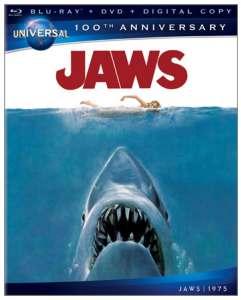
Have you heard that the high-definition transfer on Universal Studios Home Entertainment’s new JAWS Blu-ray is stunningly beautiful? That the sound is vivid and powerful? That the disc is a must-own? You heard correctly.

There is only one noteworthy addition to the special features on this new JAWS release (the others are holdovers from the previous Anniversary Editions), but the reason any movie lover needs to purchase this disc is front-and-center: a heart-stopping adventure anchored by three incredible performances and a million compelling details, the movie holds up as one of the all-time greats and has never looked as good as it does on this Blu-ray.



When a killer shark appears off the beach of Amity Island… Does anybody really need to read a synopsis of JAWS? Envy the viewer who gets to experience this film for the first time, taking in the power of Robert Shaw’s iconic Quint, his drunken bluster only occasionally masking a steely reservoir of haunted intensity; or Richard Dreyfuss turning Hooper into the personification of a plea for sanity, good-humored and passionate and just enough of a Napoleonic prick to be credible; or to freshly experience Roy Scheider’s Martin Brody, who, in the least showy of the three above-the-title roles, somehow managed to create the single most sympathetic and recognizably human hero in modern movies. JAWS is the kind of film that inspires even the most casual audience members to talk for hours about their favorite character, scene or even shot, discovering and rediscovering nuances in the film every time they watch it (personal favorite: the shark gliding just under the water in the pond as it closes in on the doomed oarsman clinging to his capsized boat).

The new hi-def transfer is another occasion for new discoveries, with a picture so sharp and clear you can read the calendar hanging on the wall in the background of Quint’s cabin, or see detail on individual whitecaps as Brody looks out over the ocean from his bedroom window. The new bonus feature is one that fans have clamored for over the years, and after its egregious omission from the 30th Anniversary DVD, THE SHARK IS STILL WORKING is finally included on the Blu-ray. Erik Hollander's feature-length documentary does a good job of

avoiding the same material covered in Laurent Bouzereau’s excellent THE MAKING OF STEVEN SPIELBERG’S JAWS (also part of this package), and focuses primarily on the legacy of JAWS and its fandom, covering everyone from memorabilia collectors to locals who made up the supporting cast. It’s a fun family album of a movie, sharing choice tidbits about the shoot and an especially affectionate view of how the film impacted the lives of those who lived through it (highlights include onetime Mrs. Kintner Lee Fierro’s bewildered confession of her fans’ most common special request). THE SHARK IS STILL WORKING doesn’t end up winning the title of ultimate JAWS companion—it’s more of a JAWSFEST: THE MOVIE—but it’s certainly one of the most dedicated and loving pieces of fan-tribute created in deference to the original film, and its inclusion here is welcome, and about damn time.

There are a few nitpicks. While the newly color-corrected transfer creates continuity and visual beauty missing from previous editions (just check out the sky and the water in that first scene), at least one scene is affected negatively: the unforgettable sequence on the dock that begins with Charlie’s wife’s holiday pot roast thrown into the water as bait. Film prints and previous editions keep the two men practically in silhouette, an effective stylistic choice. On the Blu-ray, the two actors have been lightened so considerably that not only can we see the details on their faces, we can plainly notice that their dialogue does not match the movements of their mouths. While this is not egregious digital tinkering on the level of Spielberg’s E.T. DVD, it is a shame to see a once note-perfect suspense sequence get damaged in the process of being “fixed.” Having said that, considering other imperfections that have always existed in the film (fake shark not matching real shark footage, weird hand-drawn shooting stars, a preposterous method of killing the monster…the kind of stuff that really bothers you on the 110th viewing), it’s a minor complaint in the face of what is still a juggernaut of a movie and one helluva good-looking release.

MOVIE:

BLU-RAY PACKAGE: