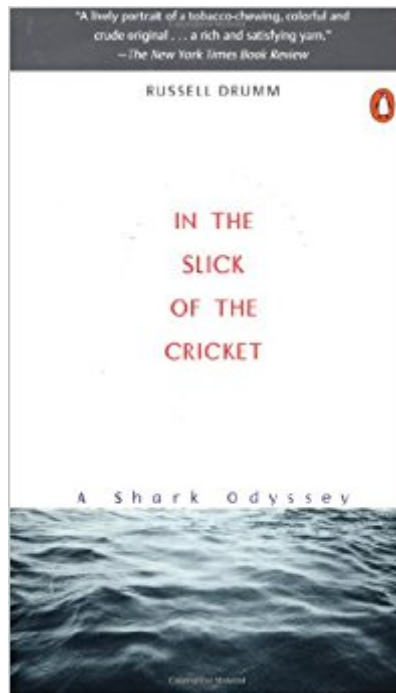




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In The Slick Of The Cricket: The True Story Behind The JAWS Epic



Synopsis

In his forty years of charter-boat fishing off the shores of Long Island, Frank Mundus, captain of the Cricket II, has hauled in more terrifying multiton, multifanged great white sharks than anyone around. Unwittingly playing Ishmael to the Cricket's Ahab, local newspaperman Russell Drumm set out to accompany Mundus on what would be the captain's final voyage into the deep before hanging up his reel and retiring to a beach in Hawaii. What starts out for Drumm as a short escape from the mundane world of obits and ads for seaside condos quickly turns into a storm-tossed odyssey in which Mundus joyfully relives his seafaring days. The cantankerous and thoroughly entertaining captain treats Drumm and the reader to weird and wonderful stories about his ingenious fishing methods, his collection of charter "idiots" and heroic first mates, and his lasting bitterness toward author Peter Benchley for never acknowledging him as the source of the Jaws story. Weaving his own extensive knowledge of the marine environment and the fishing industry with Mundus's peculiar blend of philosophy and seafaring lore, Drumm delivers a stunning portrait of a unique modern adventurer and a bleak, yet humorously portrayed, vision of the apocalypse.

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Customer Reviews

Who can forget the scene in Jaws when Quint, the weathered, steely-eyed captain scrapes his fingernails down the blackboard and announces to the quibbling town elders that they're dealing with a great white shark? In all his hard-nosed glory, Quint might seem like a creation of Hollywood, but in fact he was based on a real fishing captain out of Montauk, Long Island--Frank Mundus, captain of the Cricket II. Mundus never got his due from the movie or from Peter Benchley, the

author of the novel *Jaws*, and that irks him. Russell Drumm, a Montauk reporter, quickly learns this and a lot more during an adventure at sea with the famous shark hunter. Also aboard is the single charter, a big-game fisherman from Hawaii who has yet to grapple with the ultimate trophy: a great white shark. In the five days that follow, the three are tossed by storms during their pursuit of what has been called nature's perfect killing machine, and Mundus relives for the reporter his 40 years on the high seas. In *Slick of the Cricket* is an engaging portrait of a driven man and his unusual occupation. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

A superb portrait of a white-shark fishing guide--deft and sparingly, beautifully written. You might never have laid eyes on this book save for the Pushcart Prize people, who rescued it from obscurity with their 16th annual Editor's Book Award for overlooked manuscripts. You wouldn't have had the chance to be stunned by the dexterous writing, deeply impressed by the layered understanding the writer has brought to the subject. Drumm covers the waterfront beat for the *East Hampton Star*, which means if you want a real story, you'll spend your time in Montauk. There he came across Frank Mundus, the captain of *Cricket II*, a 40-year veteran of charter boats specializing in sharks. Drumm spins a wonderful tale of Mundus's fishing days: The captain radiates from the page like a force, an Urcharter captain, all canny and crude, full of stories (of sharks stuffed into phone booths for a laugh, of sharks hung from fire escapes in New York City by proud fishermen) and deeds (standing on the floating carcass of a whale and tossing cookies to circling great whites; bagging the 4,500-pounder that brought him to the attention of Peter Benchley, who fashioned him into Quint). Mundus also exudes a spooky, vaguely sinister field of energy (sacrificing a goat to a shark helped here, as did allowing a shark to be turned into a pincushion of arrows). This is not strict journalistic fare, much of the book being a highly personal, apocalyptically inclined evocation of a five-day shark trip with Mundus. But Drumm is one of those rare journalists who know all the crannies and foibles of their home patch, have done all the legwork, and appreciate the difference between exploration and exploitation. A first-rate story of a person and place out of time; thanks Mundus, thanks Drumm, thanks Pushcart. (photos) -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Frank Mundus may have been the role model for Peter Benchley's Quint, but he was much more than that. Quint was an egotist whose hubris endangered those aboard the *Orca* and cost him his life and his shark. Frank Mundus would never play fast and loose with his passengers -- and if he went out after a shark, he'd damn well come home with the shark. Whether taking some rich paying

customer out to chase down giant sailfish or going out with some pals to fill up the freezer with dinner, the man was a walking, talking fish finder. Many (many, many) years ago, my dad and uncles got to know Mundus and, once or twice a year, they'd go out fishing. No charters, just some pals out for a day away from the wives...and if they made it past the Anchor Inn, about a mile from our dock, it would have surprised the hell out of all of them. Mundus wasn't famous yet. He was pretty young at the time, and my dad referred to him as "the kid" or "the Dutchman." Whatever his age, Mundus was already a fishing phenomenon. In the book, Frank Mundus comes across as a loud braggart, full of semi-funny stories about shark-related pranks, including balancing himself on the carcass of a dead whale, carving off chunks of the creature and tossing them to the surrounding sharks...as if they were a pack of beagle puppies jumping for milk bones, and sacrificing a goat to impress the paying customers. Did I mention that Mundus had quite a reputation as a leg puller? The Slick of the Cricket creates a hagiography and mythos around Mundus, and tracks a week-long shark hunting expedition during which the writer really struggles to uncover the inner enigma of Mundus. Better he should have stuck to fishing. Mundus was an ordinary guy who could catch fish and spin yarns like nobody's business. He knew the Long Island Sound, its mysteries and currents and secret sweet spots. He knew when to try to outrun a storm or sit her out. And he knew where the big fish lived, when they were hungry and what they wanted to eat. A fish whisperer, if you will. It wasn't magic or voodoo (despite the dubious goat sacrifice). It was experience, instinct and a very sharp brain at work. Exploring that would have made this a great read. How did Mundus know where the great whites might be? There aren't a lot of them, but if one was in the vicinity, Mundus would find him. Same thing with the blues...my dad said The Dutchman could smell when the bluefish were running. He'd drop by and they'd pile into one of the family's leaky rowboats, gun the reluctant outboard and head out to where the bluefish were feeding. Fast, mean and delicious, the bluefish would come in droves after a school of small fry, snapping those sharp teeth as they took bites right and left...and so thick in the water you didn't need a fishing pole... you just tossed the bailing bucket over the side and scooped 'em up. The trick was not falling overboard, especially after a couple of beers. A hungry bluefish is voracious...think of an 11-pound piranha. What Mundus knew must have been fascinating, and while I haven't had a fishing pole in my hands in a couple of decades, God what I'd give to know some of his real secrets...was he reading the water, getting his info from the way it looked, the surface flow, the color? What did he see that nobody else did? Russell Drumm has a good book here, but it would be better had he just shut up and fished instead of looking for the metaphysical meaning of it all. The laughter, the bellowed-out stories, the cries of "didja see how he..." emanating from the picnic table out back where my dad, Mundus (Uncle Dutchman to us kids)

and the uncles sat scaling and cleaning their catch were the real deal...hard working men having a little bit of fun when they could. Come Monday, they'd be back in the factory, back driving the truck, back hauling tourists up and down the Sound. Maybe Mundus did sacrifice the odd goat to impress (and scare the tar out of) some moneybags dentist from Scarsdale. But he knew he was kidding and Mr. Drumm doesn't seem to. I think he might have understood Mundus' character better had he approached the man with a sixpack of Schaeffer and some kielbasa sandwiches. There are no real thrills here. If you aren't much of a fisherman, you may enjoy this book more. It just doesn't give enough of the Mundus kavorka -- his innate fish sense, how to track and catch the really big ones (even before there was sonar and loran), what it's like at 5:00 a.m. when the air has a knife edge to it, and the water is steel grey and unforgiving and you know there are monsters, real ones, big ones, with rows and rows of razor sharp teeth just under the surface and waiting for you. And what it feels like to have one at the end of your fishing line. That's what Mundus was all about, and what the book just misses. It gets the joke, but it doesn't get the man.

Great book, great price

Couldn't really get into this book.

Russell Drumm's *In the Slick of the Cricket*, is an introductory course to the legendary shark fisherman, Frank Mundus. Fishing in the waters near Montauk, Mundus is well known for bringing in record-breaking White sharks. According to Mundus, his straightforwardness and skillfulness in shark fishing inspired Peter Benchley to create the character Quint, in his most frightening and notorious novel-JAWS. We are given this information as well as several other humorous experiences as Drumm sails on what could very well be Mundus' last expedition on his indestructible ship, the Cricket II. I felt that the plot had the potential of becoming something much larger than what it actually is. Several of Mundus' experiences are thought provoking such as humankind's massive crave for the exploitation and genocide of all shark species after the film JAWS hit the movie screens. However, Drumm's writing style was often ambiguous; jumping from Mundus' stories to his present expedition without smooth transitions is confusing and mis-leading. Obviously, fishing jargon is commonly used and difficult to follow at times, but Drumm does a decent job in identifying and defining the terms through both his and Mundus' stories. Also, most of the chapters end with philosophical ranting about Drumm's personal views on a variety of the substance dealt with in the book, but the connections between his thoughts and Mundus' words were poor. If

you're interested in fishing excursions and the exploitation of sharks, this book may be of interest to you. Either way, I recommend that the reader remains focused to follow the sketchy transitions between Robert Drumm and Frank Mundus.

Taking place along the shores and outer reaches of Long Island, NY, Russell Drumm smartly lets the sea stories of Frank Mundus, purported to be Benchley's model for the shark hunter Quint, be the center of this short book. Joining Mundus on one of his last trips out before retirement, Drumm let's Mundus' voice do most of the talking and a fine story teller Mundus turns out to be. When sticking with Mundus and the journey at hand, the book is successful, but when Drumm explores the metaphysical with his take on the nature of fishing and the spiritual presence of a deck hand that committed suicide; the book veers off into places that just waste time and don't further the narrative. Read it for Mundus, and make your way through the rest.

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Whatever preconceived notions you hold about this wonderful book, be prepared to push your personal horizons farther than even the great Frank Mundus might care to go. Drumm is a find. He writes about shark fishing in a way that makes it a metaphor for much greater things. That's not meant to take away from the fact that this book is first and foremost about the "Monster Man's" greatest accomplishments. It is very much what you might expect. But it is also a fresh and original exploration into the personal and collective oceans within us all. Read it to recover a sense of awe.

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