



BILLION DOLLAR FISH

1 x 53 min. Written and directed by **Alfred Schwarzenberger**
HD, 5.1 and Stereo Executive producer: **Sabine Holzer**



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Deep in the waters of the Danube lives a prehistoric giant. Her eggs are the dish of dreams and fantasy, and the price they fetch can make the wildest dreams come true. Virtually unchanged, her ancestors swam in ancient rivers when the dinosaurs still ruled the planet. However, these prehistoric giants survived even the dinosaurs' extinction and are with us still—but now time is running out.

This ancient giant is the Beluga sturgeon, considered by some to be the largest freshwater fish in the world. Her unfertilised eggs become black gold, served in only the most expensive restaurants as caviar. Sturgeons are now at the very edge of extinction because of the exclusive market for their eggs—but only the eggs can allow the species to live. Paradoxically, the desire for caviar may now be the only chance they have for their future existence.

'Billion Dollar Fish' has been filmed in some of the least known and remotest areas of Eastern Europe. The river Danube is well known, but only in those sections along its course where it flows through some of the great cities of Europe, cities with names that resonate through history—Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade. However, the lower Danube is virtually unknown to the Western world, and it is precisely the lower Danube that may be the last hope for the sturgeon.

While the story of the sturgeon itself unfolds beneath the currents of the rivers and along its shores, on the land there is another story to be told: that of the people who are fighting to preserve the fish. This documentary also gives an insight into how different peoples, once divided by politics and war, are now united in their attempts to secure this ancient fish's future in a modern and changing world.

'Billion Dollar Fish' is a story of mystery and intrigue, of greed and desperation, of desire and aspiration—of an ancient giant and how her eggs have taken on a prize almost beyond that of gold. This artificial value, placed on them by humans, may be the only chance that this species has for survival.



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