The Impact Of Steven Spielberg’s Creativity And Methodology In Film From 1964-1993: Jaws

From his impressive beginnings, we reach 1975. The release of Jaws. Spielberg directed this film and it demonstrated a vast amount of creativity through his chosen methods. Considered one of the greatest films ever made, Jaws was the quintessential summer blockbuster, regarded as a milestone in motion picture history, and it won several awards for its music and editing. It was the highest-grossing film. It also managed to establish the modern Hollywood business model. Jaws was additionally selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in the United States National Film Registry as ‘culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant’ (Library of Congress List, https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/complete-national-film-registry-listing). Other reputable sources tell us how it was the “Winner of 3 Oscars and the highest-grossing film of its time, Jaws was a phenomenon” (The Jaws Log, Carl Gottlieb, ReadHowYouWant.com, 2010) Not to mention that it also became the first major film to be shot on the ocean. This tells us that the impact made via this film was phenomenal, but how did Spielberg go about this? Well, this film was very creative in its production as Spielberg used three life-size pneumatically powered prop sharks were made for the production: a 'sea-sledge shark', a full-body prop with its belly missing that was towed with a 300-foot line, and two 'platform sharks', one that moved from camera left to right.

The use of mechanical sharks had never been used before and it is one of the reasons why Spielberg’s films and their production are highlighted to be so creative. The actual method behind using these sharks was also very impactful, they gave Spielberg a more realistic perception of his initial vision and were used as a model to make the post-production much easier to follow. There were however elements in which Spielberg’s methods and creative choices would lead to a negative impact. For instance, the unstable mechanical sharks forced Spielberg to shoot many scenes so that the shark was only implicated. For example, for much of the shark hunt, its location is indicated by floating yellow barrels. The opening had the shark devouring Chrissie, but it was rewritten so that it would be shot with Backlines being dragged and yanked by cables to simulate an attack.

Spielberg also included multiple shots of just the dorsal fin. This forced restraint is widely thought to have added to the film's suspense and is also a great example of how his choices would lead to a more effective impact on the production, taking shortcuts such as these would go on to become much more frequent as even the very best directors must make adaptations to the original plan. In one interview, Spielberg said, 'The shark not working was a godsend. It made me become more like Alfred Hitchcock than like Ray Harryhausen.' The acting was a vital part in order to make audiences believe in such a large shark: 'The more fake the shark looked in the water, the more my anxiety told me to heighten the naturalism of the performances.' It was this combination of confidence in Spielberg’s vision and the execution by the crew members which truly made this film such an integral part of early Hollywood blockbuster for Spielberg himself.

This is a prime example of how a film cannot be completely successful without everyone working together, however, in our case, it is clear that Spielberg’s direction in which he proceeded to take the film was the root of this film’s success. Despite this, it also received a

great deal of criticism, primarily due to Spielberg's pushing of the boundaries when it came to Jaws' sociopolitical message. It was told that "Jaws scapegoats the feminine principle for sociopolitical maladies and reveals how the social hierarchy fractures and devitalizes both masculine and feminine identities." (Integrating ideology and archetype in rhetorical criticism, part 2: A case study of Jaws, Thomas S Frentz, page 61-81, 1993) This is where Spielberg triumphed in his development because his actions were brassy to provoke a reaction. It is believed that this reaction may have been one of the many factors which lead to the exponential impact of his productions.

A point which could ultimately destroy Spielberg's praise altogether was that he "borrowed the Jaws script from Richard Zanuck's Desk". Many believe this to be sinful however in the film industry it is very competitive and there are many actions you wouldn't normally take to get to the top. To contend this point I believe (as the source wrote) "he seized the opportunity to enter the film industry" and that which he excelled. It was most importantly his creative additions which Spielberg made to the methodology behind production which, for many, contributed towards its success in its entirety.