

BUILDING A BETTER SHARK

To get inside the mind of nature's most fearsome eating machine, explorer Fabien Cousteau dreamed up a great white submarine so realistic it fooled even the sharks
Photograph by Mike Hoover

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BEING EATEN ALIVE ISN'T THE ONLY WAY TO GET inside a great white shark. You can also have a Hollywood engineer build you a submarine that looks and moves just like the real thing. That's what oceanographer Fabien Cousteau—grandson of the famous French explorer Jacques—did recently near Mexico's remote Guadalupe Island, where a healthy population of great whites feeds off a very nervous population of seals. Cousteau's idea: fool the giant predators into thinking he's one of them.

"I was trying to pass as the weird cousin from Australia," Cousteau says of his time as a 14-foot-long female great white. "The sharks were definitely curious. They would cruise in to investigate and then stay in the area. Unfortunately—or fortunately—none of them tried to mate with me."

Cousteau, 37, got the idea of building the sub from a comic he read as a kid; the ingenious design that engineer Eddie Paul came up with utilizes an air-powered "tail" to propel the shark at a great-white cruising speed of two knots. Cousteau pilots the craft using a joystick and a video monitor.

Following in his family's tradition, Cousteau filmed his adventures to make *The Mind of a Demon*, a documentary that should air later this year. Cousteau hopes it will help change people's negative perception of great whites. In fact, he and his crew spent more than 100 hours diving with sharks as large as 20 feet, most of the time without a cage. "It was their world. They could have attacked us anytime, but they never did," says Cousteau. Keeping the sharks honest came down to a trick that also works on humans: "Always make direct eye contact." —JASON KERSTEN



COUSTEAU'S SHARK SUB was designed and built by Hollywood special-effects legend Eddie Paul (*XXX*, *Terminator 2*) in just four weeks for \$100,000. The 1,200-pound air-powered craft has a rubber-covered fiberglass head, a stainless-steel-tubing skeleton, and a flexible spine forged from bulletproof plastic. The synthetic beast emits no bubbles or sound, which would blow its cover. Its hinged head, seen in operation here, serves as both entryway and emergency escape hatch.

LIFE

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(DON'T
EXPECT
MILK &
COOKIES)

"I got a lot of
acquaintances.
I got very
few friends."