mouth! It has all the impact of a best selling tee shirt. Based on the most controversial, talked-about motion picture of the summer season. No tee shirt has ever had the pre-sale of 4 million books combined with a screen super thriller and its saturation prime-time TV advertising.

**“JAWS” IRON-ON TRANSFER**
A special “secret sauce” transfer that can be pressed on with an ordinary home iron. Ideal for T-shirts, pants, almost any item of apparel. The transfers will be individually packaged with printing instructions and will be shipped in quantities of 100.

For your convenience, we have set up a special telephone line to handle your orders. Please call: Area Code 213 885-5527 and ask for “JAWS.” Or contact Photos-Lith International, 11816 Western Avenue, Stanton, CA 90680.

George Morris, Cheley-Smith Marketing, Inc.
728 Colorado Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90041
Telephone: Area Code (213) 254-6717

PAGE 19
PROMOTION

THE EXCITING MUSIC FROM "JAWS" HAS BEEN MADE INTO A SOUNDTRACK ALBUM BY MCA.

This item is available both on record and tape. The exciting symphonic material and always-wonderful instrumentations for piano, string, and symphonic are re-created in the album at the same time, by supplementing the distributors' display items. The set of high-immediacy posters is ideal for this, and we sure to turn-up the promotion!

"JAWS" FEE SHIRT

SEE MERCHANDISING PAGE 16 FOR DETAILS

ALL THE FOLLOWING ACCESSORIES ARE AVAILABLE FROM NATIONAL SCREEN SERVICE

- Teaser Trailer
- Regular Trailer
- Color Stills in Complete Sets
- Deluxe Hi-Rise Standee
- Day-Glo Title Display
- Satin Accessories
  - 3-Piece Streamers; Deluxe Sectional Valances, 10 feet, 9 feet by 12 feet Flags (Copy on one side) or some with copy reading correctly on both sides, Usher Badges.

POSTERS

14 x 36
22 x 28
ONE SHEET

FREE TELEVISION COMMERCIALS in Color

ORDER BLANK
Exhibition Department · Universal Pictures Company
30 Rockefeller Plaza · New York, N.Y. 10020
PLEASE SEND ME
DATE
THEATRE
PLAYDATE
STREET ADDRESS OR P.O. BOX
SIGNATURE:

FREE RADIO SPOTS ON TAPE

ORDER BLANK
Radio Department · Universal
Universal City, California 91604
PLEASE SEND ME
DATE
THEATRE
PLAYDATE
STREET ADDRESS OR P.O. BOX
SIGNATURE:
Sharkfacts:
Provided as a Public Service
by the Producers of
JAWS

If you swim in the sea, anywhere in the world, you do not do so without risk. The shark is an ancient, wide-ranging, and ever-present threat. Sharks do not ordinarily feed on human beings, but as volumes will attest, they do attack. How and when and why is still unpredictable.

Therefore, if you must venture into the ocean, at least know your enemy. At present, there is much about the shark's behavior we do not fully comprehend. Some of the important things we do know are enumerated below. You would be wise to study them.

1. All sharks, no matter what their size, should be treated with respect. There are over 360 species of sharks. Most are predators, born with a full set of teeth and the instinct to use them. Even a shark much smaller than a man has the ability to inflict fatal injuries.

2. The seas of our shore are peopled by many killers. The proven man-eaters include the Blue Shark, the Tiger Shark, the Bull Shark, the Mako, the Hammerhead, and most forms of all the Great Whites.

3. Fresh water swimmers are not necessarily safe from sharks. A lake in Central America contains some of the most vicious sharks in the world. Experiments have proven that some sharks traverse 100 miles of river to get there. Three of the worst attacks in U.S. history occurred in a brook near New Jersey creek 20 miles from the open sea.

4. The shark is in many respects one of the most successful creatures on the planet. The first sharks appeared over 360 million years ago. They have changed relatively little in the past 300 million years. The shark's prey are many, his enemies few. He is a most efficient killing machine.

5. Shark attacks may be motivated by more than mere hunger. There is evidence that the shark has a "fighting instinct" that leads him to attack for reasons of aggression - probably to protect territory, personal space, or status.

6. Some sharks can move in tremendous bursts of speed. The Mako, which can leap twenty feet out of the water, has been reported to exceed 60 miles an hour.

7. A shark is a tooth making machine. And the teeth you see in a shark's gaping mouth aren't the half of it. Behind the front row lay at least four, six, even six rows. Razor sharp cutting and tearing teeth, they are often serrated like a steak knife. When a tooth is lost, a new tooth replaces it. In one change, a shark can infuse a wound which is massive and almost surgically precise.

8. A major portion of a shark's brain is devoted to the sense of smell. An incredible small concentration of blood in the water can arouse its feeding desire and bring him lunging to the surface from far away. If you are bleeding, no matter how slightly, get out of the water.

9. A shark's vision is far from poor. Like a butcher, his eyes are designed to be efficient in very dim light. In the dark, his eyes show a special advantage over you. Never swim at night.

10. Sharks have been known to attack practically anything. Floating bandages, life rafts, Whaling preachers. And boats. One hooked shark attacked a 35-foot fishing boat, careening from the bottom and up into the air.

11. Shark attacks occur in water of every depth. They have killed in the open sea and at the surf line. Some of the worse attacks occurred in water only knee deep.

12. A shark doesn't have to bring you to hurt you. His skin is extremely tough, covered with tiny diamond-like structures very similar to teeth. Rub him the wrong way and he can severely abrade your skin.

13. Sharks are superbly equipped to detect low-frequency vibrations - the eerie noises made by wounded fish, and prey swimmers. He can home in on these peculiar sounds from hundreds of yards. Swim smoothly.

14. Of all the sharks in the sea, the Great White (Carcharodon carcharias) is unquestionably the most dangerous. The largest ever captured measured 25 feet and weighed over 1,200 tons. Their undiscerning eyes grow even larger.

The known food of the Great White Shark includes mackerel, tuna, purposeless sea other sharks, and on terrible occasions... man.

for all large animals found in the sea, man is the easiest prey.

Authenticated by Donald R. Nelson (Ph.D.), Shark Research Specialist, Associate Professor of Biology, California State University, Long Beach

COPYRIGHT 1975 BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES
February 21, 1975

Majors, Richard D. Zanuck and David Brown
The Zanuck/Brown Company
Universal Studios
Universal City, California 91608

Dear Dick and David:

With the tremendous first sales reports received from our paperback edition of Peter Benchley's JAWS, I hasten to advise you that seldom in our thirty year history has a book taken off with such strong sales velocity.

Today, less than a month after publication, JAWS is maintaining the fastest sales rate of any book Bantam has published since THE EXORCIST.

We have just gone back to press with four reprints to make a total of 1,000,000 copies of JAWS in print. Another printing may be required in a day or so.

This initial response convinces us that JAWS is a publishing phenomenon and that your production for Universal based on the book will be the most eagerly awaited motion picture of 1975.

Sincerely,

Oscar Dystel
President

ROY SCHEIDER - ROBERT SHAW - RICHARD DREYFUSS in "JAWS"
A ZANUCK-BROWN PRODUCTION - SCREENPLAY BY PETER BENCHLEY AND CARL GOTTLIEB - BASED ON THE NOVEL BY PETER BENCHLEY - MUSIC BY JOHN WILLIAMS DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG - PRODUCED BY RICHARD ZANUCK AND DAVID BROWN
A UNIVERSAL PICTURE • TECHNICOLORE • PANAVISION

BACKED BY THE BIGGEST NATIONAL TV SPOT CAMPAIGN IN INDUSTRY HISTORY!
6- Joint venture: “in Production” movie-ad to help the sales of the novel.
7- Bruce’s promotional pictures.

(a) A real shark shot in Australian waters.

(b) The mechanical shark known as Bruce.
FOR: IDEAL TOY CORPORATION
FROM: Zeke Rose

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"JAWS" GAME TO MAKE EARLY 1976 DEBUT

The Jaws game (above), inspired by the largest grossing movie of all time, is being introduced by Ideal Toy Corporation in early 1976, with the game slated to be in major markets during January.

Two to four players, ages six and older, compete against each other and the great white shark as each participant, equipped with a gaff hook, tries to fish out of the shark's mouth an item gathered from the sea depths.

With removal of each piece, the jaws move closer together and removal of the wrong piece snaps them shut.

"Millions have already seen this movie," explained Herbert R. Sand, Ideal's executive vice president-corporate marketing, "and it still has a long run ahead of it. In addition, plans for 'Jaws II' are in the works.

"We have developed an exciting game which is easily identified with this great property."

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12/24/75

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April 7th, 1975

Mr. Peter Benchley

Dear Peter,
The previews were great! Last month's issue of Milimeter Magazine was not! I recently saw a copy and died a little inside. Around the same time I gave that tirade interview to Newsweek Magazine, May '74, I also spoke to the Milimeter people and slammed your book. Now, a year later, the story has surfaced to haunt me and I am writing this apology because I feel absolutely gutless about my crude and professorial remarks. Jacques Cousteau and I are not in partnership!

I suppose when you analyze my offensive statements they seem to bend, in uncertain defense, towards the broad liberties that we took with the novel. No matter. My behavior was indefensible and I hope you will accept this apology. If not, just remember that you own ten points in a movie that pretends, for once, to be better than the book on which it was based.

As they say in Show Biz, "you can cry all the way to the bank". Let us pray.

Sincerely,
Steven Spielberg.

11 April, 1975

Dear Steve:
Thanks for your letter. I don't see Millimeter (in fact, your mention of it was the first I'd ever heard), so whatever vicious, putrid, scabrous, scurrilous, subversive slime you ladled on me would probably has escaped my view. Nevertheless, forewarned is… etc. You were thoughtful to write.

In fairness, though, you should know that I have employed mercenaries to prepare a broadside about you, revealing, at last, the sordid truth about your personal life. It'll be there - - whips, leather sneakers, shorty-nighties and crunchy peanut butter. I' aiming for the June issue of Jack & Jill.

I have yet to see the picture, but I'm scheduled to go to a distributors' screening next wednesday. From all I've heard, you have fashioned a master- piece, for which I am (obviously) glad and grateful.

The Cousteau business is perplexing and annoying. Unspecifics as his remarks have been,
they're still reckless and inaccurate. I've written him a letter, asking him to cite specifics, but he hasn't replied. It's curious, for never in the past has he claimed or manifested any expertise about great White Sharks. Meanwhile, I'm marshaling expert testaments about the accuracy of the book, not that I seriously expect a chance to use them.

Anyway, it will soon -- god willing -- be water under the proverbial bridge.

Again, thanks for writing.

Best,

Peter Benchley.

(c)

November 20, 1975

Dear Peter,

Every night I meet young filmmakers who would like to hang around and learn. I tell them to stay away cause I'm not done learning yet!

All they do is shrug and make their own films so that one day they can rob me competitively of all the good jobs. It's a turnover of a new generation - a lot of them aren't even teenagers yet.

I'm happy to see THE DEEP getting the old JAWS sendoff. I'd like to read it sometime. It sounds like another producer's ball breaker. You hate Hollywood. Your ideas put producers, directors and actors into oxygen tents filled with nitrous oxide. Movie making, Peter, is not supposed to be work.

Needless to say, I hope you'll call me when you hit town so I can buy you dinner and discuss life abroad an airplane.

Good luck in Paris. Kiss Josie for me.

Fondest Regards,

Steven.

p.s I've done all I can, but the French press will have none of my rogue shark theory regarding a man-eater in the Seine River.

So do what you can to convince them that there are sharks in their vichyssoise.
Ad celebrating the success of the movie.
12. Letter from Thomas Congdon to Peter Benchley. For originals refer to the Peter Benchley Collection in the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University Library. Note. Moon is the early name for Quint’s character.

Notes for Peter Benchley: June 1, 1972

Peter, these are rough notes, too quickly typed. But possibly they may help a little. 1. Our editorial director, Betty Prashker, a supporter of this book from the start, wrote this memo after reading the chapters and the pages describing the revision: "Tom, I think the story has too many predictable elements at the moment. The town meeting; the luxury housing development; etc. Perhaps what I mean is that there seems to be a lot of plot without real characters or drive. I like the idea of the shark being a character -- Benchley's shark passages are marvelous -- and Moon sounds good. Couldn't the frame of the story be the hunt for the shark? All the action could take place during the Fourth of July weekend, with the death of the woman as a kind of prologue.

He could have the three men on the boat get to know each other pretty well and do some flashbacks and flash forwards to fill out the narrative. As it stands now, it seems to stretched out. --- If Benchley is willing to work with you, I would certainly go ahead with the contract." I find that a pretty useful memo. The present approach probably is a little too predictable, too straight-line, the plotting too pat. That's perfectly understandable; in this first version, what you were doing was churning up and inventory of plot ingredients testing them, seeing what worked and what didn't. But now that you've got some tantalizing ingredients, the problem becomes to combine them in an interesting way. I think the three-man-in-a-boat is one kind of interesting way. And it has a very great advantage of getting your most interesting character, Moon, on stage early. (In present version, we have to wait a long time, through a lot of preliminary.) Bring Moon on almost immediately and the book will begin at a higher level of tension; even if you quickly veer off from Moon to flashback into other character stories, still we readers will know that Moon is there and that we can expect to meet him further down the line. (I love the name Moon, by the way; perfect.)

Seems to me that Betty's suggestion of focusing the whole book on the hunt (with flashbacks and flash forwards) would solve the problem of fanfliness and the one-two-three-four-five-six-seven quality of the present version, in which Something Big happens every so often, and, in between, it's sort of egg-beating. (I'm having a metaphor trouble.) What I mean is, a psychological adventure story ought to have great intense focus, and one thing that helps achieve this is a tight time frame.

2. As for the "too many predictable elements", I again think Betty may be right. And again, concentrating on the hunt, the shark, the personalities of Moon, Hooper and Brody, may be the remedy, causing you to winnow out your inventory a little. I'm beginning to think that the mayor and his guilty secret may be just one plot complication too many. ...what do you think? And I'm beginning to think that the guilty secrets in this book should tend to be psychological and sexual rather than commercial -- though I'm not sure what I mean by that. I guess I mean that if you're going to go into the mayor and his shame deeply enough to make it real and gripping and not just the usual mayor-and-scandal sort of thing, you'll be getting too far from your main thrust...the shark story. I don't know. ---, Anyway, about predictability, I saw The Last Picture Show the other night, which is also about a town, and I was impressed by how little the director felt he needed to tell you; he didn't spell things out a lot. Old shame and secrets were brought in when he needed them, but only as much of them as he needed in order to get on with his main effort, to tell the story, to illumine his people. --
-A process of creative selection; a case of less being more.

3. I looked at Rabbit Redux -- and I confess that I think your book, your first novel, ought to be in the regular past tense. That's what I think. For me, the present tense has an inescapable con notion of hype-journalism, ala Jimmy Cannon. I like the story-telling tradition in which the narrator takes me into another time, which is very close to the special pleasure of the reading experience.

4. I think the way you've defined Hooper is very promising. He can tell us a great deal about the white shark, can convey the lore, the exciting stories, the fascinating biological minutiae...via his conversations with Brody, Ellen and Moon. He should be the character, am I right, who has the tea zest for the shark as a magnificent awesome work of Nature. One thing: I hope he doesn't get too fancy about "science", wanting to save the shark for study; a little of that, understated, is okay, but beyond that point it begins to sound like those old mad scientist movies.

5. If Brody's wife is to become attracted to Hooper ---and if it's to be believable--then the Brodys ought not to be so lovey at first; we should see strains. Maybe she's smarter, from a better background, better educated than Brody -- and whereas it didn't make any difference to her earlier, now it doesn't. (Maybe she was a girl from the summer families who fell in love with a nice young Wautaugue cop. The do that.) My point: There have to be real, substantiated reasons for Ellen's attraction to Hooper. And I think they ought to have an actual affair; it ought to be ongoing by the big weekend--one of the flashbacks will tell us about it. In any case, because of his problems with Ellen (and Hooper), which we gradually find out about, Brody probably ought to be a good deal less chipper throughout; long before we know why he's unhappy, we ought to see that he's unhappy.

6. Sex. I liked that nice hearty scene between Ellen and Brody. But I don't think there's any place for wholesome married sex in this kind of book. (here I'm really getting presumptuous, and you must feel free to laugh this off.) It ought to be more interesting, less open--much more led-up-to question ought to be not so much how they do it but whether they're going to.

7. Did you ever think of setting the book in a real lace-- say Nantucket? You know the place so well—the look of it, the inner workings, the intricacies of life there, the history, the fabric of its existence. And your books could use more of this -- a really vivid sense of place. So why not a real place, with that place's real attributes, but with declaredly fictional characters (not a roman a clef). ? Wouldn't it help you more than it complicated things for you? And think of the bounce you could get off the whale hunting legacy of Nantucket, the Ahab thing.

8. Seems to me that one thing that really does have to be handled well and kept going and finally resolved, in some way to some extent, is Brody's guilt for not having closed the beach immediately because of the pressures. This is a theme that can vivify a book, and I urge you to craft it with all your renowned skill.

-This study of the book I've just done in preparation for this memo to you, including my rereading of the original version, has actually increased my already considerable enthusiasm for the book. Coming back to it after a time, I find it full of possibility, and I find your writing very good indeed and well suited to the task. Doubleday seems realistic in its intention not only to publish this present book successfully but to build an author who will write many very successful novels. No Kidding. TOM
Dear Mr. Powlik:

Your letter reached me via the various channels of the ICM bureaucracy, and I hasten to reply.

I'm not entirely sure what you're asking of me.

If industry reaction to your script is as positive as you say, you don't need any assistance from me.

If, on the other hand, you're having trouble selling it or getting it made, there's no way I can help you. I can't get my own stuff made. I can't even get a sequel to JAWS made: I submitted an idea years go and was turn down flat. Any endorsement from me would be as worthless as Cactus Jack Garner's proverbial cup of warm spit.

So I see nothing to be gained by your sending, or my reading, the work-in progress. That said, I wish you all good fortune with it, and I hope someday to be able to shell out ten bucks to see it in a theater.

Yrs,

Peter Benchley.