



INDIANA JONES THE MAN IN THE HAT RETURNS

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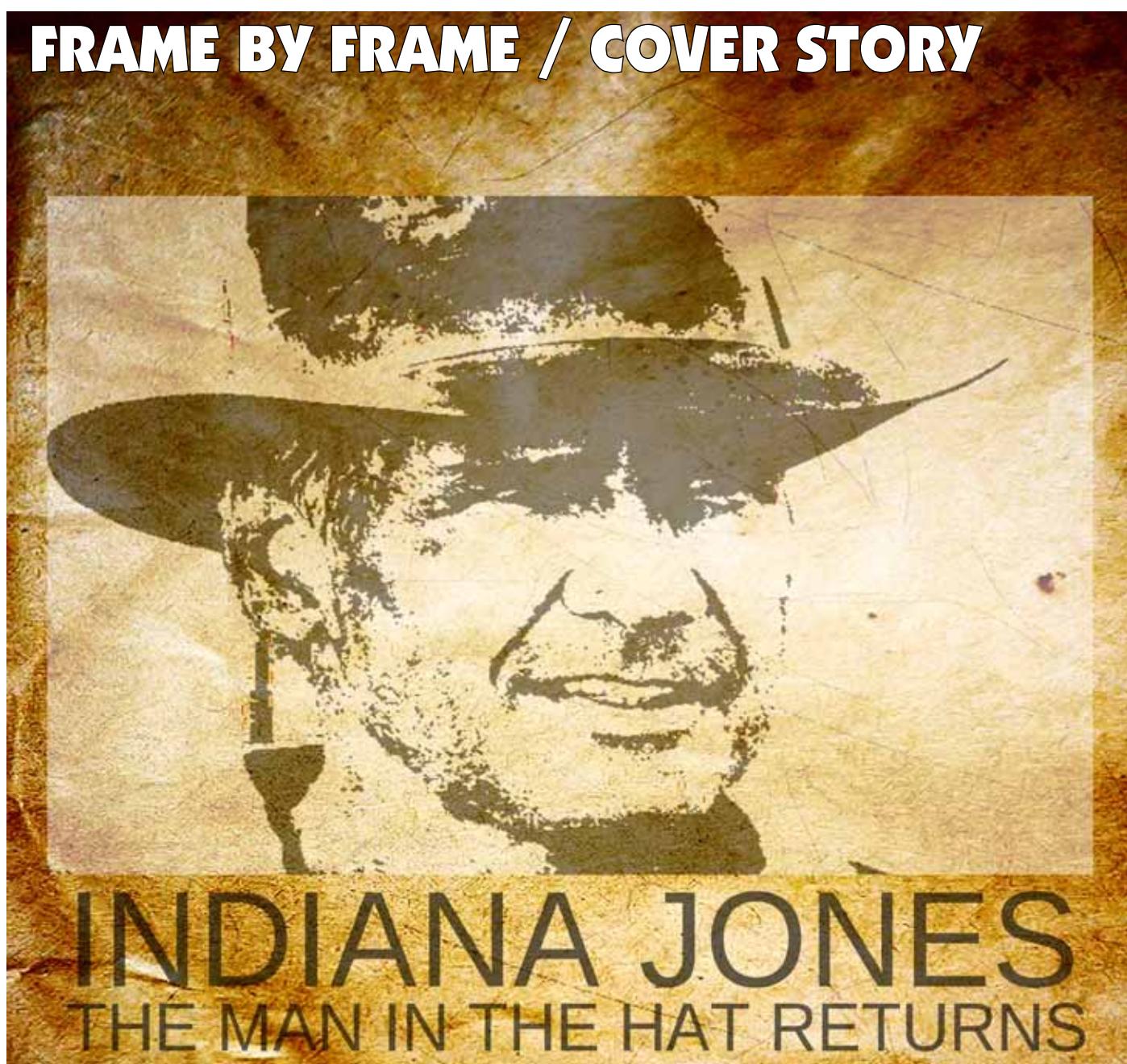
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FRAME BY FRAME / COVER STORY



by Glen Ryan Tadysh

In light of last week's *Vanity Fair* article on Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy's confirmation of a new Indiana Jones film in the distant future, my brain's been under a bit of an Indy spell.

The Original Trilogy

Unlike *Star Wars*, I wasn't introduced to Indiana Jones at a young age. I don't recall my parents ever talking about the films and we certainly didn't own any of them. It's difficult for me to place the exact moment I learned of the series' and titular character's existence, but I do



Glen Ryan Tadysh
understood the significance of that particular Disney attraction.

At one point in the fifth grade, a friend loaned me a copy of *Young Indiana Jones and the Tomb of Terror* (1990)—an incredibly short, young-

adult adventure novel. While I read the book, my curiosity regarding the titular character still wasn't aroused, and other than seeing my grandfather watch *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) at one point in my pre-teen years, I had no real exposure to the film series until I was 17.

In my final semester of high school, I went on a spring trip to Disney World with my school's band, where I experienced the Epic Stunt Spectacular! for the first time. A week after the trip I saw a trailer for *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008), realizing I had yet to see a single Indiana Jones film. Of course, there was no way in hell I would watch the fourth film without seeing the original trilogy.

My initial reaction to the original films (viewing them in release order) was what anyone might expect. I loved *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *Last Crusade*, and found myself disappointed with *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984). The obvious explanation for such a reaction stems from the sharp contrast in tone separating the first and third films from the second. *Temple of Doom* could be considered the ugly duckling in many ways, at least prior to *Crystal Skull's* release.

My actual love for this series didn't truly come about until I finally acquired a set of the films—yes, all four—just three years ago. At this time I was becoming a huge admirer of Spielberg's films, and paying closer attention to his style of storytelling. I found myself frequently watching films I've always known and loved, such as *Jaws* (1975) and *Jurassic Park* (1993), and experiencing others like *Close Encounters*

of the Third Kind (1977) and *The Sugarland Express* (1973) for the first time.

As my Spielberg obsession grew, I paid closer attention to how the Indiana Jones films differed from one another. Seeing how they were made and the mode of thinking that went into each film's conception not only broadened my perception of the series, but also helped me understand *Crystal Skull's* negative reception.

That being said, I have to admit I didn't watch *Temple of Doom* too often at first—hardly at all in fact. I still had the bad taste in my mouth from my first viewing. Curiosity eventually got the better of me though, and it wasn't long before I experienced *Temple of Doom* again.

Before I knew it, I found myself enjoying the film just as much as *Raiders* and *Last Crusade*. My attitude toward *Temple of Doom* changed as I began to understand why it was darker, and overall different, than the others. If anything, I actually applaud Spielberg and George Lucas for straying away from formula and making a completely different film than *Raiders*. I feel a sequel should never be a rehash of its predecessor because you want to keep the series fresh and not cheat your audience by delivering the same end result.

Of course, none of this is to say *Last Crusade* was a rehash of *Raiders*, because it wasn't. Some viewers feel it was too similar to the original film, and dislike *Last Crusade* for that reason. I wouldn't make that argument, although it certainly shared more of a kinship with *Raiders* than *Temple of Doom* in terms of tone and story. In *Last Crusade*, we see the return of Marcus

Brody, Sallah, Indy's college, the Nazis, a Judeo-Christian artifact, an independent female character and Middle East locations. At first glance, it's easy to see how a *Temple of Doom* fan could become disappointed and set *Last Crusade* aside, despite the performances of Harrison Ford and Sean Connery.

However, it's important to remember that *Last Crusade* contains elements its predecessors are without. The film possesses much stronger character development and acting, and delivers a more emotional conclusion due to the father-son relationship and John Williams' score. The father-son story alone gives the film more depth than its predecessors, making it resonate on a more personal level. *Last Crusade* also features treacherous Austrian archeologist Elsa Schneider (Alison Doody), the trilogy's first femme fatale.

Could Spielberg have given us a third film that stood apart from its predecessors to the extreme that *Temple of Doom* stood apart from *Raiders*? Yes, but as Spielberg stated in the making-of documentary for *Last Crusade*, he simply wanted to "bring back the spirit of the original *Raiders*." Spielberg definitely accomplished that objective, and regardless whether he could have done so with a "different" movie, the end result was still nothing short of superb entertainment.

Crystal Skull

My brother and I took the opportunity to watch the fourth Indiana Jones film in theaters, and our reaction to that film was completely contrary to general fan reaction. We loved it. We found ourselves laughing throughout the movie, and overall enjoyed *Crystal Skull's* story. As a matter of fact, I didn't learn of the intense hatred toward the film until nearly three years later when a friend of mine became distraught at the sound of me saying *Crystal Skull* wasn't that bad a movie. I was shocked to say the least in discovering so many people hated the film, saying Spielberg and Lucas destroyed their childhood by "raping" their beloved franchise; in a similar manner as with Lucas and the *Star Wars* prequels.

I generally don't respond well to this type of criticism, as I find it to be fueled by nothing more than narrow-minded ignorance instead of constructive thoughts. And while I know I'm part of a minute group which enjoys *Crystal Skull*, that doesn't mean I blindly enjoy the film.

By itself, *Crystal Skull* isn't a bad movie. It's certainly a better film compared to any of the *Star Wars* prequels, and yes, even *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005). Sorry, but parts of that film are so tastelessly hokey, cringing isn't even enough to compensate. *Crystal Skull's* hokey elements are at least added with intent, given that type of old-fashioned campiness is part of what Indiana Jones is about.

People can say what they want about Shia LaBeouf, but his character in *Crystal Skull* was certainly better than Sam Witwicky in the *Transformers* series. Was he the best choice to play the son of Indy? No, but he can at least still bring humor into the movie, and anyone who grew up watching *Even Stevens* (1999–2003) on Disney more than likely laughed a few times. I think we should consider ourselves lucky that LaBeouf performed most of his own stunts in the film, and legitimately crossed swords with Kate Blanchett. It could have all been done with CGI, but we were fortunate enough to still get practical, in-your-face stunt work in the digital age we live in.

Anyone who's watched the behind-the-scenes material for *Crystal Skull* would know that the majority of the film contained real locations, practical effects and elaborate physical sets. Again, we were lucky to get any of that.

Continuing on, here's a simple list for the other pros and cons of *Crystal Skull*.

Pros

- A fantastic and energetic John Williams

score

- Return of Ford as Indy, and Karen Allen as Marion Ravenwood
- A fresh antagonistic force
- Attention to detail and effort in recreating the 1950s
- Continuing to incorporate real legends/mythology: Area 51, crystal skulls, Francisco de Orellana, Nazca Lines and El Dorado
- Most of Indy's one-liners

Cons

- Failure to duplicate Douglas Slocombe's lighting and cinematography styles
- No reprisal of Marcus Brody due to the passing of Denholm Elliott
- David Koepp writing the script rather than Lawrence Kasdan
- CG elements: prairie dogs, monkeys, the alien and flying saucer
- LaBeouf swinging on vines in the jungle

Now, I want to elaborate on the point regarding Koepp. I don't have any problem with Koepp as a screenwriter, or a director for that matter. I enjoy the majority of his films, and his adaptation of Stephen King's *Secret Window, Secret Garden*—*Secret Window* (2004)—is not only one of my favorite thrillers, but it's definitely his best work in my eyes. I simply feel that when looking at the majority of Koepp's scripts, I don't think he was the best choice for writing and finalizing the first *Indiana Jones* film after a 20-year hiatus.

I'm not sure whether Kasdan was approached to pen *Crystal Skull*, and if not, I feel Spielberg and Lucas should have brought the original screenwriter back to help resurrect the series. Given *Crystal Skull*'s major transition in setting and genre, Kasdan's input in my opinion, was greatly needed.

I feel most of the elements that comprise an *Indiana Jones* film were present in *Crystal Skull* though. And I say "most of" because I won't deny the presence of an incomplete soul as far as the film is concerned. Elements encompassing the spirit of *Indiana Jones*, which were present in the first three films, are most certainly absent from *Crystal Skull*.

I'd like to point out though that I don't contest the filmmakers' decision to move the period from pre-WWII 1930s to Cold War-era 1950s, and establish a science-fiction genre. Without those two elements, there isn't even a film to discuss. What I find to be an intriguing idea, is taking a genre-based series like *Indiana Jones* and experimenting by shifting the foundation. Obviously, it didn't work out, but had some different decisions been made in the creative process, *Crystal Skull* would definitely have been received in a more favorable light.

I'm not going to bash the "Nuke the Fridge" scene either because honestly, I found that entire sequence hilarious. And what I find even more hilarious is that the ridiculousness of the original three films can be digested without issue, but Indy surviving a nuclear blast in a lead-lined fridge is crossing the line. These films aren't to be taken seriously to the point that one judges them based on reality. That's not what they're about. *Indiana Jones* films are about fun-filled entertainment based in the style of classic action-adventure, and I feel a lot of that was forgotten due to nostalgia when folks watched *Crystal Skull*.

And if one wants to blame my rationalization on not having grown up with the series, so be it. But at the end of the day, *Crystal Skull* can still be a fun film to watch.

The Future

So what does the future hold for the *Indiana Jones* franchise? An endless stream of ideas and concerns accompany this question, the greatest

of them being who will take up the hat and whip.

Despite what anyone's saying so far, it's fair to assume Ford won't be returning to the series due to his age. Ford proved he could handle the role at 65 in *Crystal Skull*, and the story's timeline being pushed forward 19 years—the same time gap between the films' releases—only helped sell Ford's reprisal. However, as much as some only want to see the role in Ford's hands, two facts make recasting Indy inevitable.

1) Ford will be beyond his current age of 72 by the time a new film even gets off the ground, meaning not only will it be harder to accept him as the character, but depending on his health and strength at the time, Ford may be physically unable to handle the demands of Indy.

2) The series needs to return to the pre-WWII 1930s setting, like in the original trilogy. Quite frankly, this is the only way resurrecting the franchise will work given *Crystal Skull*'s reception. Moving Indy to the 1950s era of Cold War paranoia and sci-fi B-movies, while interesting and a bold move, simply didn't work. The spirit of *Indiana Jones* belongs in the 1930s, and shifting back two decades from *Crystal Skull* only renders Ford's return all the more illogical.

I wouldn't be surprised if fans' negative reactions to the thought of another actor portraying Indy were similar to those of James Bond fans when Connery officially retired from the role after *Diamonds are Forever* (1971). But as many including myself consider Indy to be America's Bond, this franchise like its British counterpart should get to live on through generations with a variety of actors in the character's shoes.

And on another note regarding the Bond

franchise, one thing Disney and Lucasfilm can take away from it is the fact that series hasn't been without its blunders. So it's important the filmmakers not cheat fans by aiming for quantity rather than quality when returning Indy to the big screen.

So with all this in mind, who is a viable candidate for Indy?

If I were to throw a name into the hat, it would most definitely be Chris Pratt. I honestly feel Pratt is the only real choice right now, and my reasoning for this is his role as Star-Lord in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014). Pratt essentially played Han Solo in that film—a sarcastic, cocky and (initially) selfish space pirate who is both witty and charming—and he did so perfectly, which to me, makes him ideal for the role of Indy.

But even if we get the right actor, what artifact will our hero go after this time, and whom shall he go up against?

In the making-of documentary for *Raiders*, Lucas said the story concept of *Indiana Jones* was "an archeologist who goes around finding ancient artifacts that have a supernatural flavor to them." This statement gives us endless possibilities as to what Indy could search for.

In discussing this subject with other fans, one proposal I found interesting was the Shroud of Turin, a 14-foot piece of linen cloth which bears the image a man believed by many to be Jesus Christ. The cloth itself is believed to be the burial shroud of Christ due to the figure's wounds being consistent with those of crucifixion.

Having never before heard of this artifact, I found the idea of an *Indiana Jones* story based

on it rather interesting. However, given the series has already dealt with two Judeo-Christian artifacts, I feel our hero should go after something different, much like the approach *Temple of Doom* took. Something involving the mythologies of Ancient Egypt or Greece could make for a fresh chapter in the franchise, my favorite of the possibilities being *Pandora's Box*. And while I know one could argue that artifact's similarity to the Ark of the Covenant, there are still many fascinating creative directions a writer could go with it. Other options include *Atlantis*, the *Fountain of Youth*, *Excalibur*, the *Ring of Gyges*, *Camelot*, the *Philosopher's Stone* and countless others.

As far as antagonists are concerned, the only thing I'd prefer to not see is Indy going up against Nazis, as we already received this treatment twice. Given Indy's line of work, he's certainly without a shortage of enemies. So as long it's not Nazis hunting our hero, I'm game. I know the *Monkey King*—known in Chinese literature as Sun Wukong—was a character Lucas and various screenwriters played around with during development of both *Temple of Doom* and *Last Crusade*, so perhaps that character could finally make it into the series.

In the end, I feel it doesn't matter what Lucasfilm decides to go with as long as the rules established by the original trilogy are followed, and the mistakes of *Crystal Skull* are learned from. I say it's time for these types of old-fashioned action-adventure films to make a comeback in American cinema, and there's no better way to kick it off than with the return of the man in the hat.

NEW FILMS THIS WEEK & NEXT



MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

Mad Max: Fury Road
R 120 min Action | Adventure | Sci-Fi | Thriller

In a stark desert landscape where humanity is broken, two rebels just might be able to restore order: Max, a man of action and of few words, and Furiosa, a woman of action who is looking to make it back to her childhood homeland.

Director: George Miller
Stars: Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult, Zoë Kravitz

Pitch Perfect 2 (2015)
PG-13 115 min Comedy | Music
After a humiliating command performance at Lincoln Center, the Barden Bellas enter an international competition that no American group has ever won in order to regain their status and right to perform.

Director: Elizabeth Banks
Stars: Anna Kendrick, Rebel Wilson, Hailee Steinfeld, Brittany Snow

May 22
Tomorrowland (2015)



SAN ANDREAS

Director: Claudia Llosa
Stars: Jennifer Connelly, Cillian Murphy, Mélanie Laurent, Oona Chaplin

May 29
San Andreas
PG-13 114 min Action | Drama | Thriller
In the aftermath of a massive earthquake in California, a rescue-chopper pilot makes a dangerous journey across the state in order to rescue his estranged daughter.

Director: Brad Peyton

Stars: Dwayne Johnson, Alexandra Daddario, Carla Gugino, Colton Haynes

Aloft
R 112 min Drama
Aloft tells of a struggling mother who encounters the son she abandoned 20 years earlier.

Director: Cameron Crowe

Stars: Emma Stone, Rachel McAdams, Bradley Cooper, John Krasinski