



[HOME](#) / [FILM](#) / [FESTIVALS](#)

'Dangerous Animals' Review: Sharks Meet Serial Killer In Sadistic Genre Mash-up Surfing Flick – Cannes Film Festival



By [Pete Hammond](#)

May 17, 2025 1:30pm



Jai Courtney in 'Dangerous Animals'

IFC/Shudder

Take *Jaws*, throw in a bit of *Saw*, add some *Room* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, a little *Point Break*, plus a touch of *Gidget*, and *voila!* You have the recipe for *Dangerous Animals*, a deviously demented combination of shark and serial killer genre movies that had its world premiere tonight in Cannes as part of this year's Directors' Fortnight lineup.

Actually this Australian-made thriller is not the kind of fare you expect to see in a more arty Cannes Competition, but here it sits before hitting the theatrical waves in theaters June 6 through IFC and Shudder. It just goes to show festivals can dig exploitation movies too.

This one from director Sean Byrne (*Devil's Candy*) and writer Nick Lepard is tailor-made for summer moviegoing. *Dangerous Animals* centers on Zephyr (Yellowstone's Hassie Harrison), an emotionally distant surfer girl who would be content to cuddle up on a 30-foot wave rather than with a man for any length of time. Before we meet her, however, the film opens with a sequence in the ocean where tour boat operator Tucker (Jai Courtney) is welcoming a good-looking young couple on his ragged boat for a little adventure where he sends them out on a secure line above pools of sharks. Heather (Ella Newton) is nervous, but her boyfriend goes for it. Bad move as just then Tucker's real motivation is revealed: This is a setup for his snuff film, cueing the sharks and feeding him to them as he tapes the whole thing on his video camera. Can you say "ick"?

Back to Zephyr, who is involved in a hot one-nighter with Moses (Josh Houston). But before it can get more serious she up and leaves his woody for her woody and drives to a remote location for a little night surfing. This is where — uh-oh — she encounters Tucker, and before you know it, she has been abducted and awakens in a basement-style room on his boat, tied to a bed opposite the aforementioned Heather. What kind of fate awaits them both? Don't ask. This is just the beginning of the real horror as Tucker turns out to be a serial killer Hannibal Lecter would be proud of. His gross game of dangling his victims out on the open sea and into the hungry mouths of great whites is as intense as it gets, and Courtney eats this villainous role up with relish and lots of blood. But he has met his match in Zephyr, who has a fight for life he doesn't often encounter. Meanwhile back on land, Moses is increasingly worried and starts a search for her. It doesn't go well.

You know the rest, lots of twists and turns as Zephyr and Tucker go at it, both unique kinds of loners who get their kicks in the water, only in wildly different ways. Courtney, the fine Australian actor, gets a juicy lead role here and runs with it, about as evil as it can get. He is one sick pup. Harrison is perfect casting, a scrappy surfer girl with more moxie than 10 guys on boards. The Great Barrier Reef scenery is to die for, and that seems to be what the plan is for these characters. Cinematographer Shelly Farthing-Dewe captures it all in style.

Producers are Troy Lum, Andrew Mason, Pete Shilaimon, Chris Ferguson, Brian Kavanaugh-Jones and Mickey Liddell.

Title: Dangerous Animals

Festival: Cannes (Directors' Fortnight)

Distributor: IFC/Shudder

Release date: June 6, 2025

Director: Sean Byrne

Screenwriter: Nick Lepard