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Michael Giltz

Posted October 17, 2008 | 05:23 PM (EST)

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# DVDs: Battling The "Indiana Jones" Effect

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It's a strange but understandable phenomenon of pop culture. When the creators of a beloved character or franchise bring it back to life after a hiatus, people are so glad to see their favorite hero or fantasy world again that when the revival is just a shadow of its former self or when the revival even sullies the memory of the original and makes it hard to remember why you loved it in the first place, heck when it's so bad that you literally throw up (as the guys from *South Park* insist), people will still embrace the event anyway. Imagine if your beloved Great Aunt

Mabel were brought back to life -- sure she's a zombie and it's a little upsetting, but you can't help being tickled over hearing her walk and talk again, if only for a little while.

The most obvious recent example of this are the three *Star Wars* prequels. I don't know anyone from 8 years old to 80 who doesn't think those three movies are anything more than mediocre, at best. And yet they grossed \$3.3 billion worldwide at the box office alone. And God help me, if they released a fourth one tomorrow, I'd line up to see that as well. But there are plenty more where that came from. Helen Mirren played Inspector Jane Tennison of *Prime Suspect* in two absolutely brilliant miniseries. The gaps between the weaker and weaker sequels became longer, but still at the end we cheered her on. Sylvester Stallone truded out *Rocky Balboa* 16 years after the last entry and 30 years after the Oscar-winning original. And simply because it wasn't quite as godawful as the last three, we bought into the absurd premise of one last fight. *The Godfather III* came out 16 years after *Part II* and was nominated for an Oscar, for God's sake. I'm sure we could list many more examples from movies, TV shows and books.

Now that same hypnotic effect doesn't occur when someone brings out a new Tarzan or a new Robin Hood. Every generation will have their own spin on legendary characters. (Yes, I'm already looking forward to Robert Downey Jr. as Sherlock Holmes.) But that built-in audience is not under the same hypnotic effect as the fans who will flock to a movie when the people who first created it or the actor who first originated it brings that tale back for another go-round.

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That's my explanation for why I didn't storm out of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (\$39.99; Paramount). (Here's some good news. There's a single disc edition for \$5 cheaper with few of the OK extras. They shouldn't even bother to put that out. But the Blu-Ray edition is EXACTLY THE SAME PRICE as the regular two disc edition and has all the same extras. Hurrah! Let's hope every studio quickly realizes that if they want to keep the \$18 billion DVD gravy train rolling that Blu-Ray can't be an excuse to jack up prices. Let it provide a jump in picture and sound quality -- which it most certainly does -- not a jump in cost.)

Once the contact high of seeing Indy again has worn off, a second viewing on DVD is the perfect antidote for the "Indiana Jones Effect." I have a personal animus against "amusing" reaction shots of animals. No great movie ever included them. (The exception that proves the rule? *The Thin Man*.) Spielberg shows not one, not two, but THREE animal reaction shots of gophers or groundhogs or prairie dogs or whatever those little fellas are in the first few minutes. Cate Blanchett was game but you can't be a great villain if all you do is bark out "bring the map!" to your underlings. And did Shia LaBeouf REALLY swing through the trees like Tarzan? This isn't a godawful movie the way the first three *Star Wars* movies are; Harrison Ford is too good and seeing Karen Allen again too much fun. But it's not a patch on the original. The best antidote to the Indiana Jones Effect? Watching *Raiders of the Lost Ark* again. It's one of the great adventure films of all time. And seeing it again will remind you of what a truly great Indy film should be.

So tell me, what movie or TV show or book series snookered you with the Indiana Jones Effect?

**TERRENCE MALICK'S IMPROVED MASTERPIECE** -- I'm an unabashed fan of director Terrence Malick, who delivered two masterpieces in the 1970s (*Badlands* and *Days Of Heaven*), went on vacation for 20 years and then delivered two more masterpieces, *The Thin Red Line* and now *The New World*, which is just out in a new extended cut the studio says was overseen by Malick. It's 23 minutes longer than the initial Oscar-qualifying release and 37 minutes longer than the standard theatrical cut, which I avoided because I loved the longer version so much. This new, 172 minute version (\$20.98; New Line) is just breathtaking. It tells the story of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas. The arrival of the British in America is like watching a spaceship land in Central Park; you completely understand the panic and astonishment of the "naturals" (who are soon termed "savages" when their help is no longer needed). Just as wonderful, when Pocahontas travels to England, you see that world through her eyes and it's just as strange and exotic as you or I going to Mars. But here's the highest compliment I can pay: I believed it. When Smith and others are rowing up river or standing in the middle of a field and staring at the indigenous Americans who are sniffing at them in wonder, I believed it. I wasn't thinking about the cameras or the actors or the fact that they might have to pause filming when a plane flies overhead. I was utterly caught up in watching people in 1607 land in America and seeing that world with virgin eyes. This isn't through simple accuracy -- it's a remarkable alchemy of brilliant cinematography, famous and unknown actors, well-worn costumes and a million other details. Heck, the music of Wagner shouldn't make me believe I'd been transported back 400 years. But I did.

**BOXED SET ROUNDUP** -- Sure, the only movie you really need to watch in *The Ultimate Matrix Collection* on Blu-Ray (\$129.95; Warner Bros.) is the original. But all of them look smashing on this premium-priced Blu-Ray edition and it does contain an overwhelming amount of top-notch bonus material, including *The Animatrix* and enough behind-the-scenes footage, commentary and documentaries to keep you busy for literally a week. *Agatha Christie's Poirot: The Definitive Collection* (\$99.95; A&E) collects 12 TV movie-length mysteries of Poirot (though, oddly, they're not listed in the order of the original airdate). *Poirot* has to be one of the most confusingly packaged TV series around. You've got 45 (I think) roughly one hour mysteries followed by 16 TV movie length adventures (four more just aired in the UK and aren't included in this "definitive" edition). David Suchet is a definitive Poirot, though he's best appreciated in the early episodes, which are all packaged this way and that in numerous compilations. This set has solid mysteries for fans and is nicely compact, though with four more movies already done it's sure to be replaced in a year or so with an even more definitive set of TV movies and hopefully one day the entire series in order. At least they're well presented. Truly distressing is the new *Jewel In The Crown 25th Anniversary Edition* (\$39.95; A&E). A great miniseries just one notch below *Brideshead Revisited*, *Jewel* has long been available in a bulkier, more expensive set with a shoddy transfer of the original footage. In the UK, they recently put out a remastered version with some modest extras. But while THIS version may be cheaper and more compact, it appears to be the same cheap-looking version put out all those years ago. If you've never seen it, this is better than

"Washington Unplugged"

Arianna was on CBS' "Washington..."

**Alex Leo** The "Real Housewives Of New York City" Flowchart Of Hate

I'm a little embarrassed to love this show as much as...

"BRUNO" TRAILER! Calamity, African Babies, Chase Scenes And More (NSFW VIDEO)

IT'S HERE! The trailer for this July's Sacha Baron Cohen...

**NATO Leaders Focus On Afghanistan, But Most Reject Obama's Plea For Troops (SLIDESHOW)**

STRASBOURG, France — On the eve of the NATO...

**First Lady Fashion At Friday's NATO Concert (PHOTOS)**

Another night, another fashion opportunity for NATO leaders and their spouses! See...

**Diana Palin, Sarah Palin's Sister-In-Law, Arrested For Breaking Into Home**

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Police say Alaska Gov...

**John Oliver Explains The Real Reason You Never Touch The Queen (VIDEO)**

John Oliver was upset enough to drop his monocle when he...

**Obama Teases Reporter From India During Press Conference (VIDEO)**

Obama held a conference packed with press from around the world on Thursday. He called...

**Jim Cramer Declares The Depression "Over" (VIDEO)**

On Thursday's episode of "Mad Money" host Jim Cramer declared that the depression...

**Scientists Find Rocket Fuel Chemical In Infant Formula**

ATLANTA — Traces of a chemical used in rocket fuel were found in samples of...

**Least Wasteful Cities In America (SLIDESHOW)**

It's great to love the city you live in, and better to

nothing, I suppose.

**SPORTS** -- *Ringside Ali* (\$34.95; ESPN) is the latest sports release to make excellent use of the DVD's potential. They spotlight 15 major fights with a generous 10 hours of footage and throw in a three and a half hour documentary to boot. *History Of The Cleveland Browns* (\$26.98; Warner Bros.) with two discs and 4+ hours seems modest in comparison. *Sports Night: The Complete Series* (\$69.99; Shout) is a tenth anniversary edition loaded with new extras that celebrate the show that first made clear what a distinctive talent creator Aaron Sorkin was. *The Long Green Line* (\$29.99; LGL) is a bare-bones, affectionate look at legendary long distance running coach Joe Newton.

**DOCUMENTARIES** -- Errol Morris has never made a boring or uninteresting film. His latest documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (\$28.96; Sony) looks at the abuses of Abu Ghraib. Instead of demonizing the low-level soldiers who have borne the brunt of legal and public condemnation, Morris lets them speak for themselves. He also challenges our instinctive assumptions about what constitutes abuse -- not to say standards are too strict but to say they are not strict enough. The clear message is that these soldiers were not acting on a whim but following orders, which doesn't excuse their actions but does show the blame deserves to be spreader farther and much higher up the chain of command. *Hollywood Singing and Dancing* (\$29.99; Great Musical Treasury) is a fine look at the history of musicals for film buffs, with about four hours of movie and extras, hosted by Shirley Jones. *Regular or Super: Views on Mies van der Rohe* and *Monte Grande: Francisco Varela* (\$28.98 and \$29.98; Icarus) are two thoughtful documentaries about original thinkers: the architect and the scientist/researcher. Finally, *Capricorn One Special Edition* (\$19.98; Lionsgate) is of course the documentary cleverly disguised as a fictional film starring Elliott Gould that blew the lid off the the hoax of landing on the moon.

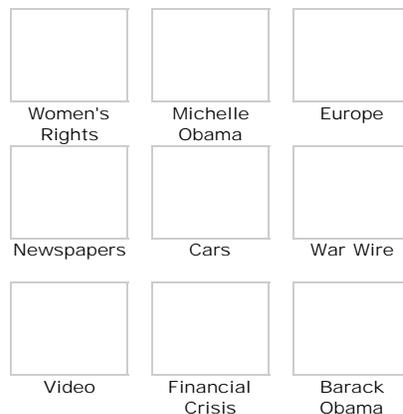
**KIDS** -- *Liberty's Kids: The Complete Series* (\$59.98; Shout) contains all 40 episodes of the fine animated series about the American Revolution seen from the point of view of young people, with Walter Cronkite as Benjamin Franklin and guest stars like Michael Douglas, Whoopi Goldberg, Ben Stiller and many more. *SpongeBob SquarePants: Who Bob What Pants?* (\$16.99; Paramount) is a cute new TV movie starring the most famous sponge in history, as well as bonus episodes. *Silverhawks: Volume One* (\$44.98; Warner Bros.) is an animated adventure series from the creators of *Thundercats* that unfortunately includes just half (albeit 32 cartoons) of its one and only season. *Veggietales: The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything* (\$29.98; Universal) is the latest, aggressively gentle adventure starring the Biblically-minded vegetables like Larry the Cucumber. *Yo Gabba Gabba: The Dancey Dance Bunch* (\$16.99; Paramount) contains four episodes of the goofy, sweet puppet show, although I'd rather people get an entire season than just a few fun episodes. *Barney I Love You Gift Set* (\$24.98; Lionsgate) collects three DVDs and one CD of the kid-liked, parent-despised dinosaur.

**MOVIES** -- *Mongol: The Rise Of Genghis Khan* (\$27.98; New Line) is the first of three movies about the empire builder (or warlord if he took over your country) and it's a very old-fashioned biopic in both the good and bad sense of that term. *The Edge Of Heaven* (\$27.99; Strand) is a melancholic look at Turks in Germany (especially parents and children) that proves the more specific and unique a story is, the more universal it can become. *Can't Hardly Wait* (\$19.94; Sony) is the tenth anniversary edition of the amiable high school comedy with a great cast that includes Jennifer Love Hewitt, Ethan Embry and especially Lauren Ambrose locked in a bathroom with would-be black boy Seth Green. *Sex Pistols: There'll Always Be An England* (\$19.98; Rhino) is a 2007 concert film in which the most shocking aspect is that they almost seem lovable now. And just because a movie's old doesn't mean it's a classic: witness the less-than-stellar Ingrid Bergman's *Arch of Triumph* (\$14.98; Lionsgate) and Visconti's *Ludwig* (\$39.98; Koch Lorber) (both of which are more complete than some editions but not the fullest versions available), and the so-so *One Touch Of Venus* (\$14.98; Lionsgate).

**HORROR** -- People have a seemingly unquenchable love of being scared. Indulge it with the *Ghost House Underground Collection* (\$159.98; Lionsgate), which brings together eight films from around the world, all given a stamp of approval by Sam Raimi. Or you could go for the four middling Hammer films on *Icons Of Horror Collection 3* (\$24.96; Sony). But the fool-proof pick seems like *Halloween 30th Anniversary Commemorative Set* (\$89.97; Anchor Bay), until you realize you bizarrely get Halloween in three different versions (including Blu-Ray)...and *Halloween 4* and *5*? That's so odd it really is scary.

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by Michael Giltz

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by Michael Giltz

**TV ON DVD** -- *Star Trek* was such an iconic series (despite lasting for only three modestly rated seasons) it even inspired the spoof series *Quark: The Complete Series* (\$19.94; Sony), which includes eight lame-brained episodes with at least the right man in the lead role: the droll Richard Benjamin. *The Universe: Complete Season Two* (\$44.98; History/A&E) features 18 terrific looking episodes about dark matter and supernovas, all of it perfect for families. *The Edwardians* (\$49.98; BBC) is a 1970s miniseries, one of many fine projects that might have made Anthony Hopkins a star but didn't (until he dined out as Hannibal). *The Beverly Hillbillies Season Two* (\$49.98; Paramount) contains all 36 episodes of the dumb fun sitcom that was such a remarkable and immediate hit we wouldn't see its like in popularity again until *The Cosby Show*. *The Sarah Silverman Show Season Two Volume One* (\$26.98; Paramount) is not wildly popular (and personally I prefer her reined in a bit, as when she appears on Letterman) but in this day and age sitcoms that appeal to a small, naughty group can flourish. Too bad they didn't just wait for the entire season to air; 12 episodes for this price would be great -- six episodes and half a season feels incomplete. Finally, two minor series that will be welcome for completists: Burt Reynolds starred in *B.L. Stryker: The Complete Series* (\$54.95; TV Guide) and George Peppard is the Polish-American hero *Banacek: The Complete Series* (\$44.95; TV Guide). Annoyingly, both of these short run series have been put out in single season sets within the last 16 months or so. Why not just put them out in complete sets to begin with? *Nash Bridges: The Complete First Season* (\$39.98; Paramount) and *CSI: The Eighth Season* (\$84.98; Paramount) and *Rules Of Engagement Second Season* (\$29.95; Sony) and *Lil Bush Season Two* (\$26.98; Paramount) and *Life With Derek First Season* (\$29.98; Koch) and *Scott Baio Is 45...and Single* and *Scott Baio Is 46...and Pregnant* (\$19.96; Anchor Bay) all do it right. You get full seasons, usually with some good or great extras. Kelsey Grammer's cancelled sitcom *Back To You Season 1* (\$39.98; Fox) gets it almost completely right except for that wishful thinking of saying "season one." They should have faced the facts and said "the complete series."

So tell me again, have you ever fallen prey to the "Indiana Jones Effect" and when did it happen?

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 **Marshall Lucky** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Marshall Lucky](#) [permalink](#)

Actually, the prequels did BETTER with critics than the originals when they were first released, and by a wide margin:

<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/news/comments/?entryid=197859>

Prequels Tomatometer Scores Based on Current Active Critics:

83% - Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

65% - Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones

62% - Star wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace

Average Tomatometer: 70%

Tomatometer Scores for Original Trilogy During Original Release Dates:

(Click on the links for the archived quotes from Archive.org)

31% - Return of the Jedi

52% - The Empire Strikes Back

79% - Star Wars

Average Tomatometer: 54%

As for Pauline Kael, believe me, it's not meant as a compliment. There's a reason movie critics are printed in the same section of the newspaper as the astrologers. Critics are textbook examples of Asch's Theory of Conformity.

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull was the best Indy sequel -certainly better than Temple of Doom. The only person who got anything out of that film was Spielberg, who landed his very own shiksa goddess. Last Crusade was little more than a half-hearted re-hash of Raiders. But that's all beside the point. Not a single film made by anyone since 1981 has been anywhere near as good, so if Spielberg and Lucas are doing a disservice by continuing to make movies, then every other filmmaker belongs in the Epic Fail category, too.

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 **ChicagoMolly** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of ChicagoMolly](#) [permalink](#)

I've had the opposite reaction entirely with Russell T Davies' regenerated (as it were) "Doctor Who". I was a fan of the original since we started getting it in Chicago (with Jon Pertwee as the Third Doctor), and my collection of DVDs includes stories with all the classic Doctors except Paul McGann, who did a one-off film for Fox. The BBC took the series off the air in 1985 for a "brief hiatus" which lasted 20 years. Then RTD, who was a fan of the original, got the go-ahead to bring it back.

He did right by it, too. He kept a lot of the basic concept, brought back some of the old villains with improvements (the Cybermen, who predated Star Trek's Borg by 40 years, are at long last properly scary), abandoned the old 4-part serial format, and gave us season-long story arcs that let the Doctor and his companions develop as characters. And the writing is way better. Stephen Moffat's script for "Blink" won the Hugo Award at the World Science Fiction Convention. As much as I love Classic Who, New Who is head & shoulders above it. Next month the Season Four box comes out, with David Tennant as the Tenth Doctor, and I can't wait.

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 **Michael Giltz** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

Hey Chicago Molly, I agree with you completely about the new Dr. Who as being as good if not better than ever. (Who knew it would work with decent special effects? Not me.) But that's not really what I'm talking about. The Indiana Jones effect would only come into play if the original creators and/or stars were involved. In your case, that would be a new Dr. Who starring John Pertwee and in my case Tom Baker. (Or written by one of the creators rather than RTD.) And again, it's not that we would necessarily LIKE it, just that we couldn't help being drawn to it because it was the original star ie the "real" star coming back in that role. I wasn't thrilled w the new Indy but there was no way I was gonna miss it. I think your appreciation for the new Dr. Who is in line w the acclaim for the Christian Bale Batman -- quite separate from the Indiana Jones effect since it's a new creative team and a new star. Thanks for reading and I can't wait for the next Dr Who set -- though isn't Tennant stepping down soon, sadly?

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 **Nunziato** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Nunziato](#) [permalink](#)

Damn! That's a bit harsh, Mr. Lucky, although I don't completely disagree with you. I actually loved "Indiana Jones & The Thing With The Crystal Thing." Was it as good as...? Of course not. But if we are to compare what is to what was, everything now is worse, from movies to music to TV. Although to be honest, the only thing I watch is "30 Rock," which I think is the funniest show since "The Odd Couple." And as we've read in these pages, Michael Giltz does not like "30 Rock," but he loves "How I Met Your Met Mother," which I think is completely unfunny. "Harebrained?" No. Just personal taste. Personally, anything that Judd Apatow or Seth Rogen is not attached to is a welcome addition.

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 **Michael Giltz** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

Hey Nunziatio, thanks for reading. I wouldnt say I love How I Met Your Mother - I just said it was "stronger, more believable" than 30 Rock (a low bar since I don't care for 30 Rock) and a "solid comedy." If there's any sitcom right now I like, it's "The Office," which astonishes me to say since I really thought it was a terrible idea and it's really grown into something good. It's a VERY weak time in general for sitcoms, which may be why I enjoy HIMYM a little more than I might if it had aired, say, in the late 70s or mid 80s.

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 **Marshall Lucky** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Marshall Lucky](#) [permalink](#)

Memo to Michael Giltz:

Like Mambo Number Five, bitching and whining about the Star Wars prequels was an incredibly lame fad a decade ago. To bitch and whine about it today is pathetic. Your harebrained logic ("I don't know anyone from 8 years old to 80 who doesn't think those three movies are anything more than mediocre, at best. And yet they grossed \$3.3 billion worldwide at the box office alone.) reminds me of Pauline Kael's whine that nobody she knew voted for Nixon, after he had won 49 of 50 states. Like Kael, you are under the mistaken impression that your world (which is to say, your parents' basement) is representative of the moviegoing public as a whole. It isn't. Deal with it.

If you really are upset that the newest Indiana Jones movie isn't as good as the original Raiders of the Lost Ark, then you only have yourself to blame. Here's a hint: NO movie released since 1981 can compare to Raiders. So if you're that miffed about Indiana Jones' latest adventure not measuring up, you might as well stop watching movies, since nothing else matches Raiders, either.

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 **Michael Giltz** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

Hey Mr. Lucky, thanks for reading and commenting. I wasn't trying to pile on to Lucas but Star Wars seemed inevitable to mention since he did both. That's why I brought up other examples like Prime Suspect and The Godfather III. However, I doubt it was an "incredibly lame fad" a decade ago" to bitch about the prequels since they didn't even exist then. The first came out 9 years ago and the last in 2005, just three years ago. I didn't offer logic so much as facts: average people and critics roundly panned the prequels yet they made a lot of money. (Check out Rotten Tomatoes or amazon for proof.) But you are the first (and undoubtedly will be the last) to mention me in the same breath as Pauline Kael and I thank you. I prefer Roger Ebert, who -- like you -- loved the new Indy. You make a great point about how few films can measure up to Raiders. That's not my standard. I can defend Temple of Doom and don't think much of Last Crusade -- but Crystal Skull, to me, doesn't measure up to even Crusade. Make a great film and then churn our inferior sequels and it'll tarnish your image. Make a great sequel like Superman II or Spiderman II or Empire and we'll love you. If filmmakers don't like being held to the high standards they've set with their earlier work, they should stop making them.

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If you think you know all about Indiana Jones, prove it!

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