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'Jump the Shark,' Meet 'Nuke the Fridge'

By [Sarah Ball](#) | NEWSWEEK
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Early in the new "[Indiana Jones](#)" sequel, our creaky, 65-year-old hero stumbles onto a nuclear test site, and the warning siren is blaring. Panicked, surrounded by Potemkin houses, he folds himself inside the lead-lined cavity of a refrigerator. Kaboom: the blast sends Indy hurtling across the [New Mexico](#) desert, a mushroom cloud rising behind him. He lands and, logic be damned, tumbles out unscathed. The franchise, though, will never recover.

In TV land, this phenomenon is known as "jumping the shark": the moment when a once proud series swan-dives into putridity. It's a reference to a dreadful, late-era episode of "Happy Days" in which a water-skiing Fonz lofts himself over the fin of a great white. But Indy fans were so demoralized, they coined a new phrase just for movie-franchise meltdowns. Ergo: "nuking the fridge."

The phrase was born on May 24—two days after the film opened—and it went viral on movie message boards. In barely a month, it has blown through several Web. 2.0 benchmarks: YouTube tributes, "fridge" haikus, merch-hawking Web sites, "Word of the Day" status on UrbanDictionary.com. "You're expecting [the movie] to be as great as you remembered it," says Beth Russell, creator of nukingthefridge.com, "and after the fridge scene, it was like, 'Oooo-K.'" A new legend is born, for all the wrong reasons.

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