

A taste of India



Sa- a deer, a female deer
Re- a drop of golden sun
Ga- a name I call myself
Ma- a long, long way to run
Pa- a needle pulling thread
Dha- a note to follow pa
Ni- a drink with jam and bread

Hmm. Something doesn't seem quite right there. On Friday, I, along with the 6th grade body of the school I was at, got a little lesson in playing the [sitar](#). A college student who used to attend that middle school came in to give a demonstration. The teacher I subbed for had "concert" written on the schedule, but it really wasn't a concert though he did play a couple of short tunes. I hesitate to use the word "song" here, because apparently classical Indian songs are over 15 minutes long, but what he played for us were tunes about half a minute in length. The reason? He is just a sitar student himself, but that was good enough to bring him in for a demonstration for students who are in the middle of learning different world cultures in social studies. As far as being a student, in fact, he told us that it takes about 20 years before one can be considered a good enough sitar player to play professionally in India, and another ten before one can teach. Wow.

He started off with a little lesson on musical notation. Remember the song above? Well, the form of musical notation he has learned for Indian music involves a musical scale similar to that referenced to in the [Solfège](#) technique, from which we get the syllables do, re, mi, fa, so, la, and ti. For Indian music, the syllables used are sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, and ni. The music also doesn't use the staff Western

musicians are familiar with. Instead, they use |, ^, and -. These symbols tell them how to pluck the playing string (the one of 17 strings used most of the time) and a letter above the symbol tells them which note- the first letter of the aforementioned syllables. A dot above or below the letter, if present, tells the octave. The sitar is capable of playing three octaves.

Along with the lesson, he played a little bit of a CD which included a type of percussion instrument that typically accompanies the sitar and is capable of 30 different sounds on two drums. I forget what he said the name of this instrument is. Again, he also played a little bit himself. During one of the class periods, a teacher, my former junior high band teacher in fact, came in halfway through with his "Beatles" class (seems the one school with its African drumming course- see post archives from about a couple months ago- isn't the only one to have such specialized music classes ☐) and asked Bob (the sitar player- what do you mean you thought he was Indian? ☐) to play some bits from the few Beatles songs featuring [George Harrison](#) on the sitar ([Youtube link](#)). He wasn't very proficient on this though as his studies were primarily Indian music.

All in all it was a very interesting lesson I thought, even though I learned it five times. ☐ This turned out to be a far better day than the day before. I was definitely pleased that I did not get that second day in that ELL class.

Snakes... Why Did There Have To Be Snakes

Since this is to be a blog concerning movie reviews, I suppose I should start reviewing more. On May 22, one of my favorite movie franchises will be resurrected with *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Let me take a moment to deal with the previous 3 movies in turn. All four movies contain two essential elements: Harrison Ford and director Steven Spielberg

Raiders of the Lost Ark was one of the top grossing films of 1981, if not THE top money maker. It is here we meet the great archaeologist and follow him around the globe on his quest to find the Lost Ark of the Covenant. Along with his female companion Marion Ravenwood (played by Karen Allen), Indy battles Nazis, a treacherous rival treasure hunter, and the bane of his existence... deadly snakes. However exhausted he may seem, Dr. Jones rises to each challenge with courage and at times a bit of a swagger. In one scene, Indy shoots a menacing swordsman with one bullet fired from his gun. However, his favorite weapon of choice: his trusty bull whip.

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom was released in 1984. The second installment was considerably darker than its predecessor. In fact, Spielberg had to lobby for a new movie rating in order to avoid getting an R-rating. Thus, the PG-13 rating was created. *Temple of Doom* concerns our intrepid adventurer searching for the lost sankara stones which were stolen from a small village in India. These rocks may have meant "fortune and glory" to Indy but to the village they meant their very livelihood. Some of the highlights in this epic are a speeding mine car chase, a rickety rope bridge, and

a sumptuous feast consisting of snake surprise, beetles, eyeball soup, and for dessert...**Chilled Monkey Brains** (a tasty treat anyone would enjoy).

The third part of the saga, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), had a lot to do with the background of the character: why archaeology, where his whip came from, and why the name Indiana. In a very brilliant piece of casting, Sean Connery was chosen to play Indy's father. Who else but the world's greatest superspy could play the world's greatest adventurer's father? After rescuing his father from Nazis, they set out to find the Holy Grail: the cup which held the blood of Christ at the Last Supper and gives everlasting life to anyone who drinks from it. In a flashback at the beginning of the movie, the late River Phoenix plays a young Indy on one of his teenage escapades.

Now, comes the next chapter. Very little is known about the new movie aside from the title and who knows what the purpose of the crystal skull is. Karen Allen is returning as Marion and Shia LaBeouf is cast as a young man who speculation suggests has a familial tie to the hero. Watch the trailer [here](#)