Written by Mike Schulz Wednesday, 28 May 2008 02:20



INDIANA JONES & THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL

We'll get to Spielberg, Ford, and all manner of chases, escapes, and effects soon enough, but allow me to ask: Has any performer ever seemed as irrepressibly, irresistibly happy on-screen as Karen Allen in *Indiana Jones & the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*?

As you no doubt remember, Allen played Marion Ravenwood - the yin to Indy's yang - in *Raider* s of the Lost Ark

, and when she first makes eye contact with Harrison Ford's fedora-wearing, whip-cracking archaeologist in this fourth, much-delayed installment from director Steven Spielberg and producer/co-screenwriter George Lucas, Allen unleashes a smile so incandescent that you can't help smiling back. From the minute she appears, the actress' well-timed return seems almost magically right

and your fond memories of Allen's Marion become immediately tied to your fond (for some, *rabidly*

fond) feelings toward the series itself. Whether she's dodging poisoned darts or trading barbs with Ford or merely beaming at the camera with that spacey, crinkly-eyed radiance of hers, Allen exudes a very special kind of good cheer in

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Crystal Skull

- the uncontainable joy of someone who's ecstatic just to be invited to the party - and, I'm delighted to report, her spirit appears to be contagious.

Heretical though the sentiment may be, some of us, over the past decade or so, have grown positively exasperated with Harrison Ford, thanks to too many grimly stoic performances in too much Hollywood swill. (*Firewall? Random Hearts? Six Days, Seven Nights? Really?*) But when Indiana finally lays eyes on Marion, the moment might stand as the most honest, enjoyable bit of acting Ford has delivered in ages. Flashing an unguarded goofus grin that's unlike any we've ever seen from the actor, Ford's sardonic, normally

unflappable adventurer suddenly looks like he's ready to sing in a musical, and his already quick-witted performance becomes even more robustly comedic; there was reason to expect Ford to be good in

Crystal Skull,
but who could've guessed he'd be
surprising

Indy loves seeing Marion, she loves seeing him, we love seeing *them*, and that, in a nutshell, is the experience of *Indiana*

Jones & the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

, at least if you're old enough to remember enjoying its predecessors in the theaters. Younger crowds will likely have a blast at the film (I saw it during a sparsely populated, Friday-morning screening with no kids in attendance), but as some who hasn't seen an Indiana Jones outing since

Last Crusade

's

1989 debut - not even on video - I think a healthy dose of nostalgia will aid your enjoyment immensely. As summer blockbusters go, I consider

Iron Man

to be the better movie, yet I actually had a better time at Crystal Skull

; there's a unique thrill to be had in watching the movie's, shall we say,

mature

participants rediscover some of the charge from their (relatively) youthful days of *Raiders*

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