



U.S. (Lucasfilm, Paramount) 115m
Metrocolor

Language: English / German /
French / Spanish

Director: Steven Spielberg

Producer: Frank Marshall

Screenplay: Lawrence Kasdan,
George Lucas, Philip Kaufman

Photography: Douglas Slocombe

Music: John Williams

Cast: Harrison Ford, Karen Allen,
Paul Freeman, Ronald Lacey,
John Rhys-Davies, Denholm
Elliott, Alfred Molina, Wolf Kahler,
Anthony Higgins, Vic Tablian, Don
Fellows, William Hootkins, Bill
Reimbold, Fred Sorenson, Patrick
Durkin

Oscar: Norman Reynolds, Leslie
Dilley, Michael Ford (art direction),
Richard Edlund, Kit West, Bruce
Nicholson, Joe Johnston (special
visual effects), Michael Kahn
(editing), Bill Varney, Steve Maslow,
Gregg Landaker, Roy Charman
(sound), Ben Burt, Richard L.
Anderson (special sound effects)

Oscar nomination: Frank Marshall
(best picture), Steven Spielberg
(director), Douglas Slocombe
(photography), John Williams
(music)

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (1981)

A homage to rather than a spoof of the Saturday matinee serials of the 1930s, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* brought producer George Lucas (hot from *Star Wars*) together with director Steven Spielberg, for a movie combining excitement, special effects, and adventure, all played with a wry sense of humor.

Harrison Ford, in the role that suited him best in all his career, stars as Indiana Jones, a tweed-wearing professor of archaeology by day, who spends the rest of his time scouring the globe for treasures and artifacts—like the Lost Ark of the Covenant (the gold chest in which Moses supposedly stored the stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments). Unfortunately, the Nazis are after it too, having heard that any army who carries the ark before it is indestructible.

With his trademark fedora, bullwhip, and rumpled clothes, Indy outruns a speeding boulder in a booby-trapped cavern, escapes from a pit of snakes, dodges sinister bandits in an African market, and hangs underneath a moving truck in a nail-biting chase through the desert. These are only some of the movie's impressive set pieces. Our dashing hero is no Superman, though, getting beaten and bashed up at every turn.

Raiders works on many levels, not only thanks to Ford's superb performance and Spielberg's skill at piling on the action and excitement, but also because Lawrence Kasdan (working from an outline by Lucas) delivers a script that is more than just an old-fashioned adventure. His hero is a complicated, less-than-perfect guy who walks the fine line between being a thief of priceless artifacts and protector of them. The villains—especially Indy's archaeological rival, Belloq (Paul Freeman)—aren't really that much different from the hero, except in their motivation (greed as opposed to historic preservation). The heroine, Marion (Karen Allen) isn't your archetypal girl-in-distress either, but a physically capable woman who (most of the time) can rescue herself and doesn't need the hero at all.

Raiders is a perfect package of adventure, humor, effects, escapism, and terrific performances that has been imitated (but never equaled) in films like *The Mummy* (1999). It was followed by two sequels in the 80's, and, after a lengthy development period, a third in 2008. **JB**



DAS BOOT (1981) THE BOAT

Director Wolfgang Petersen's 1981 World War II drama *Das Boot* was nominated for six Academy Awards, a "mission impossible" for any foreign film. Capturing in authentic claustrophobic detail the sights and, most notably, the sounds of underwater warfare, the film sidelines issues of nationalism to focus on the dangerous task of manning a submarine in war-torn waters.

Following a single mission to hunt down Allied ships in the North Atlantic, the action takes place mostly in the filthy, mold-ridden stench of the cramped U96 submarine. In charge is Captain-Lieutenant Henrich Lehmann-Willenbrock, a veteran submariner at the age of 30. Blue-eyed leading man Jürgen Prochnow, until then unknown outside Germany, tempers the captain's expected ironclad professionalism with subtle, believable humanity. Although he acts as he must—letting enemy sailors drown rather than picking up prisoners, barking for clear reports even as his vessel sinks far below its depth capacity as the cabin rivets pop like gunfire—he is not without heart. The emotional truth of the terrible events lies between the lines of his daily diary entries. Prochnow, later embraced by Hollywood with appearances in *The Keep*, *The English Patient*, and others, so embodies the captain that it is unimaginable to think that both Robert Redford and Paul Newman were slated for this vital role when the film was a German-American concern. Within the superb supporting cast, Herbert Grönemeyer, now a well-known German rock musician, plays Lieutenant Werner, a character drawn from Lothar-Gunther Buchheim, the war correspondent upon whose best-selling 1973 memoirs the script for *Das Boot* was based.

Much of the nerve-shattering realism of *Das Boot* is due to the three scale-model U-boats built for the production. Taking up a large portion of the film's \$14 million budget, they were later used in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. As much a sonic as a visual experience, the entire film was shot silent; it was impossible to record live in the submarine interiors. The subtitled version is considered definitive, with all German and English dialogue added later—many of the German actors dubbing their own voices for the spoken English version. **KK**



West Germany (Bavaria, Radiant,
SDR, WDR) 149m Technicolor
Language: German / English

Director: Wolfgang Petersen

Producer: Günter Rohrbach, Michael
Bittins.

Screenplay: Wolfgang Petersen, from
novel by Lothar G. Buchheim

Photography: Jost Vacano

Music: Klaus Doldinger

Cast: Jürgen Prochnow, Herbert
Grönemeyer, Klaus Wennemann,
Hubertus Bengsch, Martin
Sammelrogge, Bernd Tauber, Erwin
Leder, Martin May, Heinz Hoenig,
Uwe Ochsenknecht, Claude-Oliver
Rudolph, Jan Fedder, Ralf Richter,
Joachim Bernhard, Oliver Stritzel

Oscar nomination: Wolfgang
Petersen (director), Wolfgang
Petersen (screenplay), Jost Vacano
(photography), Mike Le Mare (special
sound effects), Hannes Nickel
(editing), Milan Bor, Trevor Pyke, Mike
Le Mare (sound)

The Saturday serial aspects of "Raiders of the Lost Ark" have been much commented on, and relished. But I haven't seen much discussion of the movie's other driving theme, Spielberg's feelings about the Nazis. Those are works of a thoughtful adult. "Raiders of the Lost Ark" is the work of Spielberg's recaptured adolescence, I think; it contains the kind of stuff teenage boys like, and it also perhaps contains the daydreams of a young Jewish kid who imagines blowing up Nazis real good. The screenplay is by Lawrence Kasdan, based on a story by Philip Kaufman, George Lucas and an uncredited Spielberg, whose movie is great fun on the surface -- one of the classic entertainments -- and then has a buried level. Consider. The plot hinges on Hitler's desire to recapture the long-lost ark.