deep into their own experiences, fearlessly baring their souls, as they discuss the films which had an impact on their younger selves, and how they push back against conventional notions of female sexuality that are largely constructed by, and for, men. (A striking example is the intimate 'Push It Real Good: How *Set It Off* Set It Straight', in which Corrina Antrobus dissects her own challenging relationship with representations of black womanhood.)

The idea that female desire, whether passive or performative, is in service to men is also central to Jessica Kiang's outstanding 'The Kiss, Or What the Movies Never Taught Me About Desire'. "For women, the movies teach us, to be kissed – and all that comes after – is to lose, to be caught," she observes. The key, she says, is to subvert or co-opt the masculine concept of "selfish desire", to find oneself reflected in the attitudes of male *and* female characters, both explicit and demure. To unashamedly wallow in moments of pleasure, even if in the most unexpected of places. For fellow essayist Anne Rodeman, for example, this can be found in the queer frisson between Liesl and Maria in *The Sound of Music* (1965), which she describes as "The Hottest Film I've Ever Seen".

The truth is, though, that desire can often lurk in difficult places. Some writers face this problematic issue head-on and, in doing so, bring a clarity of thought to a tangled psychological web. In her essay 'What Does It Mean to Desire an Onscreen Abuser?', Eloise Ross lays bare her fascination with Oliver Reed's violent Bill Sikes in *Oliver!* (1968). "There's a level of shame for me, as a woman and a feminist, to realise that I may have discarded my own urge for emancipation because I was essentially seduced by a thuggish arsehole," she admits – a sentiment to which many of us can relate. Elsewhere, Sophie Monks-Kaufman writes with raw honesty and strength about her own sense of sexual self-worth in relation to the cannibalistic protagonist of Claire Denis's *Trouble Every Day* (2001) and the robotic *Stepford Wives* (2004). Like all the essays, this is not just exceptional writing about women but perspicacious film criticism in general. It's powerful, emotional stuff.

And that's the very thing. Female desire is emotional, sure, but it's also powerful. While cinema would like to label all women as shy virgins, psychosexual bitches or wanton sluts, our particular kinks and wants are legion, and deliciously undefinable. *She Found It at the Movies* is unequivocal in its assertion that female desire, in all its forms, is no dirty little secret; that women should not only speak openly about whatever it is that floats their particular boat, but actively go out there in search of it.

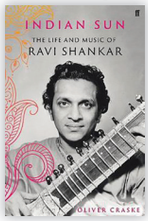
Indeed, while it may be infuriating that such an exciting complexity of female and non-binary sexuality remains alien in a cultural landscape that continues to throb with sexism and outright misogyny, this book is clear that there are still myriad onscreen pleasures for women to discover and explore. "It's not about what your find," notes editor Christina Newland in her excellent call-to-arms opener 'Those Blue Eyed Boys'. "It's about finding it."

INDIAN SUN

The Life and Music of Ravi Shankar

By Oliver Craske, Faber & Faber, 658pp, ISBN 9780571350858

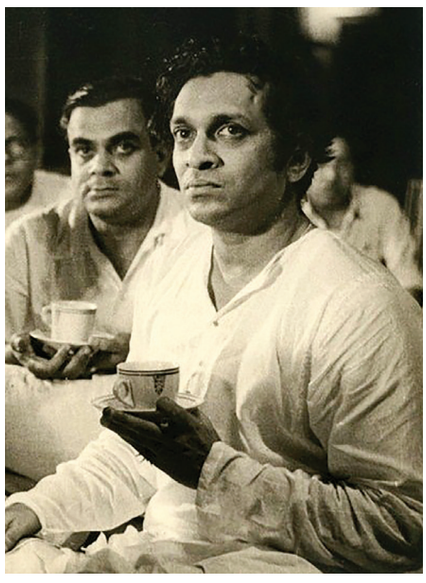
Reviewed by Andrew Robinson



Ravi Shankar, who introduced Indian music to the world in the 1950s and after, is a unique, challenging and fascinating figure for a biographer. Oliver Craske was the editor of Shankar's autobiography *Raga Mala* (1997), and knows his life and work intimately. Now, after six years of intensive research and writing following the great musician's death in 2012, comes Craske's own study, *Indian Sun*, the very first biography of Shankar, published on the birth centenary of its subject.

It tells the story of a hugely creative but also highly troubled man, born in Benares in 1920, who barely knew his absentee father, lost his mother and favourite brother at an early age, suffered from childhood sexual abuse, contemplated suicide, and remained acutely lonely as an adult despite his worldwide star status, numerous affairs with women and friendships with leading musicians such as Yehudi Menuhin and George Harrison. Craske remarks in his Introduction that Shankar's life "often resembled the music: swan-like serenity on the surface, but furious paddling underneath, with all kinds of turbulence rippling around him". Later in the book, when writing about Shankar's music for Satyajit Ray's Apu Trilogy (*Pather Panchali*, 1955; *Aparajito*, 1956; and *The World of Apu*, 1959), Craske perceptively compares the young Shankar to Apu: "A large-eyed, ever-curious, Bengali Brahmin boy [who] could almost be the young Ravi himself as he explores the lanes of Benares in the 1920s, suffers the tragically early deaths of an older sibling and both his parents, and then struggles to relate to his own son."

Shankar remained acutely lonely as an adult despite his star status, numerous affairs and friendships with leading musicians



Ravi Shankar in Calcutta in 1956

Though primarily famous as a concert performer on the sitar, Shankar composed a substantial number of film scores. He did so not only in Bollywood cinema, including Tapan Sinha's *Kabuliwala* (1957), but also in the West: for example, Jonathan Miller's 1966 BBC version of *Alice in Wonderland* – the collaboration of a "satirist" with a "sitarist", jokes Craske – and Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982), in which Shankar collaborated with George Fenton. But the Apu Trilogy undoubtedly inspired his greatest film music, especially in *Pather Panchali* and *The World of Apu*. Who can forget the grief-stricken wail of Apu's mother after the death of her young daughter Durga – expressed not by her own voice but by the bowed stringed instrument known as the *tarshehnai* playing a passage of high notes, transforming her grief into something nobler and universal?

As the profoundly musical Ray described in his 1970s sleeve-notes for the Apu Trilogy LP, the composition and recording for *Pather Panchali* had to be done in Calcutta in less than a day to accommodate Shankar's ongoing concert schedule. Ray recalled Shankar "humming, strumming, improvising and instructing at a feverish pace, and the indefatigable flautist-cum-assistant Aloke Dey transcribing the composer's ideas into Indian notation and dealing out the foolscap sheets to the tense handful who had to keep plucking and blowing and thumping with scarcely a breathing space".

When Ray died in 1992, Shankar immediately recorded a new composition in honour of this "creative genius". Entitled 'Farewell, My Friend', it intermingled two melody lines, one based on his immortal theme music for *Pather Panchali*, the second on the classical raga 'Ahir Bhairav'. "While recording I had flashbacks of some of the wonderful time we spent together and poured my heart out through my music."

Music apart, Ray's personal interactions with Shankar were at times tense and frustrating; and this was true of many of Shankar's relationships with artists and others, as Craske reveals. A key virtue of this fine biography is that it mostly resists the tendency to idealise Shankar. When Attenborough went to see India's prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in the early 1960s about his proposed film on Gandhi, Nehru advised him that it would be wrong to deify the Mahatma because "he was too great a man for that". Craske fruitfully follows the spirit of Nehru's advice in his always sensitive, if sometimes dauntingly detailed, portrait.

A season of films selected by Ravi Shankar's daughter Anoushka Shankar to mark his birth centenary was due to play at BFI Southbank, London, in April but has been postponed