

# After 19 Years, ‘Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull’ Phenomenally Exhumes Venerated Roots

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- [Adam Fendelman](#) [2]
- [Cate Blanchett](#) [3]
- [David Koepp](#) [4]
- [Harrison Ford](#) [5]
- [Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull](#) [6]
- [Jonathan Ke Quan](#) [7]
- [Karen Allen](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Rambo](#) [10]
- [Rocky Balboa](#) [11]
- [Sean Patrick Flanery](#) [12]
- [Shia LaBeouf](#) [13]
- [Steven Spielberg](#) [14]
- [Sylvester Stallone](#) [15]



CHICAGO – After such a long respite from the beloved film progression, I was initially just as skittish about seeing Harrison Ford back in the Indy saddle as I was watching Sylvester Stallone back in the ring in “Rocky Balboa” in his 2006 comeback and then again in 2008 in his “Rambo” return.



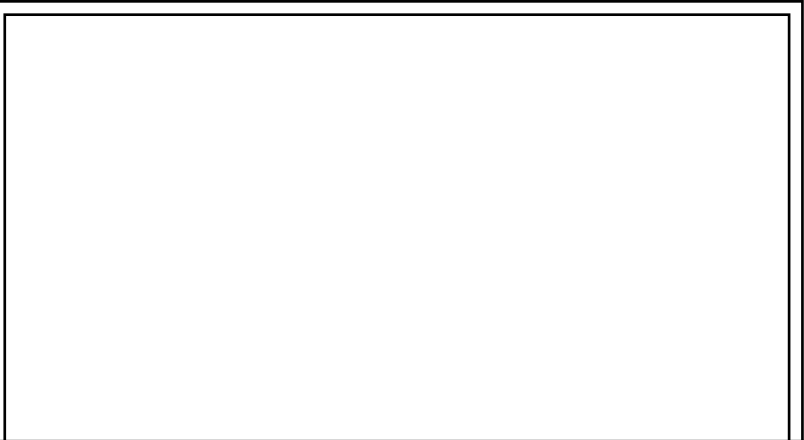
Shia LaBeouf (left) and Harrison Ford in “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull”.  
*Photo credit: Paramount Pictures*

Ultimately, though, I had faith in director Steven Spielberg not to royally torpedo the monolithically anticipated “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull,” which resurrects the Chicago-born, 65-year-old Harrison Ford as one of my favorite film characters of all time.

Spielberg delivers. Thank the heavens.

In grappling with Ford’s real-life age, David Koepp’s screenplay comically writes in subtle jabs to wrangle with the reality. Just like Stallone didn’t try to hide it in “Rocky Balboa” and he instead decided to honestly portray it, so did Ford’s character grow older.

Of course, “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull” is still a major Hollywood product and Indiana Jones is still Indiana Jones. He still flings through the air with bird-like grace, whips all obstacles in his way with laser-like precision and is imbued with the film’s classic and campy “kapow!” sound effects. I love ‘em to pieces.





Shia LaBeouf (left) and Cate Blanchett in "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull".  
Photo credit: [Paramount Pictures](#) [16]

While the character Indiana Jones has had an unfortunate television run by way of Sean Patrick Flanery in his young form from 1992 all the way through 2007, Harrison Ford as the real Indiana Jones we've all been enamored with last roughed it up in a major Spielberg production in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" in 1989.

Before that, it was five years earlier in "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" in 1984 and three years earlier in "Raiders of the Lost Ark" in 1981. Yes, that's three years between the first and second, five years between the second and third and 19 years between the third and the fourth.

Though Shia LaBeouf at first felt like he stuck out like a mutilated thumb (he's most certainly no Jonathan Ke Quan, who played the lovable Asian sidekick Short Round in the second film), he was written in as much more than just a steadfast assistant.

He has his own attitude, his own 1950s get-up, his own fascination with knives and swords, his own quick-thinking and fast-talking demeanor and ultimately his own brewing plotline.



Harrison Ford in "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull".  
Photo credit: [Paramount Pictures](#)

It's a Goliath, too. Once we learn his true relation to Indiana Jones, we're ultimately teased about his brewing ability to be Indy's protégé and eventual replacement.

While such a storyline is to be appreciated and realistically understood based on the realities of the series and Ford's age, I wasn't entirely sold that LaBeouf nailed the part of the irascible Mutt Williams. He spent too much time combing his hairdo – yes, I know it was a sign of the

times – and wasn't as rugged as he should be to even nearly fit in Indy's shoes.

There was storyline confusion there in his character as he flip-flopped between a slick greaser and a jungle-brawling Indy trainee. The jury here on LaBeouf is still out. While it was "Disturbia" in 2007 and then ultimately "Transformers" in 2007 that launched LaBeouf into the luminous limelight, I wouldn't be heartbroken if he was replaced in a fifth iteration of the film.

While Karen Allen was excavated out of Hollywood hiding for a respectable performance ultimately designed to satisfy your sentimentality for the series, thank the heavens again for the always "A"-list performance from Cate Blanchett.

She makes her foray into the franchise as an menacing Russian who influentially disappears into her role. She's spot on with her transformational image and accent and couldn't have improved with hundreds additional takes.

Jim Broadbent from 2001's "Moulin Rouge!" is a refreshingly unexpected casting decision, John Hurt entirely escapes into his character's insanity and Ray Winstone (who played the seminal "Beowulf" in 2007) felt like he was merely passing screen time and cashing a fat check.

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Aside from the interesting introduction of LaBeouf's character, Blanchett's villainous antagonizing and the return of Indy's always entertaining adventures, history may most scratch its collective head about Koepp's decision to scribe a plot that twists and turns down such an unexpected road.

As we learn the true meaning behind the crystal skulls and their application, this plot evolution takes us to an unexpectedly bizarre place. Talk about a thing that makes you go "hmmm".

Indeed, the revelation is also unexpectedly bizarre in a way that makes your head go: "Um, am I still watching an Indiana Jones movie or did the projectionist splice in some other film as some sort of sick joke?"

But alas, this is the real Indiana Jones deal. Despite some dubious decisions and anomalous outcomes, the spirit remains and Hollywood this time has fantastically exhumed its venerated roots.

*"Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" opened everywhere on May 22, 2008.*



[18]

By [ADAM FENDELMAN](#) [19]  
Editor-in-Chief  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[adam@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:adam@hollywoodchicago.com) [18]

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- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/indiana-jones-and-the-kingdom-of-the-crystal-skull>
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