

**BFI Future Film member Nadine Vafi recommends
Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981, dir. Steven Spielberg)**



A brown hat, a leather jacket and a whip in his hand: this could only be Indiana Jones, once again saving the world from evil. Indiana Jones, played by Harrison Ford, has become a worldwide phenomenon and a beloved character, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is Steven Spielberg's first movie of the Indiana Jones franchise. The story is set in 1936 and revolves around the mysterious biblical artefact, the "Ark of the Covenant", which American archaeology and history professor Indiana Jones wants to save from the Nazi's grip.

George Lucas pitched the idea for *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to Spielberg during a vacation. Before the release of *Star Wars* (1977) George Lucas, together with Philip Kaufman, came up with a concept for Indiana Jones, as Lucas wanted to bring back the serials of the 1930s and 1940s into a contemporary setting. He convinced Spielberg that this would be an even better idea than a James Bond film.

Shot in only 73 days, with a budget of eighteen million US-dollars, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* premiered in June 1981. It was the highest grossing film of the year and even the highest grossing film so far at the time. The film was nominated for eight Academy Awards and won four. During the 1980s, the adventure film had become a very popular genre thanks to the Indiana Jones films, resulting in other adventure classics such as *Stand by Me* (1986) and *The Goonies* (1985).

Raiders of the Lost Ark gives us a first glimpse of Indiana's world - a love for and a sense of adventure and discovery of other cultures and their histories. Packed with nerve-racking action scenes, a sense of humour, and a love interest of some kind, Jones always saves the day and defeats the evil enemy in a spectacular showdown. The expressive look of the film and exaggerated characters come as no surprise, since comic book artist Jim Steranko produced original illustrations for the pre-production of the film. His illustrations influenced Spielberg's choice of cinematography and portrayal of the characters. John Williams, who composed music for films such as *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars*

(1977), and Superman (1978), composed and conducted the soundtrack. His music has since become a vital part of the Indiana franchise.

Raiders of the Lost Ark is a must-see for anybody who loves the genre of adventure films. You will not regret immersing yourself in the magical world of Indiana Jones.

Nadine Vafi is a MA Film student at King's College London. She holds a BA in Popular Culture, Film Studies and Philosophy from the University of Zurich. She has worked for Switzerland's Arthouse group and a film distribution company. She has volunteered for several film festivals in Switzerland and is now a member of the BFI Future Film Steering Group. Nadine has a great passion for film history and film criticism, and she aspires to become a film festival programmer.