

[Transcript] One Man's Opinion Season 4 Ep. 31:

The Shark is Broken at Playhouse on Park

Podcast by Tim Leininger

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXPs6afuq3Y>)

Hello and welcome to *One Man's Opinion*. Today I am reviewing Playhouse on Parks' production of *The Shark Is Broken* written by Ian Shaw and Joseph Nixon, directed by Joe Discher, running through October 20th at the Playhouse at 244 Park Road in West Hartford Connecticut. Help me take a bite out of my expenses by becoming a patron over on my patron page where you can, for as little as \$1 a month, support my work here as well as my Classic Cinema podcast, yesterday's mat, where the latest episode on the rosin wrestle film anti- Mame is currently available just for patrons you can also get access to my retro reviews polls and other occasional tidbits. Thank you to my current patrons, especially my Neo- and Hamilton-tier patrons and welcome to the new ones. A link will be in *The Shark Is Broken* description.

It's been barely over a year since *The Shark Is Broken* made its Broadway Premiere. My review on that production is available here on YouTube if you haven't heard it yet if you have heard it you know that my favorite film of all time is the Steven Spielberg classic, *Jaws*. Don't get me wrong, I don't think it's objectively the greatest film of all time, it's just my personal favorite. Co-written by Ian Shaw and Joseph Nixon, Ian Shaw is the son of the late actor, Robert Shaw, who played the psychologically unhinged quint in the classic 1975 film. Ian Shaw also portrayed the role of Robert Shaw on the West End and on Broadway. The making of *Jaws* was notorious for its myriads of problems filming, especially around the mechanical sharks, which basically didn't work. This caused delays, the film going over budget, and Spielberg at risk of being fired. The play focuses on this lull time when the three principal actors, Robert Shaw, here played by John D Alexander, Roy Scheider, played by Nicholas Greco, and Richard Dreyfuss, played by Jake Regensburg, have nothing to do but hurry up and wait on a boat in the ocean off the coast of Martha's Vineyard attempting to occupy their time talking about the craft of acting, gambling, and getting drunk while trying not to get on each other's last nerves. Robert periodically also works on his famous USS Indianapolis monologue.

Tensions peak when Robert's alcoholism and Richard's anxieties and their mutual egos come to the fore. Meanwhile, Roy attempts to play moderator, trying to keep the peace at least until filming wraps. There has been some contention, particularly from the real-life Richard Dreyfuss, as to the historical accuracy of what happens in the play, particularly regarding an incident presented where Richard confronts Robert's drinking. Regardless of issues of historical accuracy, I was disappointed when the play received no love during award season. Sure it's a play that panders to a specific audience that loves this movie, but it's also a well-written piece of theater about three very human characters, with warts and all, dealing with each other's powerful egos working on a project that they can't just walk away from. It's funny, sometimes cynical, and written with a warmth and love for the film and the people who came together to make it.

The cast is really good, with John D Alexander I dare say giving a performance just as good as Ian Shaw's Broadway turn. He Nails the ragged, salty demeanor of Robert Shaw, who'd rather find his way to the bottom of a bottle than be bothered with the aspirations of an upstart actor in Richard Dreyfuss. Speaking of Dreyfuss, Regensburg has some great moments, particularly when he deals with Richard's anxieties over his career. Nicholas Greco has to play the straight man as Roy Scheider to the two larger-than-life personalities on stage, and he appropriately

knows not to push, but also not letting his character fade from significance. It's a well-balanced performance.

The design is pretty impressive, as Johann Fitzpatrick does an excellent job in recreating Duncan Henderson's original scenic design. There are some nice original touches he adds using the Playhouse's 3/4 stage to its fullest, creating elements on the stage representing the ocean, which I think looks great. Barbara Erin Del's costume design also faithfully follows Henderson's costume design, in turn borrowed from the design of the film. If you're a fan of the film *Jaws*, this is an easy "yes," go see *The Shark Is Broken*. If you're not, you should still see this fantastic piece of theater that tells an immersive story about three desperate men doing their best to survive each other in the midst of an intense and exhausting work environment.

But I am only one man's opinion, so be sure to leave yours in the comments below. If you'd like to see *The Shark Is Broken*, I'll leave a link in the description where you can get tickets. Also in the description will be a link to my patron page, Spotify page, and other social media, where you can support my work. You can also support this channel by liking and sharing the review, subscribing to the channel, and clicking the notification bell to be alerted to future reviews.