

U.S.S. *Enterprise*. And while the series and its budgets have grown to gargantuan scale, its dramatic focus has narrowed around Captain Kirk and the starship bridge. *Trek III* takes this to its logical end by ditching the hundreds of nameless, faceless crew through Scottie's clever automation of the ship. But also somewhat lost in this outer space shuffle is the bridge's sole woman, Communications Officer Uhura.

While in fact Uhura's role on the bridge was always little more than that of glorified phone operator, at least there was this strong, competent woman there at all times through the *Enterprise's* adventures. By assigning her an interstellar, off-screen errand to occupy most of the film, the boys on the bridge are free to roam the galaxies in search of better mind-melding and male-bonding without this female incursion on their territory.

Star Trek III does introduce a new woman character in Savek, a Vulcan first officer on another starship. But Savek can't exactly be considered an effective first officer, though. On the planet "Genesis," she quickly gets captured along with Kirk's hapless son, who proceeds to heroically give up his life to save hers. Other than giving Kirk's kid a chance to prove his manhood (and extinguish it), her only other purpose is to sexually initiate (through "Barbarella"-like palm-to-palm contact) a young Spock-clone as he grows past the "possibly fatal" stage of Vulcan puberty. After a regenerated Spock body has been safely rescued, it is a Vulcan high priestess who makes him "better" again. In outer space, it seems sex, chivalry and nurturing are the things women are still useful for.

But you don't have to go to the occult or a faraway galaxy to discover the true nature of women. From the exotic lands of Hollywood's India and the East, *Indiana*

Jones), mom (Willie Scott), and son (Short Round) coming together at the film's opening.

Anyone looking for role models in *Doom* couldn't have been disappointed. This group is Spielberg's archetypal family. Indiana Jones is presented as the perfect father-figure—hardworking, questing, having all these really neat adventures, and even selflessly saving children from slavery. Short Round fulfills the role of adoring son, emulating his pop right down to insulting mom just like "Indy" does. As for Willie . . . her (feminine) stocks in trade are hysteria, selfishness, vanity and stupidity.

Time after time the film sets Willie up as the object of ridicule, each time for stereotypically "women's" faults. The audience laughs at her scrambling after a huge diamond. They chuckle as her high heels

prove useless in jungle terrain and roar as she is tossed into mud after complaining about her appearance. If there weren't any women around, the film just might have no "comic relief."

When not being laughed at, Willie is usually too busy screaming to do anything else. Spielberg evidently decided somewhere after *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which featured a strong woman teamed up with Jones, that women make better passive victims than heroes. As a result, she is yanked from trap to trap and eventually hung like a yo-yo over a lava pit as Indiana battles for her survival. It's no surprise that the one time she rescues Indiana & son, she swiftly proceeds to get them into the same trap again by her stupidity.

Then again, perhaps women don't have a favoured place in the

Spielbergian world because he never was one.

What Steven Spielberg was—and is—is a boy. He makes boys' movies, like those he loved as a boy. Every interview he gives seems to trumpet his "child's sense of wonder" and hope of never growing up; he even made a glowing fantasy about eternal childhood for the *Twilight Zone* compilation film. And this perpetual 12-year-old is afraid of women.

It's no coincidence that the entrance to the Temple of Doom is found in Willie's bedroom, opened by touching the breasts of a female statue. When Indiana keeps Willie from leaving at the film's close by cracking his bullwhip around her, astute viewers can understand just how women are best "handled." In this fear, fellow-child George Lucas (of *Star Wars* and *American Graffiti* fame) deserves special credit for having come up with the story for

Doom's scriptwriters to carry out. But since Spielberg's next project is a re-make of *Peter Pan*, it's not likely he's going to grow up soon. Get set for the return of Tinkerbell.

Even disregarding the movies mentioned in this article, another summer has come and gone without women making much of a dent in these escapist fantasies. Demographics, box-office trends and marketing charts tell the film industry which movies to make for which people. And the powers that be follow these "facts" and make melodramas the sole province of women (see: *Terms of Endearment*, *Sophie's Choice*, even *Silkwood*, et. al.) without taking the radical step of actually permitting women to direct "their" films. After all, Hollywood didn't make its billions by questioning the values of our society. This industry gives the people what they want.



Uhura's role on the *Enterprise* bridge was always little more than that of glorified telephone operator.

Jones and the Temple of Doom told the inquisitive viewer plenty.

As many film critics have noted, the family is at the heart of almost all Steven Spielberg's movies. *Temple of Doom*, easily the most-awaited film of the summer of '84, is no exception with a makeshift trio of surrogate dad (Indiana



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