

'Indy' is riotous fun; 'Girls' a smarmy dud

By Judith Trojan
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — If you're in the market for a rousing, old-fashioned movie, see "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (Paramount), the last installment in director Steven Spielberg's trilogy charting the deeds of rogue archaeologist Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford).

For those who loved "Raiders of the Lost Ark" in 1981 but found 1984's "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" too dark and intense, this new action-adventure film will come as a breath of fresh air. While Indy's daredevil exploits involve the usual heart-stopping stunts and outrageous comic-book violence, the film also includes much leveling humor, a delightful peek at Indy's adolescence and a terrific scenario involving Indy with his father, medieval scholar Professor Henry Jones (Sean Connery).

As father and son race against time to find the Holy Grail before the Nazis do (the film is set in 1938), they face death and destruction at every turn. Serious, conservative Henry has never really understood Indy's offbeat approach to archaeology, but the tweedy Scot slowly comes to appreciate his son's unorthodox methodology when it saves their lives during sticky moments.

To list the riotous cliffhangers faced by this oddball twosome would ruin the excitement. The stunts are hair-raising and often performed in part by Ford, which enables his comical persona to shine through the action. The casting of Connery as Indy's levelheaded dad was an inspiration. The actors have fun with the roles and bring humor to their longstanding father-son conflicts.

Spielberg pulled out all the stops in the special-effects and stunt departments to make this an exhilarating viewing experience, but it is the small touches that put this film over the top. A delightful opening sequence set in 1912 introduces Indy (River Phoenix) as an over-zealous adolescent Boy Scout. There's a zany father-son sequence aboard a Zeppelin and another set in a Nazi fireplace. Indy even bumps into Hitler, which is an opportune surprise.

Classic movie bits, which are staples of Spielberg films, abound. The cast also includes a number of rats — and more snakes. And, as always, the coveted prize that impels the rip-roaring action is ultimately of less importance than the action itself. In this case, while the Grail is never desecrated, it is merely used as a means to a good end.

For the optimum moviegoing experience, catch "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" in theaters equipped with 70mm full-field sound systems. While such systems convey the full spectrum of eye-popping violence for children, the film's outrageous comic-book feel will make it less threatening to older adolescents.

Due to much intense comic-book violence, minor sexual innuendo and minimal rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'Earth Girls Are Easy'

Vestron's new outing, "Earth Girls Are Easy," vies with the recent "My Stepmother Is an Alien" for the distinction of being the worst intergalactic dud to grace earthbound screens in the history of cinema.

Thankfully Geena Davis' career took an upswing (she won the 1988 best supporting actress Academy Award for "The Accidental Tourist") before this dopey film

was released. Here, Davis does her best with the airhead role of San Fernando Valley girl Valerie, a manicurist who plies her trade at a salon idealistically named Curl Up and Dye.

The salon is managed by an even ditzier damsel named Candy (Julie Brown from MTV), who sings and dances in badly integrated production numbers that make "Beach Party" musicals look classy.

As Valerie agonizes over her faithless live-in fiance, Dr. Ted (Charles Rocket), and Candy yearns for her own male party animal, who should crash-land into Valerie's pool but three hairy aliens. Their spaceship may look like a tinker toy (Valerie likens it to a giant blow-dryer) and their bodies may be covered with rainbow-hued fuzz, but the girls know hot-blooded, eligible guys when they see them. Candy shaves off their split ends and turns them into hunky Valley guys. The rest is history.

Unfortunately, the aliens don't speak our language; they just mimic it. They also eat and drink most of Valerie's trendy collectibles. They don't drive very well either, but they can boogie and make come-ons to the lusty blondes on the disco and beach party circuit. The alien hotshots are played by Jim Carrey, Damon Wayans and Davis' real-life husband, Jeff Goldblum.

If your idea of humor is watching yellow, blue and orange creatures drink from lava lamps, eat goldfish and mimic Jerry Lewis, this film may be for you. But director Julien Temple takes every opportunity to speak to an even lower common denominator with his smarmy sexual innuendoes that usually focus on scantily clad, bosomy blondes.

While Temple ("Absolute Beginners") and his production design staff probably had in mind satire — of everything from California consumerism and Valley girls to classic beach party and alien films — he mucks it up with a mocking sexual tone that denigrates women. In fact, the American women depicted here (young and old) look and act more outrageously hideous and desperate than the stranded extraterrestrials. Best bet is to stick with "E.T."

Due to its endorsement of sexual promiscuity and unneeded vulgar sexual innuendoes, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

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Harrison Ford (center) and Sean Connery playing Indiana Jones and his father, Henry, are bound by more than blood when they meet Dr. Elsa Schneider (Alison Doody) in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade."

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