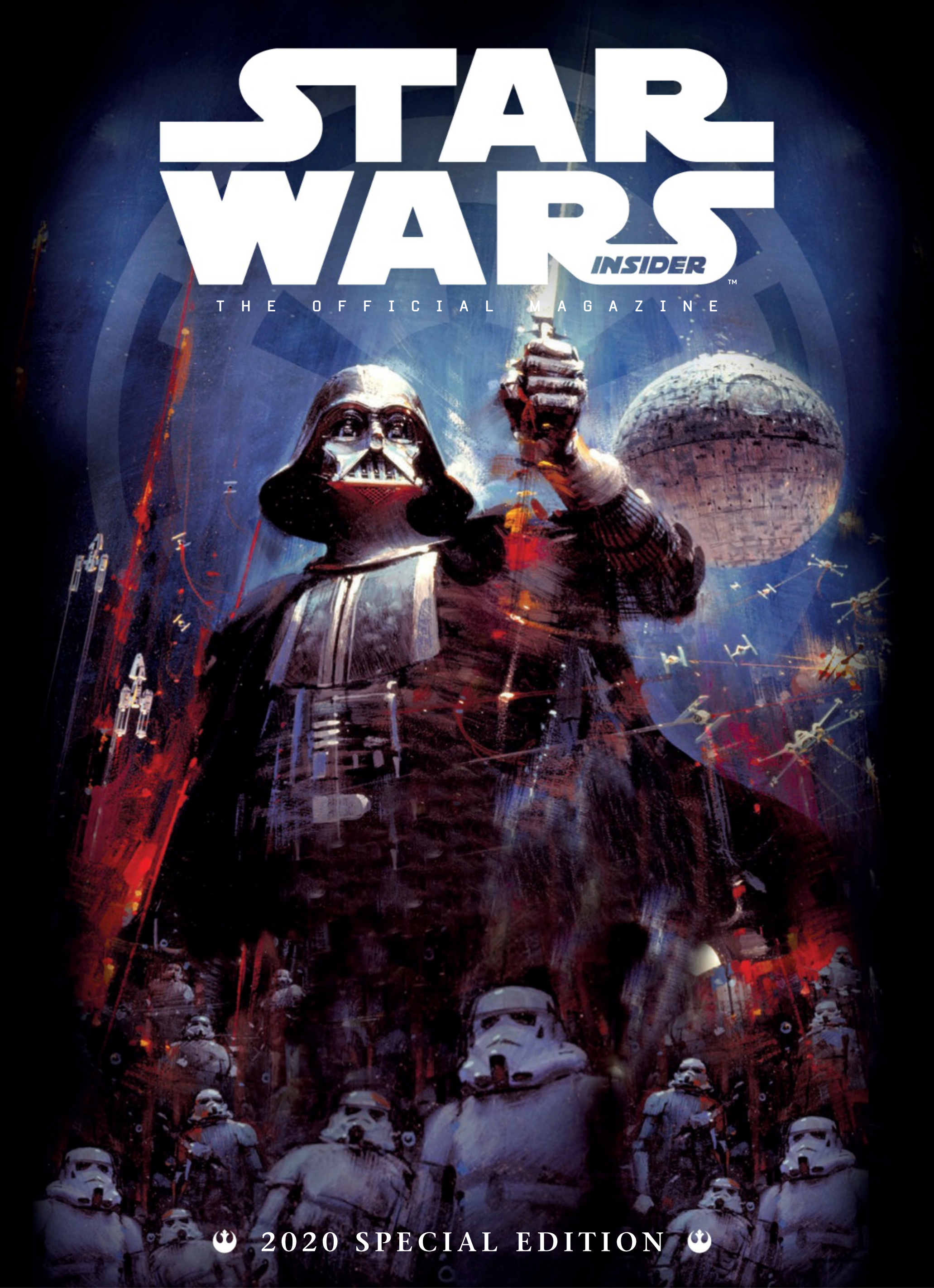
STAR WARS INSIDER™

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



2020 SPECIAL EDITION

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STAR WARS

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WELCOME...

Forty-two years is an incredibly long time over which to tell a story. I can't think of any examples of stories that have been told over such an extended period that have had such cultural prominence.

I was there pretty much from the start when, as a 7 year old, I became obsessed with collecting. I had the Palitoy (as they were in the U.K.) *Star Wars* action figures and collected the sticker albums. I was prone to dressing up in a painfully rigid PVC Darth Vader costume that smelled funny with a mask that left an angry red mark around the edge of my face when removed after my journey to the dark side had become unbearable or the frail elastic that held it to my head had snapped.

This volume is intended as a celebration of the saga and the people who have contributed to it over the years. Whether, like me, you have memories of the early years of this phenomenon or your love of *Star Wars* starts more recently with stories of Rey, Kazuda Xiono, or Doctor Aphra, then I hope you will find much to enjoy here.

May the Force be with you... always



Jonathan Wilkins
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STAR WARS INSIDER

SPECIAL EDITION 2020

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US Newsstand / Total Publisher Services, Inc. John Dziewiatkowski 630-851-7683
US Newsstand Distribution / Curtis Circulation Company
US Bookstore Distribution / The News Group
US Direct Sales / Diamond Comic Distributors
UK Distribution / Marketforce

SUBSCRIPTIONS
U.S. subscriptions / 1-800-261-6502, email: customerservice@titanpublishingusa.com
Canada subscriptions / 818-487-4575
U.K. subscriptions / 01778 392085
email: swmag@servicehelpline.co.uk

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STAR WARS INSIDER SPECIAL EDITION 2020
(USPS 003-027) (ISSN 1041-5122)

Star Wars Insider is published eight times per year (January/February, March/April, May, June/July, August, September/October, November, December) by Titan Magazines, a division of Titan Publishing Group Limited, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP.
Contents © 2019 Lucasfilm Ltd. & TM. All Rights Reserved, Titan Authorized User. TMN 13740
PUBLISHER'S U.S. AGENT
2819 Rosehall Lane, Aurora, IL 60503. Periodicals Postage Paid at Aurora IL and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to *Star Wars Insider*, PO Box 18479, Anaheim, CA 92817-8479
U.S. subscriptions $49.99 per year; Canada $64.99 and U.K. £31.99.
U.S. edition printed by Quad.

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TITAN MAGAZINES

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恐ろしいベイダー卿に勝てるのか!?

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

Carrie Fisher, 1982

Step back in time with *Star Wars Insider* as we present an archive interview with Carrie Fisher, originally published in the *Bantha Tracks* fan newsletter, May 1982. Speaking on the set of *Return of the Jedi* (here referred to by its working title, *Revenge of the Jedi*), the then 25-year-old actor offers a fascinating insight into her thoughts on completing the trilogy, and Leia's growth as a character.

Interview by Ken Rowand

Can you tell us something about your experience making the *Star Wars* movies?

I grew up in the *Star Wars* saga. While everyone else was 25 to 30, I was only 19 when the filming started. You can see me growing in each new episode. I used to kid everyone on the set by saying that I had an excuse—I was a teenager, but why were all these *grown-ups* shooting guns, and playing with all the big toys? I almost think I look totally different now.

I came into *Star Wars* straight from an English drama school. Quite a jump. I played Leia Organa, who is a royal. Leia is angry, which is part of her strength but not all of it. She was very clear about her responsibilities toward her cause, the Rebellion, and that was it for her. That commitment didn't leave her any time for relationships. While it was OK for "the boys" to be strong, that same strength made Leia seem, somehow, almost mean or sarcastic with her "my way or no way" attitude.

Basically, Leia is the only female in *Star Wars*. Oh, there's Aunt Beru, and some new characters in *Revenge of the Jedi*, but Leia remains the main female role. Originally I was known as "the girl." During my first day on the set, someone described the next scene I was in as, "the girl crosses the room and exits stage left. The camera operator will have to pan to keep her in frame." I asked whether I was to be "the girl" or "the camera operator." They got the idea. I'm now an honorary camera operator.

Now you've worked across all three movies, how has each one differed?

Each one is unique! Each episode has had its own director with his own different way of working, and it was lovely having a chance to work with all of them, yet there is still that thread of continuity.

Star Wars was an introduction. The relationships between the main characters were being established. It was made, I think, as a film to be cut—we would shoot a scene, see how it looked, then make any needed changes, rehearse those changes, and reshoot.

"Leia's character undergoes quite a change. They found a way for her to be nice while remaining strong and commited."

The Empire Strikes Back was much more of a film about people. Irvin Kershner [director] required that everything in a scene "work" beforehand, so reshooting a particular scene wouldn't just be a matter of redoing the same scene faster. We rehearsed a lot more on *Empire*, but the rewriting and reshooting of scenes did put us over schedule. Kershner was always willing to talk over any little bit of a scene to make it more comfortable for the actors.

Empire really developed the relationships of the main characters. You got to know them a little better. Hopefully, you'll get to know them as well as you can in *Revenge of the Jedi*, because it is the end of the trilogy.

I like the script for *Jedi*. Leia's character undergoes quite a change. They found a way for her to be nice while remaining strong and committed. Leia is quite feminine. Her character is as clearly defined as "the boys," and she even dresses "like a woman." It's been nice having the chance to work on a character that developed throughout the movies.

Jedi will be a very complex movie with a lot of scenes that must be done in front of a blue screen, where the actors will only have Richard Marquand's [director] verbal description to establish what is supposed to be going on. There are so many things to consider, and it takes a lot to get every detail right. You have to get the acting just right, the droids moving right. You even have to take off the creature's heads so the actors don't faint from the heat. The work can be a bit trying, but it's a lot of fun to do. It's a great crew, we're family.

How is it playing love scenes with Harrison Ford?

The most trouble we have is when the scene is written by, for instance, Harrison and the director, without my being there. In *Empire*, the scene where Harrison said, "I know" was rewrittten between Harrison and Kershner. The rewrite was great, but I just feel I need to be present when a scene that concerns me is redone. I sort of felt like I was "the girl" again, just a she or her.

We didn't have any trouble doing that scene because Harrison and I know each other so well. After all the publicity tours, and talking about ourselves, and the movies endlessly, we have developed ways of getting through scenes like that.

What do you think about all the fan mail you get?

When it first started, I would get love letters from nine-year-old boys who would compare me to "a summer's day." It was very sweet of them. They sent such lovely letters. Much of my mail was from children, and some grown-ups, who had seen the movie 50 times each. I like the fans. If any of them write me after they see *Revenge of the Jedi*, and the changes in Leia's character, I hope they will still speak of that summer's day. I'll look forward to those letters.



Leia and Han share a romantic moment, as the rebels celebrate on Endor's forest moon.





The Soundtrack of Her Life

John Williams has scored every step of Princess Leia's journey. Jon D. Witmer listens back to her iconic, emotional themes to see how they help tell the Skywalker saga.

As Imperial stormtroopers overwhelm the rebel forces on the *Tantive IV* in the opening minutes of *A New Hope*, Princess Leia delivers a small data tape to astromech droid R2-D2.

Leia turns to leave, and the image is accompanied by a short, muted burst of seven notes, the first two of which are separated by six steps on a musical scale—what's known as a major-sixth interval. Through the film, this cue will recur in a variety of forms, developing on each occasion and ultimately becoming the theme that we inextricably link with Leia.

This idea of having musical themes or "motifs" associated with key characters was central to writer-director George Lucas and composer John Williams' shared vision for the music of *Star Wars*. In the vein of classic Hollywood composers such as Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Alfred Newman, Williams would steep his score for *Star Wars* in the operatic traditions of the 19th-century Romantics.

Identifying specific melodies with individual characters in the story, Williams would take those motifs through various iterations, repeating them to accompany the character and re-orchestrating them to reflect that character's emotional and physical state as the saga progressed.

In the liner notes to the first *Star Wars* soundtrack LP, he wrote: "What I wanted to hear was something to do with a character here and something to do with the same character more developed there. I believed we needed melodic themes of our own which I could bend around and put through all the permutations that I would need in the dramatic situations."

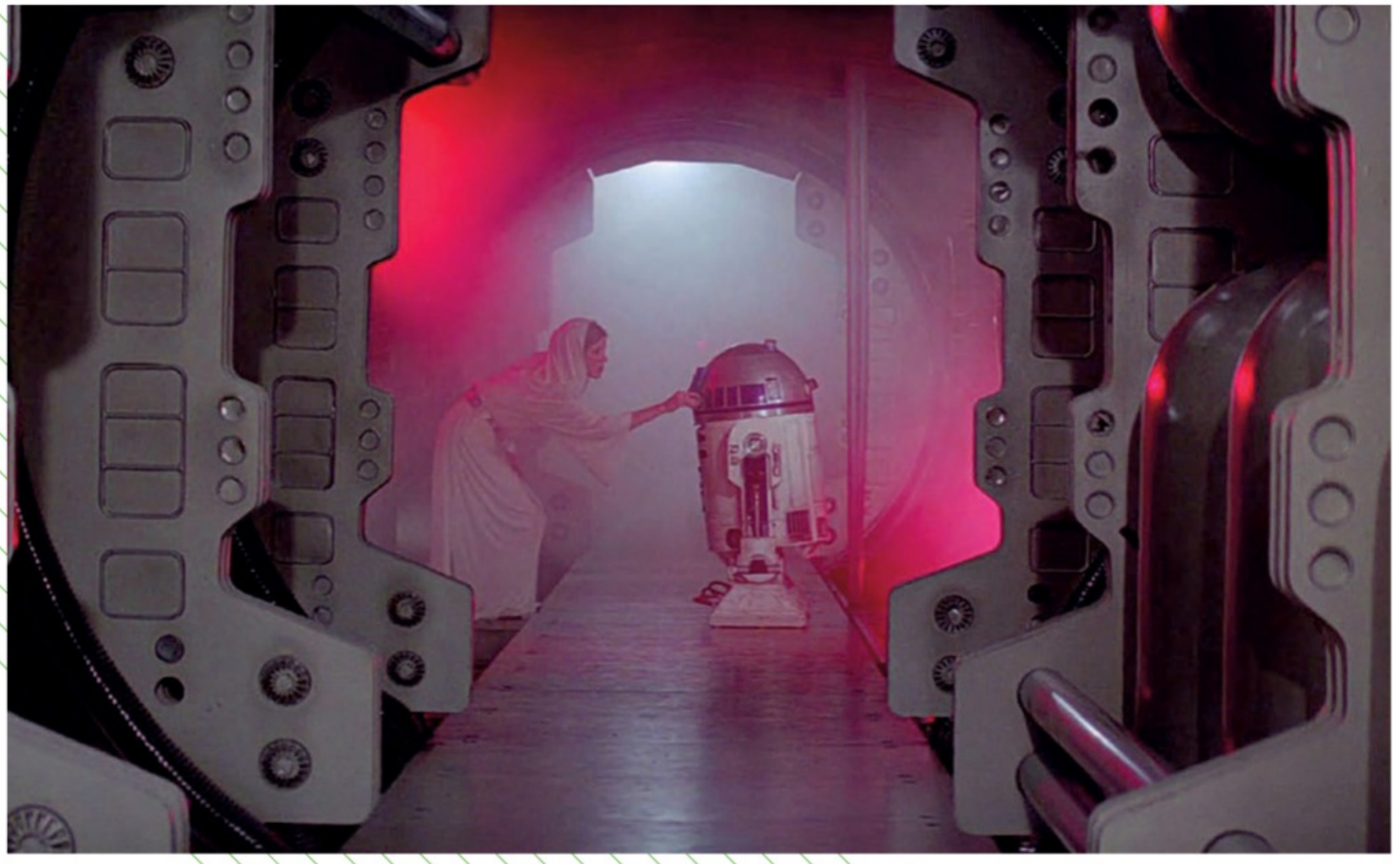
The motif that Williams would develop for Leia resounded well beyond *A New Hope*, gathering additional facets in successive films and growing into new themes that, taken as a whole, provide an appropriately nuanced musical portrait of this complex character and her journey through the galaxy far, far away.

A New Hope: "Princess Leia's Theme"

After its initial, brief statement aboard the *Tantive IV*, Leia's theme is next heard, more fully developed this time, when Luke stumbles across the princess's desperate holographic message for Obi-Wan Kenobi. "I wrote a very romantic theme for Princess Leia," Williams explained in the soundtrack liner notes. "I thought of it in terms of when Luke sees her for the first time and he says how beautiful she is. It is a fairytale-type princess melody."

David W. Collins is a voice actor, stage host at *Star Wars* Celebration, and co-host of the *Star Wars Oxygen* podcast, which offers a deep analysis of Williams' work throughout the Skywalker saga films.

01



02





03

01 Leia places her hologram in R2-D2—unkowingly setting in motion the events of the entire original trilogy (left).

02 Leia's hologram sets Luke and Obi-Wan on course to their destinies, and "Princess Leia's Theme" swells.

03 Of course, things take a more sinister turn in both the music and action when Darth Vader arrives.

"Princess Leia's theme, like Leia herself, really stands out from everything else in the movie, stylistically and melodically," he says. "Leia represents the broader universe. She represents what we know about the Republic, the Senate, and even the Rebellion for most of the movie. So her theme represents the beauty in the universe and everything that's worth fighting for."

While Leia's melody appears some nine times over the course of *A New Hope*, the version that's most widely known is Williams' concert arrangement, titled "Princess Leia's Theme." This has been included in every album release of the soundtrack to date, but isn't heard in the film itself.

"You can always tell," says Collins, "what John Williams sees as the major themes of any *Star Wars* film—from [both] a musical perspective and a story perspective—by which ones he gives the concert treatment to."

In the concert arrangement, a flute introduction leads to the main melody, which is first presented by a solo French horn (see sidebar, page 38). After a wind interlude, a flute returns to present the primary theme. Following another bridge, violins play the melody, accompanied by horn and flute in pronounced supporting roles. Finally, the full orchestra—with strings still leading the way—builds the melody to its climax, after which a violin provides the denouement. In his liner notes to the *A New Hope Special Edition* soundtrack release, film music historian Michael Matessino observes, "The final crescendo and solo violin finale perfectly express Leia's inner strength and yearning for the innocence of a time long past."

Collins hears connections to the wider story. "Another piece that famously starts with a solo French horn is Obi-Wan Kenobi's theme, [aka] the Force theme," he says. As heard when Luke looks out toward Tatooine's binary sunset, the theme, like Leia's, starts with a horn, and then the strings take over.

"The French horn has a softness to it," says Collins. "It has a sweet timbre and a lower register. Of the whole brass section, French horns have the ability to play delicate melodies and really give you something lyrical. If you're going to make a piece that's going to build, it's a ▶

SOLO FOR LEIA

John Williams recorded the music for the original *Star Wars* with the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) over the course of 14 three-hour scoring sessions from March 5 to March 16, 1977.

David Cripps was the LSO's principal horn at the time, and at this year's San Diego Comic-Con, he took part in a retrospective panel dedicated to *A New Hope*'s music and sound. During that session, he recalled playing the French horn solo for Leia's theme.

"The Princess Leia theme is surely one of the most beautiful tunes that anybody ever wrote," he said. "It shows the genius of John Williams to great effect—not just because it's a wonderful tune, but because he wrote it for the best instrument in the orchestra!

"I remember it so well, even 40 years later. We were doing sessions every day for a week, and it was not uncommon for us to be doing three sessions in a day. So we would start at nine o'clock in the morning, have lunch, do an afternoon session, have dinner, and do an evening session. It was exhausting work. And for brass players, we all said, 'Why does my mouth hurt at the end of the day?'

"There was one particular day when we were approaching the end of the evening session, and at the end of the session break John got onto the podium and said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, everything's going really well, but I need to get one more title in this evening. Would you do me the favor of a half hour's overtime?' Well, all of us brass players, we were kind of groaning at the prospect of going on for another half hour, but this was John Williams, and so we said yes.

"That title was "Princess Leia's Theme". The [sheet music] parts arrived, they were put on the stands, and I saw this thing with 'solo' written above my part. John looked at the corner where the heavy brass were sitting—trumpets, trombones, tubas—and he said, 'Don't worry boys. This is going to be a gentle, easy number for you.' And then he looked across at me and he said, 'David, I've written a little horn solo for you. I hope you enjoy it.'

"So he rolled the picture and we started. I was sight-reading this thing, and I started playing—la-da-dee-dee, da-dum-ba-da-dum—and I thought, 'When is this thing going to end?'

"We did that first rehearsal, and then John said, 'OK everybody, I need to go and listen to that. David, come with me.' So we went into the booth and we listened to it, and John said, 'Very nice indeed. That's lovely. Just play it like that every single time and I'll be happy.' So that's the story of the first time anybody ever played the Princess Leia theme."

wonderful starting point, because you get this round, warm, beautiful sound. When you start with a horn, it gives you somewhere to go."

Two particularly noteworthy renditions of Leia's theme are presented as the princess and her new allies make their way through the Death Star toward the *Millennium Falcon*. The first is a brief but pronounced appearance immediately before Leia and Luke swing across the Death Star chasm—giving way to a trumpet fanfare as the two heroes soar to safety on the other side. Despite its brevity, Williams highlighted this moment in the liner notes, writing: "This music is a kind of swashbuckling version of the princess's theme. It is a little bit tongue-in-cheek in tone, with a very strong 'Errol Flynn' flavor, like the music from a late 1930s adventure film."

The second—and perhaps the most intriguing—instance comes when Obi-Wan is struck down by Darth Vader, and the rebels trade blaster fire with stormtroopers as they board the *Falcon*. Why did Williams turn to Leia's theme here? "I felt it had the most sweeping melody of all the themes in the score," he writes. "This wildly romantic music in this tragic setting represents Luke's and the princess's reaction to leaving Ben behind."

The Empire Strikes Back: "Love Theme"

When scoring *The Empire Strikes Back*, Williams sought to build on *A New Hope*'s foundation. Quoted in Matessino's liner notes for *The Empire Strikes Back Special Edition* soundtrack, he says: "I wanted to try to develop material that would wed with the original and sound like part of an organic whole. So, in the creation of new themes and the handling of the original material, the task, both in concept and instrumentation, was one of extending something that I had written three years before. I had to look back, and at the same time begin again and extend."

Leia's original motif does

"I felt it ["Princess Leia's Theme"] had the most sweeping melody of all the themes in the score." John Williams



04

05



06



04 "Han Solo and the Princess" perfectly captures the loving-but-acerbic tone of the relationship between Leia and her favorite scoundrel (left).

05 The theme takes on a melancholy tone for *The Empire Strike's Back*'s bittersweet final moments.

06 Han and Leia share a tender moment before they are torn apart by the forces of the Empire.

appear in *The Empire Strikes Back*, but its place in the film is largely replaced by a new theme, referred to alternately as "Han Solo and the Princess" and, more simply, "Love Theme." The cue accompanies both Leia and Han as their shared adventure draws out their true feelings for one another.

As Matessino observes on the piece, "This melody perfectly complements the earlier theme, but trades in its pure innocence for a more mature love theme infused with an appropriate hesitancy and a sweeping 19th-century Romanticism."

Collins agrees with this assessment. "'Han Solo and the Princess' is filled with much more caution than Leia's theme," he says. "It has a push-pull, which you hear through the entire movie. It's what [*Empire* director] Irvin Kershner called a 'game,' because the subtext of their harsh words is that they're falling for each other. That's reflected in the theme."

That "push-pull" structure is there as the main melody is presented and then immediately repeated in a lower register. Leia's theme, on the other hand, builds upward on itself, pushing the melody into higher registers in a way that sounds aspirational. Nevertheless, Williams makes the relationship between the two motifs clear: both melodies begin with a major-sixth interval.

Like Leia's theme in *A New Hope*, the love theme makes its first appearance in *Empire*'s opening minutes, as Han tells Luke via comlink that he's returning to Echo Base. The melody continues to accompany Leia and Han throughout their subsequent journey, surging to great heights in celebration of Han's derring-do at the conclusion of the chase through the asteroid field, and swelling in tragedy as Han is pulled away from Leia and onto the carbon-freezing platform.

In his analysis for the *Star Wars Trilogy Original Soundtrack Anthology* box set from 1993, *Film Score Monthly* founder Lukas Kendall writes that "Han Solo and the Princess" is heard "in its entirety in the movie, beginning with the scene when Han and Leia are working inside the *Falcon*, their relationship growing closer despite Leia's uncertainty. The moment is

interrupted by C-3PO, however, and then musically destroyed altogether as we cut to the Imperial fleet." In this sequence, Williams again opts to build the melody by starting with a solo French horn.

In the wake of Han's capture, the love theme follows Leia and her friends as they try to stop Boba Fett's escape on Cloud City's east platform and then, having failed, as they make their way to the *Millennium Falcon*. Finally, the theme crescendos at the film's conclusion, as Leia, Luke, and the droids watch the *Falcon* depart, with Lando and Chewbacca now at the ship's controls. With Han Solo imprisoned, the theme takes on a new meaning, representing Leia's longing for her lost love. "It is a bittersweet ending," Kendall writes, "hopeful but unresolved."

Return of the Jedi: "Luke and Leia"

Return of the Jedi introduces a third motif for Leia, this time underscoring her shared lineage with Luke. This "Brother and Sister" cue makes its first appearance when Luke, against the backdrop of the Ewok village, reveals their true bond.

As with Leia's original theme, Williams chose to highlight this new music with a concert arrangement for the album release. Titled "Luke and Leia," this arrangement once again introduces the melody with a solo French horn. In the cue from the film, the melody is instead given to the strings on its first instance, then the oboe when it is repeated.

However, Collins notes, unlike Leia's earlier themes, "'Luke and Leia' is in a flatted key, which gives it a mellow, muted, even sorrowful sound. There's no opening major-sixth interval, which had been so identifiable with Leia. Instead, it's a totally different melodic shape.

"It's actually an offshoot of Luke's theme. The first five notes are the same." Given that this theme is introduced as Leia learns that she is a Skywalker, he adds, "It's important that the theme be a Skywalker theme, and that a Skywalker theme becomes Leia's, as well."

Collins argues that this change stays true to the character of Leia we have already come to know, saying: "Williams takes the main title and turns it into a more lyrical theme. Then he takes it on a rollercoaster ride through all kinds of dark emotions by putting his dramatic emphasis on the softest part of the main title's melody.

"In the main title, the big notes that are accented are perfect intervals—neither major nor minor—and the passing tones that tell us the theme is in major happen very quickly. With 'Luke and Leia', Williams pulls those tones out, transforming it into something that mixes tragedy and hope together, without ever quite giving you resolution. We hear it in the part of the movie where they're facing their biggest obstacles and everything seems desperate."

In his analysis for *Jedi*'s Special Edition soundtrack, Matessino writes, "Unlike the innocent 'Princess Leia's Theme' from *A New Hope* and the wildly fanciful 'Han Solo and the Princess' from *Empire*, 'Luke and Leia' is infused with a maturity

07 The mellow tone of "Luke and Leia" hints at the complex nature of siblings' relationship.

08 A shaken Han and Chewie, following Solo's brutal interrogation.

09 Reunited for the final time. Leia and Han's embrace later takes on a tragic air.

07



that embodies the enlightenment of the two characters and the full comprehension of their destinies."

The Force Awakens: "Han and Leia"

As *Return of the Jedi* nears its conclusion, Leia tells Han that Luke is her brother, and Williams guides the score through the "Luke and Leia" melody and into the love theme from *Empire*. At the time, this marked the culmination of Leia's onscreen romance with Han. But as the Skywalker saga continued with *The Force Awakens*, the trilogy's themes found new meaning through fresh juxtapositions.

In fact, even the prequel trilogy afforded an opportunity for Williams to incorporate Leia's theme, albeit not until the final moments of *Revenge of the Sith*, as Bail Organa volunteers to adopt Leia, and again when he hands the baby to his wife. When watching the saga in episode order, this becomes the first time the theme is heard, and its "return" in *A New Hope* quickly alerts the audience to Leia's identity and secret history.

When Leia—now a general in the Resistance—makes her first appearance in *The Force Awakens*, disembarking from a Resistance transport, she is accompanied by a woodwind rendition of her theme. "Han had been in the movie already for 40 minutes at that point, so that is definitely Leia's moment," notes Collins.

The theme quickly transitions into "Han Solo and the Princess," which is here delivered by a flute. Where a horn might have brought an air of confidence, the wind instrument feels appropriately tentative for this reunion between the estranged husband and wife. As Collins says, "After seeing *The Force Awakens*, we know 'Han Solo and the Princess' is a love theme filled with caution and, ultimately, tragedy."

The love theme then gives way to "The March of the Resistance" as General Organa's forces return to their hidden base on D'Qar. When Han and Leia share another moment soon thereafter, their love theme returns on a somewhat surer footing, courtesy of a French horn. Its position is quickly usurped by Kylo Ren's theme, however, as conversation turns to the couple's wayward son.



08



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Both Leia's theme and the love theme are again called into service when Leia and Han speak outside the *Falcon*, just before Han, Chewie, and Finn depart for Starkiller Base. As Han readies his ship, Leia appears, supported by her original motif. The two embrace, and a horn plays the love theme. Lastly, when Rey arrives on D'Qar following the destruction of Starkiller Base—and the death of Han—Williams restates the "Han Solo and the Princess" melody for the final time, as Leia embraces the young scavenger. Not unlike its use at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*, the love theme here lends further poignancy to Han's now permanent absence.

"It was great to revisit those themes in *The Force Awakens*," Collins enthuses. "John Williams brought them back and made them important all over again. Here's hoping we get to hear 'Luke and Leia' sometime in the future."

With *The Last Jedi* just weeks away, there's good cause for hope. After his arrival in the final moment of *The Force Awakens*, Luke playa a larger role in the new film, and Leia's leadership of the Resistance is sure to be further explored. Williams has scored Leia's life from princess, through war hero and sister to wife, mother, and leader. Whatever happens next, we'll be listening with love.

TEASER TRIUMPHS!

The first glimpse of a new *Star Wars* movie is always a thrilling moment. From the early "Wow–what is this?!" elicited from cinema-goers in 1976, to the "What on Earth does Luke mean?!" inspired by *The Last Jedi*.

As we wait impatiently for the new movie to either confirm our theories or blow them out of the water, now seems like the perfect time to look back on the saga's teaser trailers and see how much they really told us.

WORDS: JONATHAN WILKINS

VIDUSDAM KLOQ

STAR WARS

TEASER TRAILER, 1976









"TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX AND GEORGE LUCAS, THE MAN WHO BROUGHT YOU *AMERICAN GRAFFITI* NOW BRING YOU AN ADVENTURE UNLIKE ANYTHING ON YOUR PLANET—*STAR WARS*!"

The first footage of *Star Wars* that audiences saw came in this portentous trailer, which promised the story of "a boy, a girl, and a universe," and "aliens from a thousand worlds!" The narrator signed off with the boast that the movie was "a billion years in the making," but we can forgive a bit of hype, especially as *Jurassic Park* (1993) would use a similar line in its ad campaign 16 years later.

A highly unusual trailer for the time, the film uses fast editing as opposed to the slow takes that were more common in the late 1970s. These swift, dramatic shots are built around a slow, somewhat menacing reveal of an early *Star Wars* logo, which gradually moves toward the audience before exploding.

What's most notable about the trailer, however, is what it *doesn't* feature. John Williams' famous score and Ben Burtt's sound effects were some of the last things to be added to the movie in 1977, so neither are present. Instead, this teaser is soundtracked by a variation on Vivaldi's "Winter" from *The Four Seasons*.

With many other post-production processes still to be completed, the trailer also includes a different cry of "No blasters! No blasters!" from the finished film, a cruder lightsaber effect, and no hint of what Darth Vader sounds like.

VIDIOSYNCRASY

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

TEASER TRAILER, 1979



Audiences' first look at *Star Wars*' sequel is a bit unusual: rather than featuring movie footage, it was created using concept art and still photography. Shots across close ups of Ralph McQuarrie's paintings give the sense of movement, as does the "Venetian blind" effect applied to imagery of the familiar heroes and newcomer Lando Calrissian (played by Billy Dee Williams).

As in 1976, the *Star Wars* logo move slowly towards the viewer. Another reminder of the 1977 blockbuster is John Williams' unmistakable main theme music.

As the music plays and visualizations of Hoth and Cloud City slide by, a laconic voiceover teases "exotic worlds" and "new alien creatures." But what would have been most tantalizing for fans in 1979 was the promise of "an awesome confrontation between Luke Skywalker and the master of the dark side of the Force, Darth Vader!"

Given the lack of live-action footage, viewers might have been forgiven for thinking that the new movie would be animated, were it not for the closing character stills. The intriguing photo of Lando—smiling, but not described as either hero or villain—is the closing shot of the trailer before the logo shoots back into infinity and explodes.

As the blast echoes in the emptiness of space, the title appears at the bottom of the screen and the voiceover assures us that *The Empire Strikes Back* is "coming next year!"





VIDIOSYNCRASY

RETURN OF THE JEDI

TEASER TRAILER, 1982



By the time the first trailer for *Return of the Jedi* (here titled *Revenge of the Jedi*) debuted, *Star Wars* was so well established, moviegoers would have had no doubt what they were about to see as soon as they heard the words "A long time ago…"

The trailer dispels any doubts about Han Solo's wellbeing after he was frozen in carbonite, showing him at the heart of the action early on. Feeling more like a modern trailer than the preceding teasers, the emphasis here is firmly on action. With the exception of grunts, cries, and R2-D2's signature sounds, the only character to say anything is Admiral Ackbar, with the debut of his catchphrase, "It's a trap!"

The voiceover is eager to add hype to the wonders still to come. "An epic of heroes and villains," intones the narrator. "An adventure as vast as the universe!" Has there ever been a better line to sum up *Star Wars*?





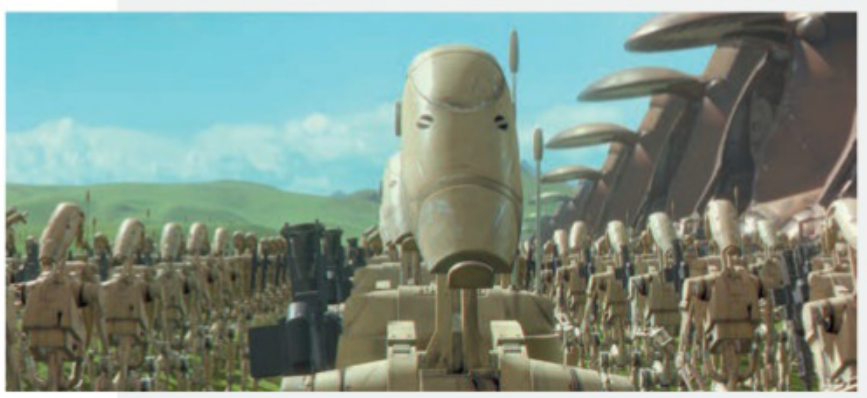
VIDUNOAYI AMV

THE PHANTOM MENACE

TEASER TRAILER, 1998







"EVERY GENERATION HAS A LEGEND..."

Back in late 1998, *Star Wars* fans developed an unexpected interest in the films *Meet Joe Black*, *The Waterboy*, and *The Siege*. Why? Because attached to the front of these films was a trailer for the most hotly anticipated film of its day: *The Phantom Menace*. Fans were buying tickets to other movies simply so that they could watch the *Star Wars* teaser before skipping the main feature to go and discuss what they had seen!

The trailer sells the movie as the first chapter in a new *Star Wars* trilogy: recognizable in some ways, different in others. The legends "Every journey has a first step…" and "Every saga has a beginning…" are intercut with establishing shots of settings that would have been impossible to create in the 1970s and '80s. John Williams' famous music plays—and kicks into the main theme as the visuals give way to a frenzy of fast cuts. We see tantalizing glimpses of podracing, Darth Maul, Jar Jar Binks, and other CGI creatures, intercut with the return of old friends like C-3PO, Yoda and a younger Obi-Wan Kenobi.

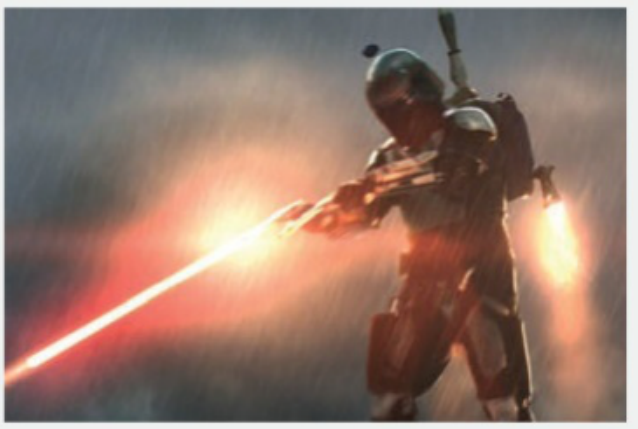
With new characters largely unknown, there is an emphasis on famous faces, as Liam Neeson, Natalie Portman, Ewan McGregor, and Samuel L Jackson are all in attendance. Thrilling to existing fans and intriguing to a whole new generation, it saw the saga reinvented in the space of two minutes.



VIDUSATVI JOA

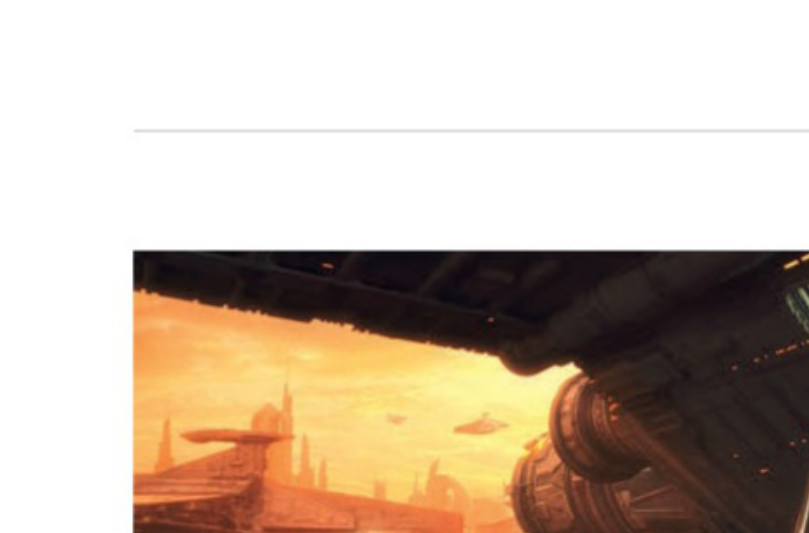
ATTACK OF THE CLONES

TEASER TRAILER #1, 2001



In the same way the trailer for *Return of the Jedi* needed no introduction, this bold departure takes advantage of *Star Wars*' long-standing hold on the public imagination. Instead of dialogue or even sound from the new movie, this teaser presents silent footage from *Attack of the Clones*, accompanied by the steady, sinister breathing of Darth Vader from the original trilogy.

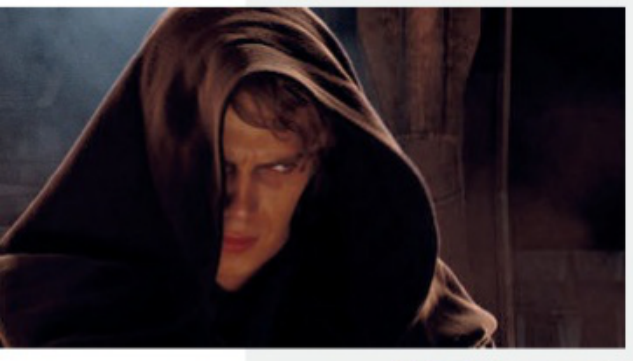
As the trailer builds to its climax, staccato drums add to the tension, which culminates in the brief sound of lightsabers clashing. The movie's title appears with a musical sting, and then recedes to black. The whole thing is just one minute long, but stays with you much longer.



VIDUSATVI JEZVIVI

REVENGE OF THE SITH

TEASER TRAILER #1, 2004







Skilfully weaving together Alec Guinness' "For a thousand generations…" speech from *A New Hope* with footage from *The Phantom Menace*, *Attack of the Clones*, and the movie it is previewing, this epic teaser reminds casual viewers how everything ties together while deftly pushing their nostalgia buttons.

For full-on fans, it is both a love letter to the movie that spawned the prequels, and a tantalizing glimpse of everything they had long been waiting to see: Anakin's fall, Vader's rise—and Wookiees, lots of Wookiees!

As teasers go, it's perfect: sending goose bumps down the spine, bringing the two trilogies together, and priming audiences for, what was at that point, the final chapter in the *Star Wars* saga.

VIDIVOSVI AVMYVIA

THE FORCE AWAKENS

TEASER TRAILER #1, 2014



"THERE HAS BEEN AN AWAKENING..."

The anticipation in 2014 for the first look at the new *Star Wars* film was intense to say the least. How would the galaxy look all these years later? Would we catch a glimpse of Han, Luke, and Leia? The teaser immediately put us at ease by opening on something simple: a scared-looking man—a stormtrooper, no less!—in a classic *Star Wars* setting, the desert. The teaser neatly introduces our new generation of heroes: Finn, Rey, Poe Dameron, plus an instantly-appealing BB-8, before revealing Kylo Ren (and oh boy, did his raggedy lightsaber get fans talking!). Smartly, none of the original characters appear here, both setting *The Force Awakens* up as a modern continuation of the saga, while building anticipation for their future reveal. And that closing sequence of the *Millennium Falcon* pirouetting through the air as John Williams' theme triumphantly plays makes one thing abundantly clear: *Star Wars* is back!







ROGUE ONE

TEASER TRAILER #1, 2016



No one knew quite what to expect from the first *Star Wars Story* film, but the teaser aptly hints at a tougher, darker tone. The lighting and color palette is gloomier, the music and sound design far more ominous, from the first familiar notes, here plaintively picked out on piano, to the terrifying scream of a siren as the rebels prepare for battle.

At the same time, it also recreates the used-future aesthetic of *A New Hope*. This is our most in-depth look at the galaxy under Imperial rule to date and it's thrilling to see the original stormtroopers and the moment the Death Star's superlaser is attached.

It's interesting to note how much of this teaser didn't make it into the final cut, though. There are a wealth of alternate takes and deleted scenes here, from Jyn Erso's "This is a Rebellion, isn't it? I rebel!" to shots of Orson Krennic striding through the watery ruins of Scarif to the thrilling sequence of Cassian and Jyn fleeing on foot while AT-ACT walkers rain down fire on them. For those with a keen eye it provides a fascinating glimpse at the road not taken.



THE LAST JEDI

TEASER TRAILER #1, 2017







Bringing us right up-to-date is our first look at *The Last Jedi*! We open with Rey's hand slapping down hard on a rocky surface as she gasps in... what? Fear? Pain? Confirming that this is a part of her training on Ahch-To with Luke, we hear a voiceover from the Jedi Master instructing her to, "Breathe. Just... breathe. Now, reach out. What do you see?" It's intercut with footage of Leia studying a map, Kylo Ren's smashed mask, and a book inscribed with the symbol of the Jedi Order. Switching to epic mode, we see a squadron of battered fighters racing across the sands of an alien world; Poe Dameron running to his X-wing, only for it to explode; brief glimpses of a scarred Kylo Ren and a frantic space battle. But the most exciting moment is saved for the end. "I only know one truth," says Luke, framed in darkness. "It's time for the Jedi to end." That bombshell adds weight to the film's ominous title, and makes us wonder exactly what has happened to Luke in the years since he went into seclusion.

STAR WARS

THE

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Painting the Galaxy

From Tatooine to Scarif, matte paintings have played a crucial role in creating the far-flung locales of *Star Wars*. *Insider* caught up with visual-effects veteran Paul Huston for a look at how the techniques have evolved over the course of the saga.

WORDS: JON D. WITMER



The Death Star's chasms. Bespin's Cloud City. The Ewoks' village in the trees of Endor. The Gungans' home beneath the waters of Naboo. The starship graveyard of Jakku. The rain-soaked crags of Eadu. What could unite such disparate vistas?

From the beginning of the *Star Wars* saga through to its most recent big-screen installments, matte paintings have helped realize far-flung settings that dazzle the eyes and fuel the imagination. By the time George Lucas formed Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) to create the visual effects for the original *Star Wars*, multiple variations of the technique—which combines a live-action element with painted scenery in order to create the illusion of a larger setting—had been developed and refined. The processes by which visual effects artists bring matte paintings to cinematic life would continue to be finessed over the course of the original trilogy and beyond, taking the paintings into the digital realm.

New Hope, Old Process

Paul Huston has been behind the scenes for every live-action *Star Wars* movie, from the 1977 original to *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. He joined ILM in 1975, fresh out of architecture school at the University of Colorado, where he also studied media and art.

Based on his illustration portfolio, he was hired as a visual-effects storyboard artist at ILM. Before long, he was also building models and assisting with the Dykstraflex camera that filmed those models on ILM's stage.

"The work would go through the facility like a pig through a python," Huston recalls. "It would be crazy-busy in the model shop until the models were finished and could be photographed on the stage, and then the stage would be really busy. I followed the pig just to keep working!"

On the original *Star Wars*, "there wasn't a matte department per se," Huston explains. "[Concept artist] Ralph McQuarrie did some paintings, Harrison Ellenshaw did some, and [visual effects art director] Joe Johnston did a couple. Because of my eclectic interests, I helped photograph some of those."

Harrison Ellenshaw was the head of Disney's matte department when he received special dispensation to work on *Star Wars*' matte paintings for two months. By the time he joined the production in early 1977, McQuarrie had already been working on matte paintings of the film's planets as seen from space.

The matte painters' myriad responsibilities included matching the perspective of the live-action element, mimicking the characteristics of whatever lens had been used for the live-action plate, and compressing or embellishing the sense of depth as required. For instance, with the high-angle view of the curved

01 (Opening page) The digital matte painting for Padmé's funeral in *Revenge of the Sith*.

02 Paul Huston works on one his models for *The Phantom Menace*.

03 Huston photographs the landscape models for *The Phantom Menace*.

04 Huston at work on the TIE fighter models for the original trilogy.

02



03





04

wall and chasm adjacent to the elevators that Luke, Han, and Chewie take to the Death Star's detention level, McQuarrie had to work out the right view for the painting. This was combined with the live-action photography using the "bi-pack method."

In the bi-pack process, two strips of film were made to run through the camera simultaneously. The previously exposed and processed film with the live-action plate was placed in front of an unexposed negative. When the two strips of film ran through the camera, which was aimed at the matte painting, the live-action footage and the matte painting would be combined onto the raw negative. The benefit of this method was that the matte element on the resulting composite was first-generation, rather than being a secondhand duplicate, which would have increased contrast and grain.

For other scenes, live-action elements were combined with matte paintings through front or rear projection, and in some instances, matte shots required an optical printer to be completed. For the Massassi Temple exterior—seen after the *Millennium Falcon* lands on Yavin 4—the live-action plate was shot at Cardington Studios in England, the foreground foliage was photographed separately in front of bluescreen, and the matte painting was created by Ellenshaw at ILM. The elements were then assembled in the optical department.

Through A Glass, Brightly

While making *The Empire Strikes Back*, the art team made more extensive use of matte paintings than they did in *A New Hope*—some 70 composites in total—that required the formation of a dedicated matte department within ILM. Ellenshaw returned to head the department, and was again joined by McQuarrie, who painted roughly half of the film's mattes. The department also added painter Michael Pangrazio, photographer Neil Krepela, and photography assistant Craig Barron to its team.

"There's an area of overlap between the matte department and the model department that I tended to gravitate towards," reflects Huston, who again worked as a model maker and an assistant on the stage camera for *Empire*.

"Don Dow was the cameraman I was assisting, and he would turn the matte painting work that came to him over to me. I had an understanding of 2D, so it was pretty easy for me to do matte camera tricks, like moving multi-plane shots in the Cloud City sequence. I also helped Craig and Mike with building miniatures they could use for reference. I could get them something that would work pretty quickly, and I think they appreciated that."

"For other scenes live-action elements were combined with matte paintings through front or rear projection…"

The *Empire* matte department frequently employed front projection, in which a matte painting was made on glass, with a blank space where the live-action element would be added. Reflective Scotchlite material was placed behind this blank area to create a mirror. The live-action plate would then be projected through a beam splitter—a half-silvered mirror at a 45-degree angle that would reflect the projected image toward the Scotchlite area of the painting.

During the process the crew also made use of bi-packing as well as rear-projection. For the latter, the live-action plate was projected onto a piece of rear-screen material from behind the glass painting. And once again, certain shots were completed in the optical department, which is also where most of the complex shots were finalized.

In deciding which technique to use, Ellenshaw and his team would weigh the needs of the particular shot against the strengths and weaknesses of each method. While bi-packing ▶

ORIGINAL TRILOGY MATTE ARTISTS

Star Wars*: Episode IV *A New Hope
Matte Artist P.S. [Harrison] Ellenshaw
Planet and Satellite Artist Ralph McQuarrie

Star Wars*: Episode V *The Empire Strikes Back
Matte Painting Supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw
Matte Artists: Ralph McQuarrie, Michael Pangrazio
Matte Photography Neil Krepela
Additional Matte Photography Michael Lawler
Matte Photography Assistants Craig Barron, Robert Elswit
Matte Photography Consultant Stanley Sayer, BSC

Star Wars*: Episode VI *Return of the Jedi
Matte Painting Supervisor Michael Pangrazio
Matte Painting Artists Chris Evans, Frank Ordaz
Matte Photography Neil Krepela, Craig Barron
Matte Photography Consultant Stanley Sayer, BSC

PREQUEL TRILOGY MATTE ARTISTS

Star Wars*: Episode I *The Phantom Menace
Digital Matte Artists Ronn Brown, Brian Flora, Caroleen Green, Jonathan Harb, Paul Huston, Bill Mather, Rick Rische, Mark Sullivan, Yusei Uesugi, Wei Zheng
Additional Matte Paintings Bill George

Star Wars*: Episode II *Attack of the Clones
Digital Matte Sequence Supervisors Yusei Uesugi, Paul Huston, Jonathan Harb
Digital Matte Artists Jett Green, Kent Matheson, Mathieu Raynault, Masahiko Tani, Susumu Yukuhiro, Toshiyuki Maeda, Brett Northcutt, Mark Sullivan, Simon Wicker, Wei Zheng

Star Wars*: Episode III *Revenge of the Sith
Digital Matte Supervisor Jonathan Harb
Lead Digital Matte Artists Yanick Dusseault, Brett Northcutt
Digital Matte Artists Richard Bluff, Vanessa Cheung, Jeremy Cook, Max Dennison, Bryant Griffin, Christian Haley, Giles Hancock, Benjamin Huber, Paul Huston, Toshiyuki Maeda, Steve Matson, Yvonne Muinde, Martin Murphy, Joshua Ong, Kevin Page, Benoit Pelchat, David Shirk, Chris Stoski, Masahiko Tani, Johan Thorngren, Yusei Uesugi, Simon Wicker, Barry Williams, Susumu Yukuhiro, Wei Zheng

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could produce better-quality results, projecting the live-action plate gave the team more control, as they could adjust the plate's size using the projector. When choosing between front and rear projection, the former was usually preferable because the highly reflective Scotchlite screen provided a brighter source, which in turn enabled faster exposures. And as the postproduction schedule ticked away, every second counted.

Auto Matte And More

For *Return of the Jedi*, Pangrazio took the reins of the matte painting department, overseeing the creation of approximately 45 illustrations, for which he was joined by matte painter Chris Evans. "Craig Barron was the camera supervisor, and he prepped me to take over a lot of things," Huston reflects. "By that time, I was pretty well embedded with the group, even though I wasn't in that department. I had kind of a dual existence: I also had things I needed to do for [ILM supervising modelmaker] Lorne Peterson to keep the model shop happy."

This time around, the matte department was working with the new Auto Matte system: "a track-mounted camera that was custom-built there at ILM," as Huston explains. "It had standard 35mm and VistaVision movements, and a whole set of lenses, including an anamorphic [widescreen effect] lens so we could photograph the matte paintings for compositing with anamorphic elements."

The Auto Matte featured two "carriages" on which matte paintings could be mounted, with each carriage capable of movement in three dimensions. Developed over a period of two years, the system had first been put through its paces on Steven Spielberg's *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and it proved indispensible in realizing *Jedi*'s numerous moving-camera matte-painting shots.

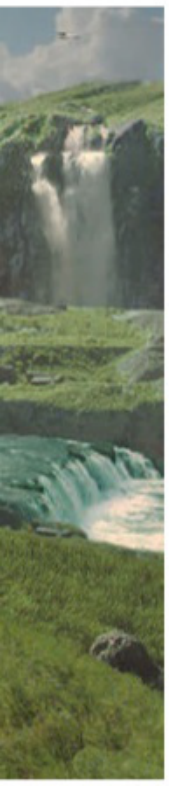
While smaller mattes were typically painted on two-and-a-half-feet by six-feet panes of glass, the larger mattes that were required to accommodate camera moves were realized on pieces of Masonite hardboard measuring either four feet by six feet, or four feet by eight feet. Rather than cut through the quarter-inch-thick Masonite in order to project the live-action plate, the painters created a "hold out" matte on glass, which was entirely black except for the blank area where the live-action plate would appear. They then rear-projected the live-action footage with the hold-out matte, to create a plate featuring just the required area for live action, surrounded by black. They then rear-projected the plate for exposure with the hold-out matte, and then composited that pass with the Masonite painting, in which the area where the live-action element would play had in turn been painted black.

For the shot of C-3PO and R2-D2 in the foreground walking toward Jabba the Hutt's palace in the background, Pangrazio and his team turned to one of the earliest matte painting techniques: the "original negative," also known as the "latent image" or "held take" method. In this process, a glass sheet is positioned in front of the camera on set (in this case, on location in California's Death Valley) as the live-action element is shot. The glass is left clear except for a small area painted black, where the matte painting will eventually go. Both the camera and the glass are tented off to avoid unwanted light from hitting the glass pane. After filming the live action, the unprocessed negative is sent to the matte department, and the detailed painting is exposed on the same piece of film.

By placing both exposures on the same negative, thereby eliminating any duping, this

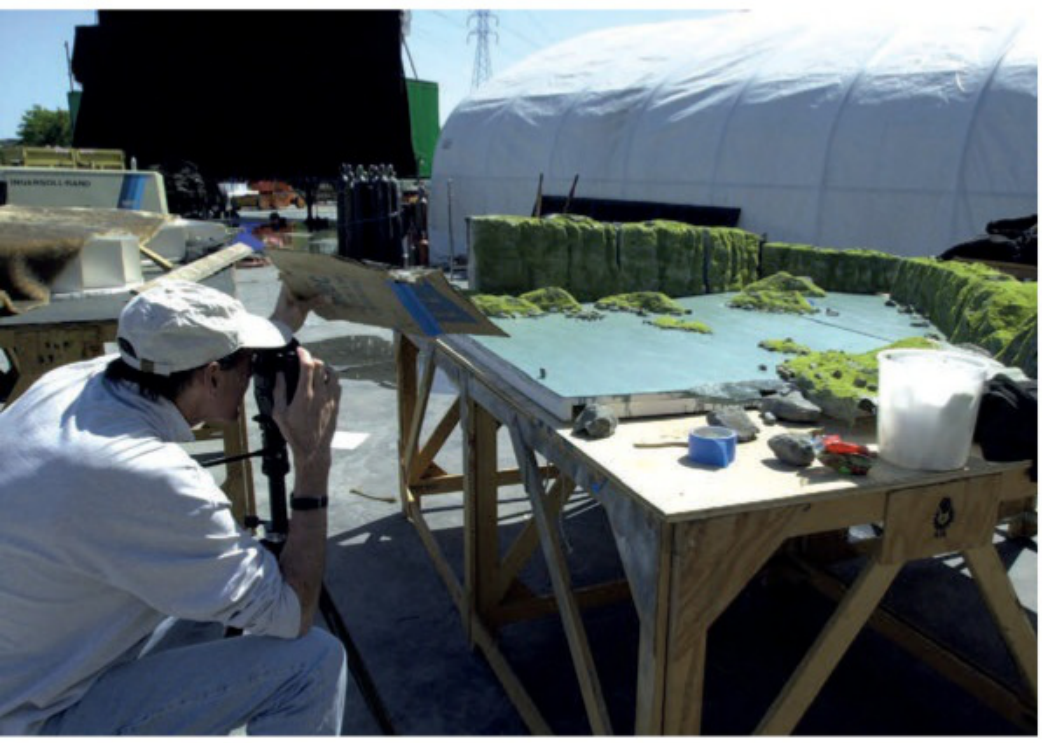
05 The picnic scene from *Attack of the Clones* incorporates a digital matte painting. Huston: "I shot the waterfalls as separate elements at locations in California and comped them together with photos of the set."

06 (Right page) Huston at work on the miniature elements he built for the picnic scene.





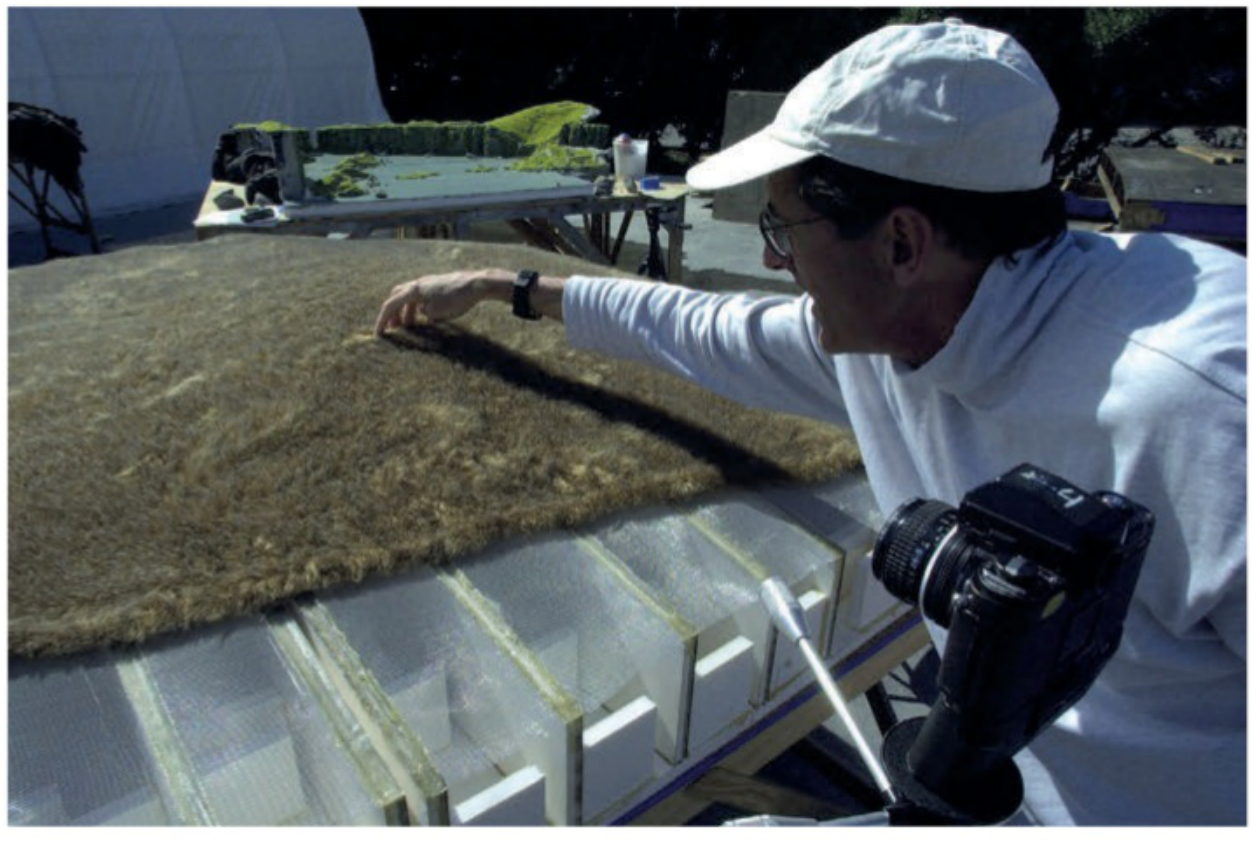
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process can yield the best results. However, as Huston points out: "It's risky, because if something happens to the original negative, you're out of luck. Supervisors didn't like to have undeveloped film sitting for months in the closet in the matte department."

Despite these risks, the original negative method found further use after *Return of the Jedi* in the two made-for-television Ewok movies, *Caravan of Courage* (1984), also known as *The Ewok Adventure*, and *The Battle for Endor* (1985). "The Ewok movies were less under the gun," recalls Huston, who was a matte photographer on the films, and ▶



even painted a matte, working under the guidance of supervisors Chris Evans and Craig Barron.

"There was a little bit more room for experimentation. And Chris and Craig really liked to keep their hands on the whole process, so they loved the original negative method. They loved being able to shoot the plate, do the painting, do the exposure of the painting, and then deliver a final shot."

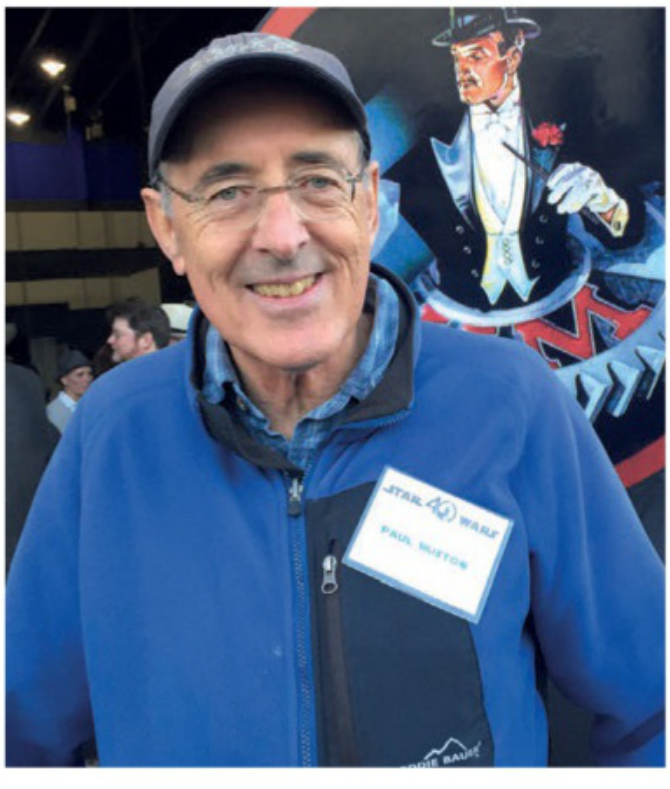
Digital Inroads

Huston would go on to hone his skills as a matte painter on features such as *The Goonies* (1985), and *Ghostbusters II* (1989), and by the early 1990s he was very well established in ILM's matte painting department. He recalls that, as the decade progressed, "Photoshop came along, and I immediately 'glommed' onto it."

The first digital matte work he undertook with Photoshop was for commercials, but it wasn't long before he was applying the technique on narrative work—specifically *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* (1992-93). "Bruce Walters was the head of the matte department, and he set [matte painter] Yusei Uesugi and myself up in a small back room in D Building [at ILM's San Rafael facility] to see what we could do with some Young Indy shots.



07



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"As Photoshop's tools got more sophisticated, it got easier and easier to use," he continues. "When we first started using it, there were no layers. You could cut and paste, and there was this crawly ant line around the selection you made. If you clicked on it, it would just immediately composite. You'd end up doing things over and over again until you got it at just the right angle. Yusei would use photo reference and do small acrylic paintings. Then he would photograph his painting and take that into Photoshop at the end to avoid the cut-and-paste level entirely. I was more comfortable just hammering everything in Photoshop."

Complementing the tools in Photoshop, Huston, Uesugi and their colleagues also began working with After Effects for 2D animated elements, as well as the 3D programs Electric Image and Form-Z. Huston notes: "We jumped into 3D right away because there are so many things that you used to have to do manually as a matte artist that 3D just does—like perspective grids, which are tedious but need a high degree of accuracy. A lot of things became much easier."

Huston also continued to draw on his prior experience with miniatures and model making. "I would go buy a toy car or a toy truck, or I could quickly build something in foam core and paint it," he explains. He would then take photos of the miniatures that he could scan and work with in the computer. "Or you'd head to the bookstore to see if you could get a book that had a good photograph that you could scan and then manipulate digitally."

Taking what they'd learned on Young Indy, Huston and Uesugi then applied their digital matte techniques to the *Star Wars Special Editions* (1997). Uesugi built the Mos Eisley spaceport as a 3D computer-generated (CG) environment, enabling camera movement with realistic parallax as Luke's landspeeder makes its way through the streets before stopping at the Imperial checkpoint. Huston, meanwhile, composed digital mattes of Mos Eisley, basing his work off photos of miniatures he constructed from foam core, paint cans, plastic balls, and other materials. He also worked with miniatures for a new establishing shot of Obi-Wan Kenobi's desert home, with Luke's landspeeder parked outside.

Working with visual effects supervisor John Knoll, Huston also built a six-foot-wide model

of the spaceport's docking bay 94, which he photographed outside at the right time of day to match the light in the film. He then embellished the photo as a digital matte painting that was projected over rough 3D CG geometry, allowing the painting to convincingly match the camera's pan and tilt as the *Millennium Falcon* lifts off from Tatooine.

Into The Modern Era

For the podrace in *The Phantom Menace* (1999), Huston and Knoll took the technique of projecting a digital matte onto 3D geometry to new heights. "That was a big moment," Huston says, explaining that the environments are "basically photographs that are projected on geometry. Luckily, you're going at 600 miles an hour, so there's a lot of motion blur!"

Using the sequence's animated storyboards—animatics—as his guide, Huston built miniature arches and other details out of foam and plaster, painted them, and then carefully photographed the models outside, capturing an array of angles and lighting directions. He also photographed dirt to create a texture map for the ground, and manipulated other photos for use throughout the sequence's backgrounds.

Huston continued to work with photographs and miniatures in his digital matte paintings for *Attack of the Clones* (2002). For Anakin and Padmé's picnic on Naboo, the background cliffs were fashioned from painted aluminum. He then composited this photographed element with digital video he'd shot of real waterfalls.

As the prequel trilogy drew to a close with *Revenge of the Sith* (2005), the line between digital matte techniques and other CG tricks became blurred, and this trend has continued through *The Force Awakens* (2015) and *Rogue One* (2016). "In reaction to the wide array of challenges under the group's purview, the digital matte department has since been renamed the 'generalists department,' because we do so many different things" Huston notes.

While Photoshop remains an important tool for 2D work, earlier 3D software has given way to visual effects software including Nuke. "In 2D, Photoshop's tools are really the easiest to use and the most direct," Huston says. "But the way that Nuke displays colors is really predictable and precise."

And for anything that ends up on-screen—especially a digital matte painting that needs to match other effects as well as live-action photography—Huston stresses, "If the color isn't right, you can go off in a direction that leads to disaster."

Asked whether he still works with miniatures, Huston says, "It's more difficult than it used to be. We don't really have the space, tools, or materials at ILM anymore. But if I can go to a store and buy something, or if I can find a location, I would rather photograph something. I still enjoy working that way."

Despite all the changes over the years, Huston muses that modern digital matte painting feels much the same. "The processes you go through—the things you analyze and look at—are similar. The rules of composition are the same. You're in the same ballpark.

"The thing for me has been that, for a long time, the paintings were locked off [stationary]," he concludes. The ability we have now to move the camera through a painting? That's huge."



CANYON OF THE CRESCENT MOON

"Camerawork was 50 percent of the matte painting, and all the matte painters were interested in using any trick they could to make things more realistic photographically. Mark Sullivan was one of the best ever at combining paintings and camera techniques. He had a bag of tricks you wouldn't believe.

"He really liked using miniatures, so I worked with him a lot. For *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, there was a shot looking through a pair of binoculars at the Canyon of the Crescent Moon. Mark did the matte painting on Masonite, and it looked really good, but he didn't think it looked realistic. So he had me cut the bottom off of the painting, just below the horizon, and then we built about a 20-foot-by-2-foot miniature of the canyon out of plywood and foam.

"We set the cut-off matte painting about 8 feet in front of the camera, with the horizon positioned so that it came to the horizon of the miniature, which was about 25 feet away from the camera—so the horizon was closer than the foreground! We put a piece of glass in front of the painting with a little bit of Vaseline along the blend line between the miniature and the painting, and we filmed the whole thing in-camera. It was crazy, but it worked really well—and it was fun. It utilized the strengths of both paintings and miniatures." — Paul Huston

07 Another angle of the miniature used in the picnic scene in *Attack of the Clones* (opposite).

08 Huston was among the many ILM and Lucasfilm alums who had worked on *A New Hope*, and who recently celebrated 40 years of the film that started it all (opposite).

"...Huston and Knoll took the technique of projecting a digital matte onto 3D geometry to new heights."

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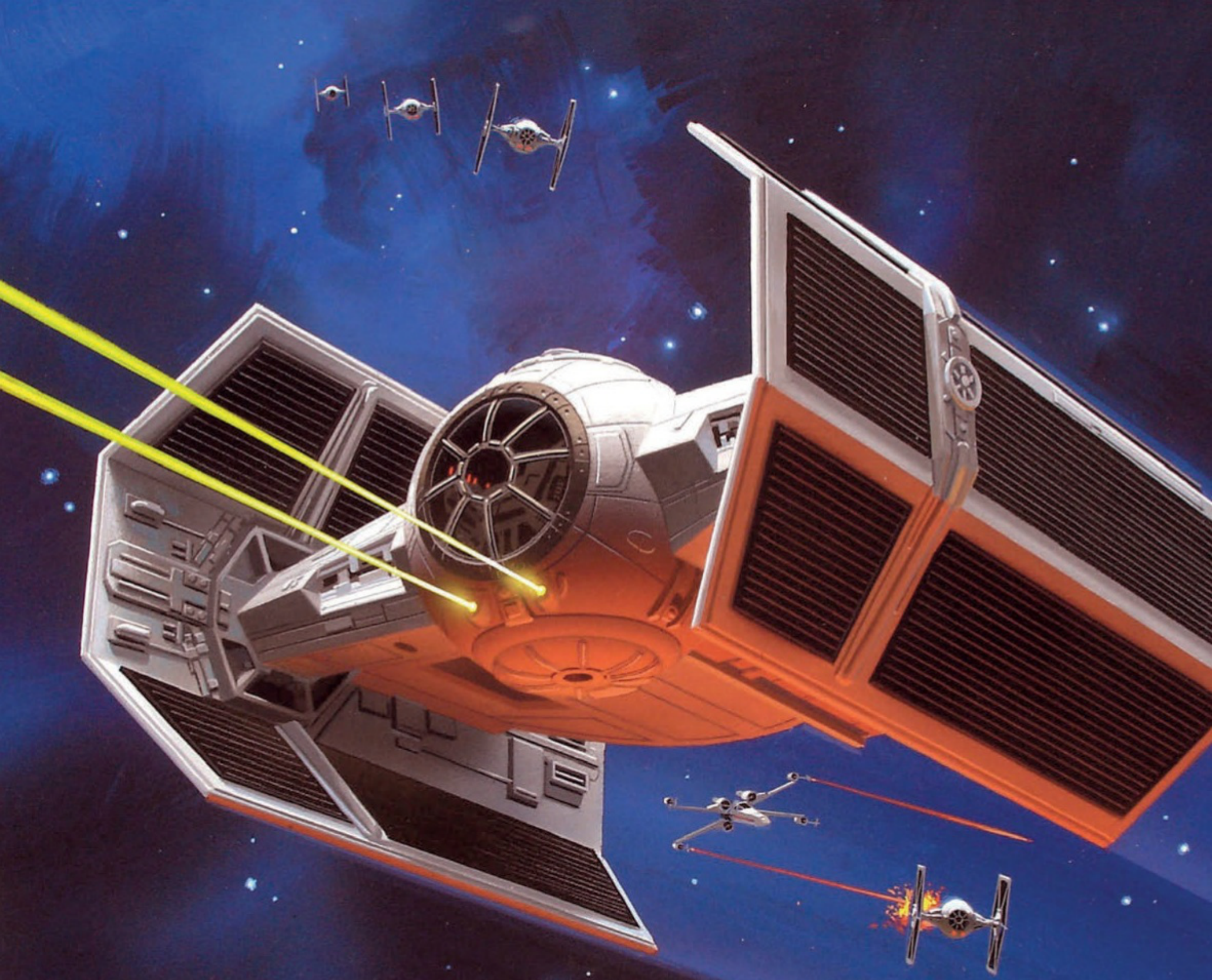
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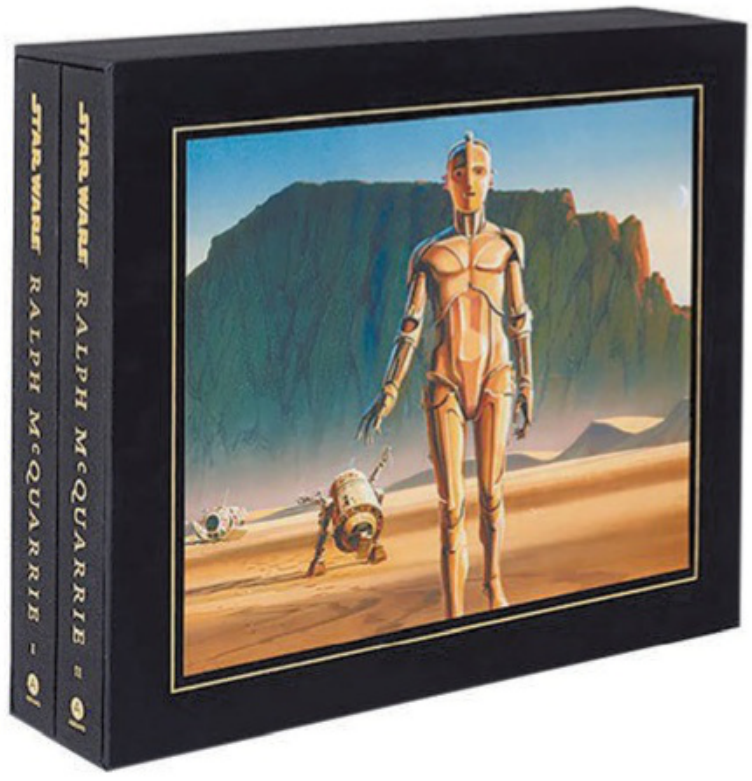


McQUARRIE'S
STAR WARS

RALPH McQUARRIE'S ART HAS BEEN A CONSTANT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION TO THE TEAMS OF NUMEROUS *STAR WARS* PRODUCTIONS, FROM *A NEW HOPE* TO *STAR WARS REBELS* AND EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN. AN AMAZING BOOK COLLECTION COVERING HIS *STAR WARS* OUTPUT IN ITS ENTIRETY WAS RECENTLY RELEASED BY ABRAMS. JONATHAN WILKINS SAT DOWN WITH THE AUTHORS, BRANDON ALINGER, DAVID MANDEL, AND WADE LAGEOSE, TO DISCUSS THEIR DEFINITIVE COLLECTION OF McQUARRIE'S WORK.

***Star Wars Insider*: These books are absolutely exhaustive! Where do you even start in putting together a project such as this?**

Brandon Alinger: The first step was assembling the team. [Former Lucasfilm executive editor] Jonathan Rinzler offered me the opportunity to author it after we published *Star Wars Costumes: The Original Trilogy* in 2014. I knew it would be a mammoth undertaking and I knew David Mandel was a McQuarrie collector and enthusiast, and David knows Wade, who shares the same passions. So the three of us assembled, without realizing exactly what we were getting into at that time. The exciting thing was that everyone was committed to doing the definitive book—to showing all the artwork. I think



McQUARRIE MASTERPIECES

***Insider* asked the team behind the books which piece they would most like to have displayed on their walls...**

David Mandel: At the moment, I cannot stop looking at the original "Cantina" painting. I love the colors and all the creatures buried in it.



that was the biggest draw for us to work on this project.

How did the process of collecting the pieces work?

BA: Fortunately, George Lucas had the foresight to begin archiving materials from his films at a time when many others didn't. So the key source was the Skywalker Ranch Archives, and that was where we began—looking through the original hand-drawn and hand-painted artwork. From there we moved on to Lucasfilm's digital image asset archive, and then to the collecting community to see what other pieces were "out there" that we could get scans of. Obviously, what private collectors have is minuscule in comparison to what's available at the Ranch Archives, but we felt every piece was important, and we were glad to get those in.

How long did the collection take to create, and how did it change from original pitch to final product?

BA: It was just about two years from our first trip to the Ranch to having the final product in hand. We debated a lot of things along the way—should it be one volume, two volumes, or three volumes? How do we break up the volumes: portrait or landscape? All these things had to be considered. While Abrams (the publisher) and Lucasfilm had final say, they were always interested in our input, which we appreciated. There were some challenges in that the quantity of available art varies for each movie. There is a vast amount of artwork on *The Empire Strikes Back* and a relatively small amount on *Return of the Jedi*, for example. So we couldn't just say three volumes, one per film. It wouldn't have been properly balanced. Ultimately, we feel the final product is what we set out to create, and we're pleased about that.

Was there anything in Ralph's career up until the point he started on *Star Wars* suggesting he would be able to create these worlds so vividly? What convinced George Lucas that he should hire him?

BA: There's no doubt Ralph was an amazing artist long before *Star Wars*. You can see his early work with NASA and Boeing published in other places, and you can see the skill he already possessed at





that time. I think the specific experience as a technical illustrator was directly relative to the world George Lucas wanted to create. As you'll read in [George Lucas's foreword], it was a series of, it was a series of paintings Ralph did for *Star Dancing*—a film Lucas' friends Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins were looking to make—that specifically caught George Lucas' eye and exposed him to Ralph's talents.

What were the key pieces that Ralph created in getting the original *Star Wars* movie off the ground, and why do you think they proved so convincing for the Fox execs that *Star Wars* was worth investing in?

David Mandel: As we point out in the text, that's a bit of a myth—the Ralph paintings were not used to sell the movie to Fox. However there were done very early and were incredibly helpful in showing people what George was talking about. They were useful when hiring people to work on the film—people like Ben Burtt talk about seeing the paintings and wanting to work on the film. They were an incredible vision of the film when people needed to see what George's vision was.

How helpful was the team at Lucasfilm in assembling this collection, and what other sources did you use?

DM: Jonathan Rinzler was key in getting things started. He brought the three of us in to write and was there the whole time to act as an advisor on the book. The team at the Archives was just incredible in helping us put the books together. That is where the majority of the McQuarrie assets are currently located— from the sketches to the paintings to the matte paintings. The Archives' team led the effort to rescan so much of the art and photograph the bigger pieces, like the matte paintings. The people at the Lucas library at Skywalker Ranch were also a big help, providing us with all sorts of older McQuarrie interviews. Beyond that, we reached out to people who knew and worked with Ralph, and the collecting community who helped add some key pieces that the Archives did not have.

Are there any lesser-known pieces that particularly stood out for you?

DM: Most people don't realize that in the early drafts of *Star Wars* there was a prison planet that was separate from the Death Star, and that planet, called the Imperial City, Alderaan in the draft, was basically what later became Bespin. For budget reasons, the Imperial City was cut and Leia was held prisoner on the Death Star; but I love the sketches and painting of the Imperial City. In this early Imperial version, Cloud City seems grayer and more ominous than Bespin. Ralph went in later and revised the painting by adding TIE fighters to it. Of course, when they were figuring out *The Empire Strikes Back*, Cloud City came back. But I love this earlier incarnation. Another piece is from the early days came when George was playing with the idea of a Wookiee planet. I loved the thickness of the trees and the way the Wookiee structures were built right into the trees. Once again, George didn't throw anything away, and these designs ended up in the infamous *Star Wars Holiday Special*.

What have been the big surprises in putting these books together?

DM: Two things jumped out as the book was being put together. The first was just how prolific Ralph really was. Most people only think about the production paintings, but his body of work on *Star Wars* is staggering. That leads to the second point: Ralph did everything. Storyboards? Try Ralph. Matte paintings? Ralph will learn how to do it. Need a poster design or a crew T-shirt? Ralph. We need a Lucasfilm Christmas card? Try Ralph. It's really incredible how much he produced and how he influenced every aspect of production and post-production, right into marketing.

While working on the project, were you surprised that so much of his work still exists?

Wade Lageose: I'm not at all surprised that so much of Ralph's work is still in existence today. Technically, the artworks he produced were so masterfully done that I can't see how anyone would not want to keep them. George Lucas collects art, which might also have something to do with their survival.

McQUARRIE MASTERPIECES

Brandon Alinger: So many of the paintings are masterpieces. If I'm picking one it has to be from the first film—I'll say the "Fantastic Five" painting. I love the trademark gradient in the sky, the signature McQuarrie orange that shows up in a number of the works, and most importantly, the early versions on the characters, which are quite different to where they wound up.



Why do you think that Ralph's work is so revered and so influential, both in *Star Wars* and beyond?

WL: One only needs to look at Ralph's artwork to understand why he is so revered. Ralph was an extraordinarily talented visionary and a master craftsman. He had a way of communicating through his artwork that was spontaneous, approachable, and universal. His unusual concepts had a real-world familiarity to them, making them believable and easy to understand at a glance. Yet there is a depth to his illustrations, from the engaging stories they tell to the wonderful lighting and artistry they display, that captures one's imagination.

How definitive can definitive be? Are you living in anticipation of a previously unheard of piece turning up now that the books are available?

WL: One of our goals from the beginning was to include everything Ralph ever contributed to the *Star Wars* universe. While that idea was simple enough, its implementation was a phenomenal task. Collecting, documenting, and photographing his pieces, then organizing them and deciding which needed rescanning was major task. It involved exhaustive research both in and out of the Archives. We often compared the physical originals maintained at Skywalker Ranch to the massive digital archive maintained by the Lucasfilm Digital Archives. Just dealing with two separate,

McQUARRIE MASTERPIECES

Wade Lageose: There are so many extraordinary pieces to pick from, but my favorite at the moment is Ralph's "Laser Duel" from *Star Wars*. That illustration has great composition and movement, and features an early draft character, Deak Starkiller (often referred to as Luke), facing off against Darth Vader. As in many of Ralph's early *Star Wars* paintings, there is a great spontaneity and energy to it. Beyond its extraordinary technical merits, it tells an engaging story—as do many of his paintings—that keeps me coming back, again and again.



proper archives with different cataloging systems was time consuming and often tedious.

All of us authors who worked on the books are collectors, so when we reached out to fellow art collectors in the community, they were more than helpful in getting us their original McQuarrie pieces to be scanned for the books.

While we're confident we found everything that resided in the official archives, I'm sure that over time some pieces could surface "in the wild." I should point out Ralph was a generous man. I heard stories where he would sometimes give sketches as gifts to various people—such as the UPS driver who was an admirer or a fan who sent him an interesting note in the mail. So it's quite possible there might be some pieces still out there. If any readers are aware of undocumented McQuarrie works, please let us know.

If you could ask Ralph a question, what would it be?

WL: I've admired Ralph's genius since I was a kid, and that childhood enthusiasm for his work never diminished. I was fortunate enough to have met Ralph through his agent in 1997. That first meeting led to a fifteen-year friendship. During those years I was able to ask Ralph many questions. I would visit Ralph and he would share stories of his life, career, the phenomenon of *Star Wars*, and the impact it had on his life. When preparing these books, and to augment my conversations with Ralph, we conducted interviews with his colleagues, and were allowed access to the Skywalker Ranch Archives—which are rich with materials accumulated from and by various sources. So we were really well covered. One of the more challenging sections involved the *Empire* storyboards Ralph produced while in England. Although some artworks were easily identified by the R.McQ. signature, others pieces required careful analysis. Suffice to say, it would have been ideal to have Ralph at the table to answer questions regarding specifics on his storyboard contributions.

MORE TO SAY

Star Wars Art: Ralph McQuarrie, published by Abrams, is available now.

HAVE YOU?

JEDI TOY BOX

IN A NEW SERIES, *STAR WARS INSIDER* LOOKS AT THE STORY BEHIND CLASSIC COLLECTIBLES. WHERE BETTER TO START THAN WITH THE CLASSIC KENNER 3¾" ACTION FIGURE LINE—FEATURING THE MUCH-LOVED TELESCOPING LIGHTSABERS?

The first four *Star Wars* figures ever made were Chewbacca, R2-D2, Princess Leia, and Luke Skywalker. Included in the legendary Early Bird Kit, these four were sent to kids in the mail in the early months of 1978. While three of the four were standard figures, the Luke was special as his lightsaber was an early Kenner design that was soon discarded. Rather than the single-piece saber, the Early Bird Luke had a two-piece saber: a main shaft that slid in and out of the arm, and a smaller filament that slid in and out of the shaft. Collectors have come to call this the Double Telescoping lightsaber (or DT for short).

When Kenner was creating product concepts for the action figures, Bernie Loomis, the president of the company at the time, wanted the saber to magically appear in the figure's hand. Several concepts were prototyped to achieve this goal, including one saber that would wind up around a spool inside the figure. The problem with this design was that when extended, the lightsaber retained a curved shape—not exactly movie accurate!

The best idea was a two-piece saber. Engineering this was difficult, however; at the 3¾" size, the plastic for the saber was very thin and fragile. To keep the small filament from simply falling out of the larger shaft, Kenner had two designs. The first was the "mushroom tip," where the tip of the filament was melted into a small dome or "mushroom" shape after being installed into the larger shaft. This approach never worked as the melting made the small filament even more fragile than it already was. The final design was just to mold a slight kink in the tip of the saber, which kept the filament from falling out, but left Luke with a bent light blade. Not only was the double telescoping saber design a problem in manufacturing, but the toy also broke easily during play, violating the "Long Play Toy" claim Kenner advertised on its packaging at the time.



BERNIE LOOMIS, THE PRESIDENT OF KENNER, WANTED THE LIGHTSABER TO MAGICALLY APPEAR.

Thus, the double telescoping feature was revised into the standard one-piece saber most common on the Ben and Vader figures. Blueprint change drawings have surfaced showing a change date in mid-November of 1977, well before the Early Bird kits were shipped. So, Kenner already knew the feature was not going to survive.

While the majority of DT Lukes came in the Early Bird kit, some of these also ended up on cardbacks at retail. This variant is exceedingly rare and, while there is no solid count, experts suspect that less than 25 remain in existence today. The loose version is fairly common and can be found regularly in the market for $150-$200, but carded examples are pushing the $10,000 mark.

Even rarer are the DT Ben and Vader figures. Kenner produced some Bens and Vaders with the double telescoping lightsabers early in the production process prior to making the change, though far less were produced than the Luke figure. Most of the examples in collectors' hands today came through Kenner sources as loose figures, but there are a few examples of carded DT Bens and Vaders, and at least one example with a store price sticker, proving these figures did make it to retail. The scarcity of DT Ben and Vader cannot be overstated. Most likely fewer than 30 loose examples exist for each figure, and the number of carded examples can be counted on your fingers. Loose, the price of a DT Ben

or Vader pushes close to, if not slightly over, the five figure mark. While there are no recent public examples of a carded DT Vader or Ben selling, it would not be shocking to see one sell for $20,000 or more in today's market.

If you're looking for one of these figures for your collection, be very careful. There are plenty of fake DT sabers out there. Buy from a trusted source or have an expert examine the figure before you purchase it.

After the first wave of *Star Wars* figures, Kenner dropped the saber-in-arm concept entirely. While the three original figures continued to be sold in this version (non-DT variation) right up until the line was canceled in 1985, new incarnations of Luke—such as the Luke Bespin and Luke Jedi figures—came packaged with a loose lightsaber weapon that could be placed in the figure's hand, much like the toy blasters. No one is quite sure why Kenner did away with this feature for those later Luke figures. Maybe the execution just wasn't as "magical" as Bernie Loomis' original vision. Maybe the manufacturing was easier with a saber that didn't have to be installed in the arm. Maybe Kenner just wanted to try something different. We may never know—but one thing is for certain: If you were lucky enough to have a double telescoping figure as a kid, there was nothing like the magical igniting of the saber to put Luke into a duel with Darth Vader.

Words: Cj Fawcett
Photos: themanwhoshotlukeskywalker

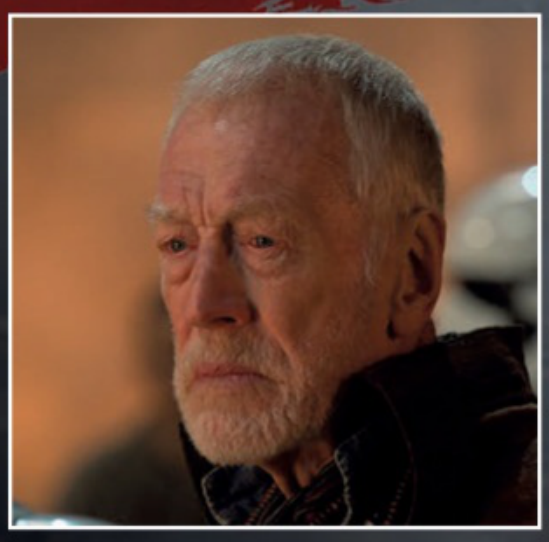


MORE TO SAY

Got a collecting question? Email us at starwarsinsider@titanemail.com and we'll try to answer your question in a future issue!

HAVE YOU?

50 THINGS TO NOTICE IN STAR WARS THE FORCE AWAKENS







1 BRINGING BALANCE

Lor San Tekka, played by legendary stage and screen actor Max Von Sydow, speaks the first line of dialogue in the film. According to the *Star Wars: The Force Awakens: The Visual Dictionary*, San Tekka is a seasoned traveler and explorer who spent the dark times as a follower of the Church of the Force. Although not Force-sensitive, he, like many others, strongly believed in the Jedi ideals.

During his conversation with Resistance pilot Poe Dameron, played by actor Oscar Isaac, Lor San Tekka almost immediately references the balance of the Force, saying, "Without the Jedi, there can be no balance." Qui-Gon Jinn and Mace Windu first mentioned the concept of bringing balance to the Force in *The Phantom Menace.*

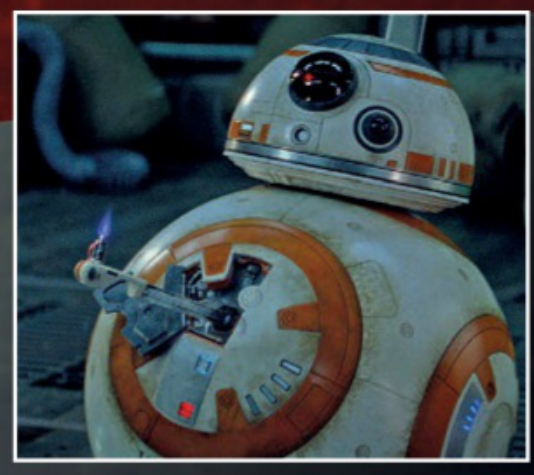
2 FRIENDS REUNITED?

During the battle near Maz Kanata's castle on Takodana, FN-2199, or Nines, is the trooper who shouts, "Traitor!" and attacks Finn with a Z6 baton. Nines and Finn trained together prior to the events of *The Force Awakens*. More can be learned about their relationship in the novel *Star Wars*: *Before the Awakening* by Greg Rucka.

WHAT WOULD *STAR WARS* BE WITHOUT HINTS TO THE EXPANSIVE UNIVERSE SEEN IN THE SAGA OF FILMS AS WELL AS THE CANON OF BOOKS, COMICS, CARTOONS, AND VIDEOGAMES, NOT TO MENTION ALL THE IN-JOKES AND CAMEOS FROM THE REAL WORLD? JOIN US AND TAKE YOUR FIRST STEPS INTO A LARGER WORLD AS WE REVEAL THE SECRETS OF *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS*.

WORDS: BRYAN YOUNG





4 BUILDING BB-8

In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, director J.J. Abrams chose the name BB-8 because he looked round and bouncy, saying, "I named him BB-8 because it was almost onomatopoeia... It was sort of how he looked to me, with the 8, obviously, and then the 2 Bs."

Bill Hader of *Saturday Night Live* and Ben Schwartz of *Parks and Recreation* fame helped create digitally altered sounds for BB-8's voice, and are credited as "vocal consultants".

5 FATAL SLIP

FN-2003, also known as Slip, is the stormtrooper who drags his bloody hand across Finn's helmet during the First Order's siege on the Jakku village of Tuanul. Slip made his first appearance in *Before the Awakening* written by Greg Rucka.



6 SQUEAK WARS

We get an initial glimpse of Mouse Droids aboard the *Finalizer*, which were first seen on the Death Star in *A New Hope*.





3 CAPTAIN PHANTASM

Captain Phasma's name and chrome armor were a tribute by director J.J. Abrams to the 1979 horror movie, *Phantasm*. In fact, Abrams' company Bad Robot recently oversaw a 4K restoration of the cult classic, which was written and directed by Don Coscarelli.



7 ESCAPE PLAN

It is revealed in Alan Dean Foster's novelization of *The Force Awakens* that the vehicle stolen by Poe and Finn aboard the *Finalizer* is a Special Forces TIE fighter.



8 ARRRGGGH!

The Wilhelm scream, which is used at least once in every *Star Wars* film, is heard during Poe and Finn's daring escape. This famous sound effect was first used in the 1951 film *Silent Drums*, and was popularized by the character Private Wilhelm in the 1953 film *The Charge at Feather River*.



9 THE EYE'S HAVE IT

According to the *The Force Awakens Visual Dictionary*, Rey's goggles are cobbled together using lenses from a stormtrooper's helmet left on the planet after the Battle of Jakku.



10 RANCID RATIONS

The polystarch ration, or instant bread, Rey prepares at her "home" on Jakku was a real effect, not computer generated. According to special effects supervisor Chris Corbould, it took three months to develop, and it tasted terrible.



12 PEGG PAL

In addition to his role as the junk boss, Unkar Plutt, actor Simon Pegg also served as a valuable resource to director J.J. Abrams, who said, "His support and friendship [was] massively important and helpful in the process."



11 DESERTED DESTROYER

The downed Star Destroyer Rey passes on her way to the Niima Outpost is called the *Inflictor*, which is mentioned in the novel *Lost Stars* by Claudia Gray.

13 A NEW CREATURE

As Rey trades in scavenged junk to Unkar Plutt for rations, the creature behind her is a Nu-Cosian crittermonger and storyteller named Bobba-Jo. He was the first new creature from the film revealed by J.J. Abrams in his video for the Omaze contest, "Force for Change," where a lucky fan named D.C. Barns won a walk-on part in the movie and a trip to the premiere of *The Force Awakens*! You can read more about this character in Landry Q. Walker's short story, *All Creatures Great and Small.*





14 REY'S HEADGEAR

The pilot's helmet Rey wears while eating her instant bread ration once belonged to Captain Dosmit Ræh of the Tierfon Yellow Aces.

15 TIE FIGHTER DOWN

Finn and Poe's stolen TIE fighter crashes into the Goazon Badlands, the same stretch of desert where the Battle of Jakku occurred. Videogame developer DICE created a playable map of the area in *Star Wars*: Battlefront, published by Electronic Arts and Lucasfilm.





16 BEAST OF BURDEN

After arriving at the Niima Outpost, Finn quickly races to a watering hole and begins guzzling water next to a happabore. This hulking creature is found throughout the galaxy on various worlds, and is first mentioned as a mount for Sarco Plank in *Weapon of a Jedi* written by Jason Fry.

17 WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK

When Poe Dameron wakes up bound to an interrogation table on the *Finalizer* the sound of an IT-000 droid, located behind Kylo Ren, can be heard. An earlier model of this droid, the IT-O interrogator droid , was used by Darth Vader in a failed attempt to force Princess Leia to reveal the location of the rebel base.



18 GAME ON?

The holochess dejarik set seen on the *Millennium Falcon* was animated by Tippett Studios, which is owned and supervised by the same special-effects mastermind who worked on the original sequence in *A New Hope*, Phil Tippett.



19 CAPTURE THE FLAG

The flags at Maz Kanata's castle are imprinted with familiar images from *Star Wars* films and cartoons, including the Mythosaur skull from Boba Fett's left-shoulder blast plate, Hondo Ohnaka's Gang symbol and Ziro the Hutt's belly tattoo from *The Clone Wars*, and Cikatro Vizago's Broken Horn Syndicate symbol from *Rebels*. There is even a flag displaying the universal symbol for the 501st organization.



20 ON SONG

Composer and actor Lin-Manuel Miranda, most recently of *Hamilton: An American Musical* fame, wrote the tracks *Jabba Flow* and *Dobra Doompa*, which were performed at Maz Kanata's castle by travelling musicians Taybin Ralorsa, Infrablue Zedbeddy Coggins, Ubert "Sticks" Quaril, and Sudswater Dillifay Glon.



21 WARWICK RETURNS

Star Wars film veteran Warwick Davis continues his streak of cameos in *The Force Awakens*, this time in Maz Kanata's castle as interstellar scout and hyperspace trailblazer, Wollivan. It also continues a tradition of Davis playing characters who have names beginning with the letter "W": Wicket W. Warrick (*Return of the Jedi*), and Weazel and Wald (*The Phantom Menace*). Coincidentally, Warwick played the lead character Willow Ufgood in *Willow*, a Lucasfilm Ltd. production from 1988.



22 C-3PO—SPYMASTER?

In addition to his role as translator, C-3PO is in charge of the Resistance's pool of spy droids distributed across the galaxy, including GA-97, who reports BB-8's presence at Maz Kanata's castle.

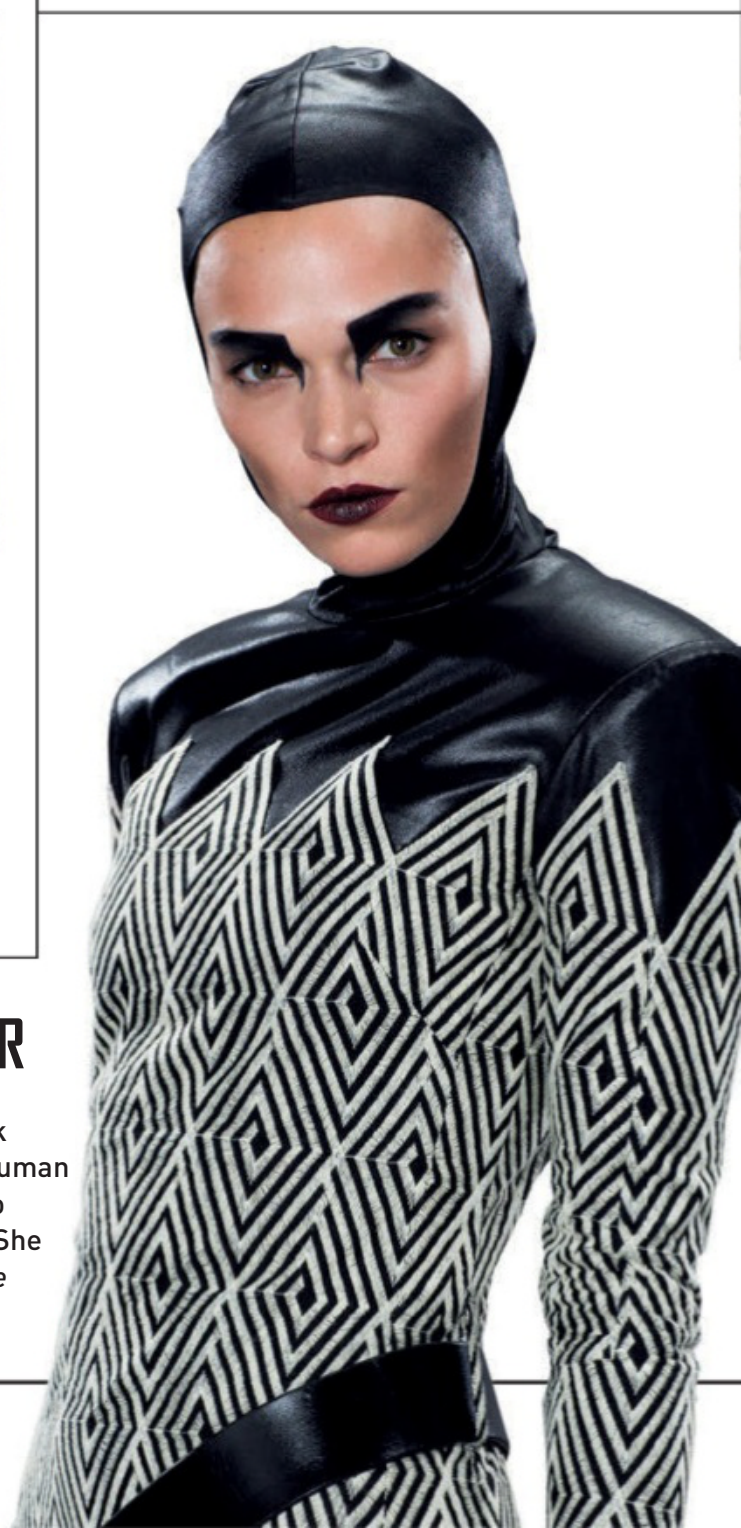
23 DON'T TRUST HER

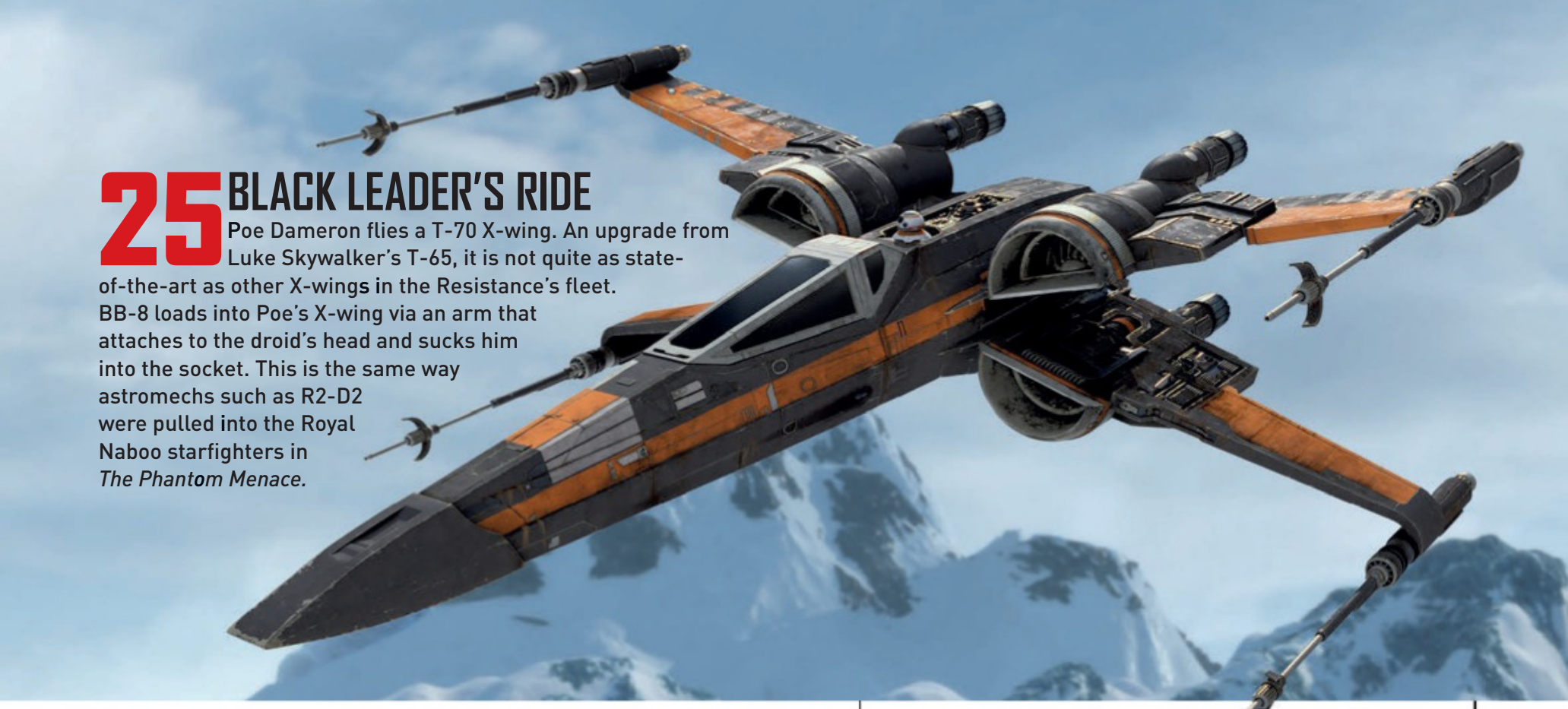
See the mysterious girl wearing the distinctive black and white outfit? That's Bazine Netal, a human mercenary and spy of the First Order who spots BB-8 at Maz's castle on Takodana. She was first introduced in the short story *The Perfect Weapon* by Delilah S. Dawson.



24 THE RETURN OF SOME JEDI

During Rey's Force vision, or Forceback, at Maz's castle, many voices and sounds are heard, including Darth Vader's breathing and Yoda explaining the nature of the Force. However, it is an altered sample of the late actor Sir Alec Guinness's voice that is the sequence's most impressive ingredient. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, director J.J. Abrams explains longtime Bad Robot collaborator Bryan Burk and one of the film's producers took the word "afraid" and altered it to sound like "Rey." They then combined that with new voice-over from actor Ewan McGregor to complete the line, "Rey...these are your first steps."





25 BLACK LEADER'S RIDE

Poe Dameron flies a T-70 X-wing. An upgrade from Luke Skywalker's T-65, it is not quite as state-of-the-art as other X-wings in the Resistance's fleet. BB-8 loads into Poe's X-wing via an arm that attaches to the droid's head and sucks him into the socket. This is the same way astromechs such as R2-D2 were pulled into the Royal Naboo starfighters in *The Phantom Menace.*

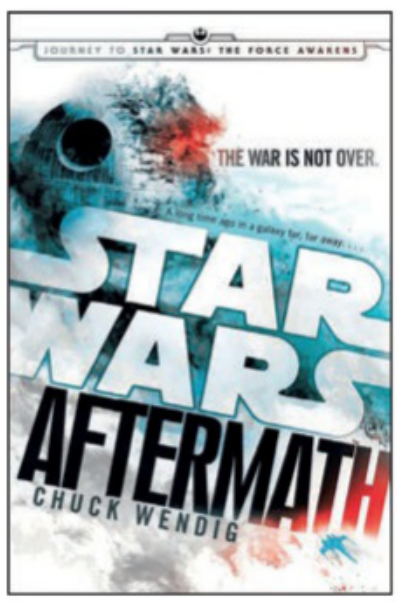


26 REY'S VISION

The beginning of Rey's Force vision brings her to a hallway that bears a resemblance to two different hallways that were important in the life of Darth Vader. The first was a hallway he fought Obi-Wan Kenobi in on Mustafar in *Revenge of the Sith,* the other was the hallway in *The Empire Strikes Back* that led to the catwalk where he battled his son, Luke Skywalker.

27 GALACTIC PEACE

With the Empire defeated, Chancellor Mon Mothma restored the Galactic Senate and decided all member worlds would have an opportunity to host the delegates, bringing a more inclusive spirit to the government that was absent during Emperor Palpatine's reign. The first such captial was Mon Mothma's homeworld of Chandrila, as revealed in Chuck Wendig's novel *Aftermath*. The cosmopolitan world of Hosnian Prime is the site of the capital in *The Force Awakens.*





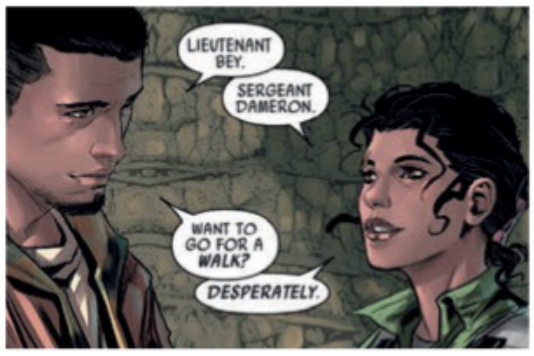
28 A LIGHTSABER'S JOURNEY

According to a display at Disneyland's *Star Wars* Launch Bay, Luke Skywalker's lightsaber, along with his severed hand, were salvaged from the depths of Cloud City following his confrontation with Darth Vader. How Maz Kanata obtained the famous Jedi's weapon is still unknown.



29 SNOKE'S SHOW OF POWER

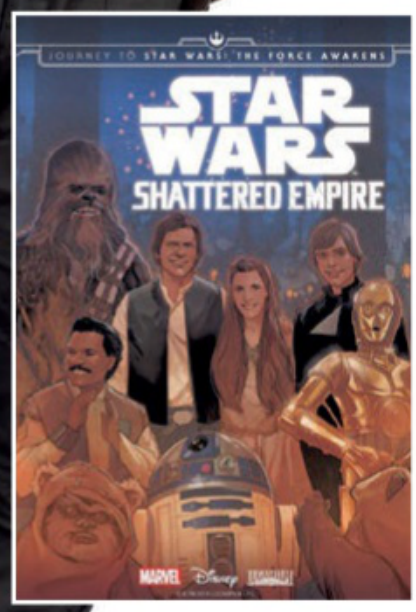
In a show of power, General Hux destroys Hosnian Prime with Supreme Leader Snoke's approval. The casualties are staggering as Chancellor Villecham; Kor Sella (General Leia's envoy); senatorial representatives from planets such as Naboo, Taris, and Commenor; as well as inhabitants of the planet are obliterated.



30 POE'S PAST

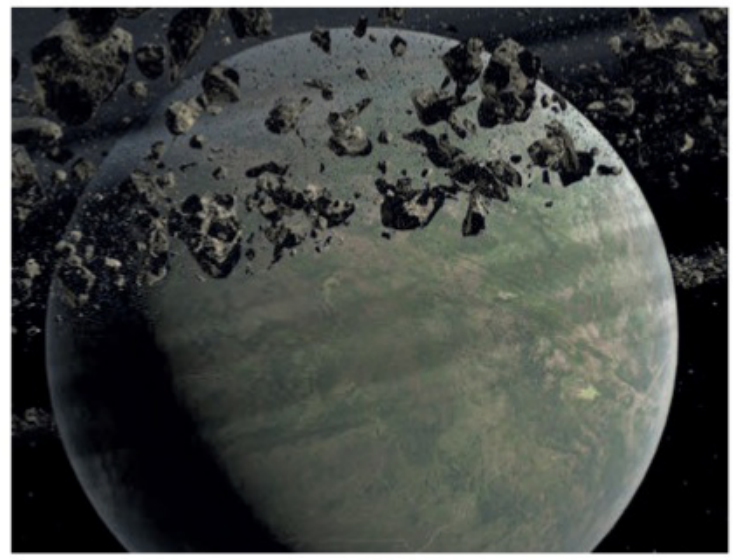
Poe Dameron is a child of the Galactic Civil War. Poe's parents fought for the Rebellion, most notably during the Battle of Endor where his mother was a pilot and his father was a member of Han Solo's landing team. You can read more about them in the *Star Wars: Shattered Empire* comic book series written by Greg Rucka.

Poe was raised near the Massassi Temple on Yavin IV, the rebel's secret base in *A New Hope.* Coincidentally, the temple's real world location was in Guatemala, the country where the man who plays Poe Dameron, Oscar Isaac, was born.



31 HIDDEN FORTRESS

The Resistence's hidden base on D'Qar is located in the Ileenium system. It was discovered and marked for potential use as a rebel base decades earlier by pilots of Corona Squadron, Thane Kyrell and Kendy Idele. More can be learned about their exploits in the pages of *Lost Stars* by Claudia Gray.



32 LEIA'S DROID

PZ-4CO, or "Peazy," is a communications droid assigned to General Leia on D'Qar, and makes her initial appearance in the Resistance's command center. Peazy is first referenced in the pages of *Star Wars*: *Moving Target*: *A Princess Leia Adventure* by Cecil Castellucci and Jason Fry.

33 GOOD LOURD!

Carrie Fisher's daughter, Billie Lourd, plays Lieutenant Connix, who appears in the Resistance base on D'Qar.

34 THANK THE MAKERS!

Lucasfilm president and executive producer Kathleen Kennedy approached members of the R2 Builders Club Members at *Star Wars* Celebration in 2013 and asked them if they wouldn't mind making the R2-D2 prop seen in *The Force Awakens*. Of course they said yes!



35 DOCTOR DOOKU?

Actress Harriet Walter plays Doctor Kalonia, the physician who treated Chewie's wounds after the skirmish at Takodana. In addition to *The Force Awakens*, Walter has appeared as Lady Shackleton on *Downtown Abbey*. She is also the niece of Christopher Lee, who played Count Dooku in *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*.



36 FEELING BLUE

Blue Squadron makes its debut in *The Force Awakens*. Luke Skywalker was originally supposed to fly with Blue Squadron in *A New Hope*, but the star fighters' blue markings made it difficult to film against blue screens, so they were changed to red instead. The resulting moniker was Red Squadron.

37 SNAP TO ACTION!

Greg Grunberg is an actor and childhood friend of J.J. Abrams who has appeared in many of the famed director's productions. In *The Force Awakens*, Grunberg plays X-wing pilot Temmin "Snap" Wexley. It was his character who provided the Resistance with the information they needed to launch an attack against the Starkiller Base. Wexley was first introduced in *Aftermath* by Chuck Wendig.



38 SNOWSPEEDER UNSEEN!

When Rey and Finn arrive at the oscillator on Starkiller Base, behind them is the boosted snowspeeder that brought them there. It was featured in the novelization of *The Force Awakens* by Alan Dean Foster and is also a toy by Hasbro.





39 AGENT OF THE FIRST ORDER

As reported in *Entertainment Weekly*, actor Daniel Craig of James Bond fame makes a cameo in *The Force Awakens.* He plays a stormtrooper who falls victim to Rey's Jedi Mind Trick on Starkiller Base. When first asked about his supposed role prior to the film's release, Craig vehemently denied it because he was forbidden to confirm his association with the project. His involvement was made easy because the latest Bond film, *Spectre*, was filming on a neighboring soundstage only a thermal detonator's throw away.



40 HUX: A TRAGIC VILLAIN?

J.J. Abrams wanted Hux to have a sense of tragedy, and the fact that he appears to be too young to be in charge of a murderous group added to that. According to Abrams, the character's name was created after he noticed a grave with the name "Hux" carved into the stone.

41 KYLO'S BLADE

Kylo Ren's lightsaber is based on an ancient design, dating back thousands of years. The ragged, unstable appearance of the main blade and two cross-guard blades, or quillions, are the result of a cracked kyber crystal housed inside the weapon's hilt.



42 COMFORTABLY NUNB

One of the Resistance fighters flying an X-wing against Starkiller Base is none other than Lando Calrissian's Sullustan co-pilot from the Battle of Endor, Nien Nunb. In the Princess Leia-focused book *Moving Target* and *Battlefront: Twilight Company*, Nien Nunb is revealed to be a vital combatant in the fight against the Empire, and willingly signs back up to take on the First Order. Actor Mike Quinn, who plays Nunb in *Return of the Jedi*, was tapped to bring life back to the character he made famous for *The Force Awakens*.



43 ANOTHER TRAP?

Admiral Ackbar makes appearances in the war room at the Resistance Base on D'Qar. According to *The Force Awakens Visual Dictionary,* General Leia had to coax him out of retirement to meet the growing threat of the First Order. Tim Rose, the voice behind everyone's favorite fishy commander from *Return of the Jedi*, reprises his role in the new film.



44 LEIA'S LOSS

Through the Force, General Leia can feel the loss of Han Solo in the same way Yoda feels Order 66 in *Revenge of the Sith* and Obi-Wan Kenobi feels the destruction of Alderaan in *A New Hope.* Leia previously sensed Luke was in danger at the climax of *The Empire Strikes Back* and knew he was safe after the destruction of the Death Star in *Return of the Jedi*.

45 DROID STORY

Look closely and you'll see as Rey and Chewie leave aboard the *Millennium Falcon* in search of Luke that C-3PO's red arm has been replaced with a golden one. The reason behind C-3PO's red arm is explained in the comic book *Star Wars Special: C-3PO #1* by James Robinson and Tony Harris.





46 NO SLEEP 'TIL BESPIN!

J.J. Abrams love of the Beastie Boys features in his 2009 movie *Star Trek* (the band's song "Sabotage" plays during young James Kirk's introduction) and continues in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

The Beastie Boys were an American hip-hop/rock band from New York City, consisting of Michael "Mike D" Diamond (vocals, drums), Adam "MCA" Yauch (vocals, bass), and Adam "Ad-Rock" Horovitz (vocals, guitar).

The Abednedo harassed by First Order troopers in the Jakku village is named Ilco Munica. These are the first two of a series of references to the Beastie Boys. Abednedo is close to the word "Abegnego," which is a character in a biblical story they told in a track called "Shadrach" on their album "Paul's Boutique." Ilco Munica refers to "Ill Communication," their fourth studio album.

The second Abednedo with a name whose reference is to the Beastie Boys is present on Hosnian Prime, a senator named Brassmon Kee, which is similar to the Beastie Boys hit "Brass Monkey."

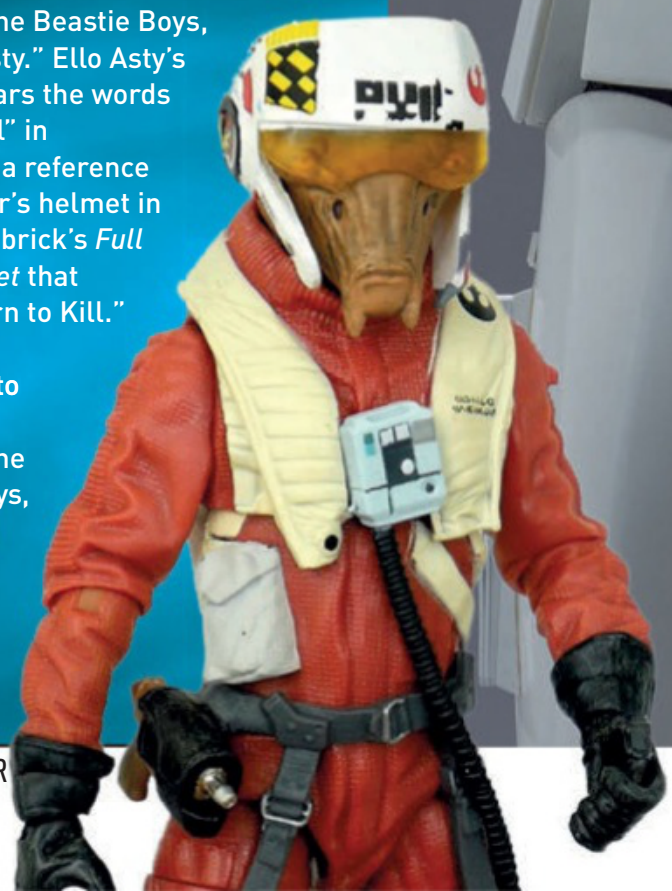
The third Abednedo character whose name references the Beastie Boys is an X-wing pilot who sacrifices his life in the battle over Starkiller Base. His name is Ello Asty, which is a reference to the fifth studio album of the Beastie Boys, "Hello Nasty." Ello Asty's helmet bears the words "Born to Ill" in Aurebesh, a reference to Lt. Joker's helmet in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* that reads "Born to Kill." It's also a reference to the debut album of the Beastie Boys, "Licensed to Ill."

47 CELL MATES

Finn's trooper designation is FN-2187, a reference created by director J.J. Abrams to Princess Leia's cell number, 2187, aboard the Death Star in *A New Hope*.







48 HEY, ISN'T THAT...?

Various well-known faces can be seen in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Here are some, along with some hints as to where you might have seen them before...

Thomas Brodie Sangster, who portrays First Order Petty Officier Thanisson in *The Force Awakens*, plays Jojen Reed in the hit television series *Game of Thrones* and Newt in the *Maze Runner* films. His first major movie was *Love Actually*, in which he played the stepson of Liam Neeson (Qui-Gon Jinn in *The Phantom Menace*).

Resistance X-wing pilot Jess Pava is played by actress Jessica Henwick, who also plays Nymeria Sand in the television show *Game of Thrones*. Pava is first referenced in *The Weapon of a Jedi* by Jason Fry.

Actor Ken Leung, who played Miles on the television show *Lost*, appears in *The Force Awakens* as Admiral Statura. It was his character who explains the science behind Starkiller Base's oscillator.

Members of the Kanjiklub gang are played by actors from the 2011 Indonesian action film, *The Raid: Redemption* (originally titled *The Raid*). The most notable of whom is action choregrapher Yayan Ruhian, who portrays their leader, Tasu Leech.



49 LOOKING FOR LUKE

Luke Skywalker sought out the First Jedi Temple. Jedi Temples were first seen in *The Phantom Menace* and the first temple Luke visited was the Temple of Eedit on Devaron in Jason Fry's book *Weapon of a Jedi.* The planet outside known space where the first Jedi Temple is located was named Ahch-To in the screenplay for *The Force Awakens* and the island was filmed on location at Skellig Michael in Ireland.



50 SNOKE AND LEIA

Story Group member and *Star Wars* expert Pablo Hidalgo has revealed on Twitter that Leia and Snoke knew each other before the events of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

There are undoubtedly many more cool things to look out for in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. With the movie now available for home viewing, it's the perfect time to look! Happy hunting!

INTERROGATION DROID!



SUAVE, STYLISH AND ALWAYS READY TO CHARM THE LADIES! HOW WILL BILLY DEE WILLIAMS FARE AGAINST *STAR WARS INSIDER*'S INTERROGATION DROID? WORDS: CHRIS SPITALE

What's Lando's greatest asset?
His unparalleled charm, of course! That was one of the things that I thought was very important to that character.

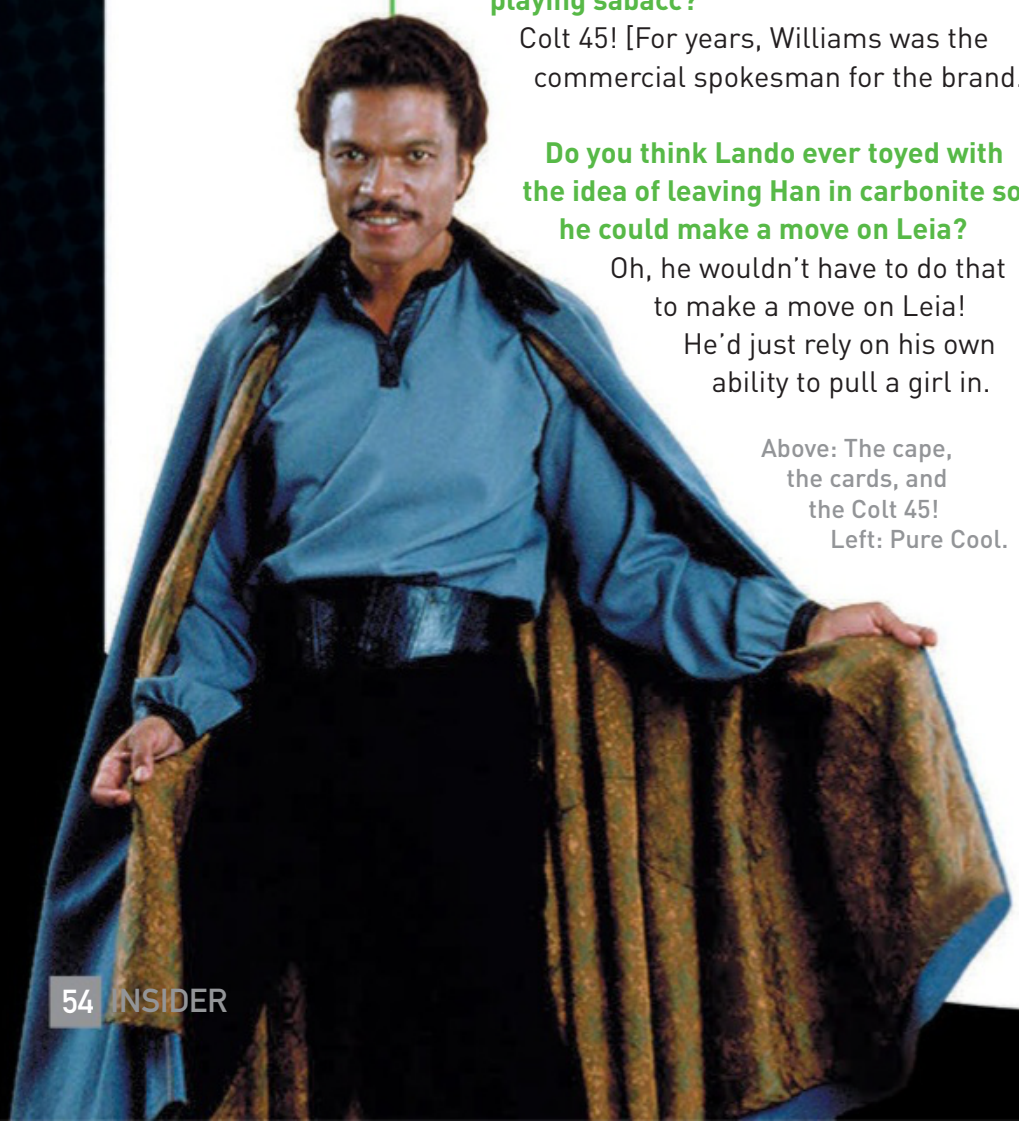


Lando's smile is bigger than:
a) A Cloud City exhaust port, b) Jabba the Hutt, or c) Boba Fett's reputation.
The Milky Way!

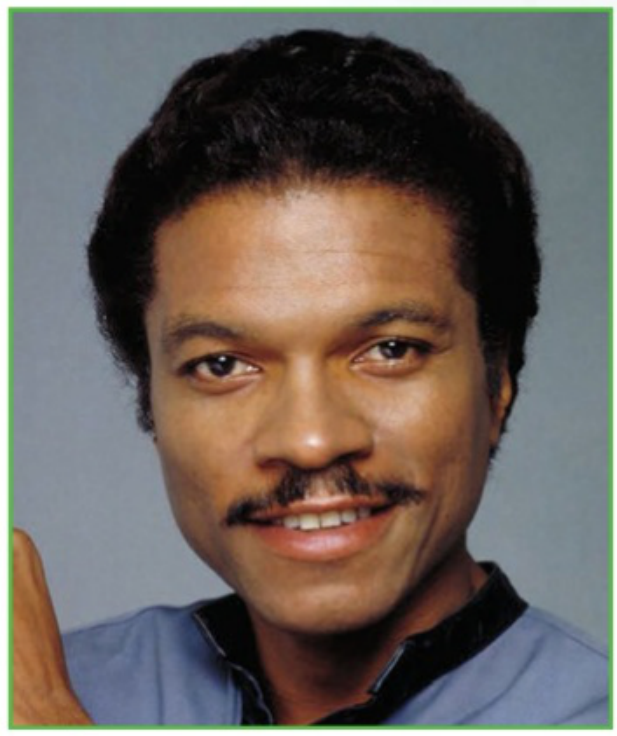
When Lando owned the *Millennium Falcon*, did he trick out his ride?
He didn't need to. He owned something that was comparable to Las Vegas. I think he was more concerned with the mechanics of the *Falcon*.

What drink did Lando most frequently sip while playing sabacc?
Colt 45! [For years, Williams was the commercial spokesman for the brand.]

Do you think Lando ever toyed with the idea of leaving Han in carbonite so he could make a move on Leia?
Oh, he wouldn't have to do that to make a move on Leia! He'd just rely on his own ability to pull a girl in.



Above: The cape, the cards, and the Colt 45!
Left: Pure Cool.



NAME: BILLY DEE WILLIAMS
ALIAS: LANDO CALRISSAN

FIRST APPEARANCE
Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back

What were some of Lando's most successful pick-up lines?
It's kind of a spontaneous thing. Depending on the situation, who the person is, and how he's affected by that person. I like to compliment people, especially if there's something very interesting about the person. I'm always quite open about how I view them.

Who was a better co-pilot for Lando in the *Falcon*—Chewbacca or Nien Nunb?
Nien Nunb. Chewbacca was much more loyal to Han Solo, so there was always that possibility of tension.

So who's the bigger ladies man: Lando Calrissian or Billy Dee Williams?
Oh, Lando Calrissian! I've been more of a ladies man in my time. Maybe it's a tie!

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LAWRENCE KASDAN

CO-WRITER *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS*

A GIFTED WRITER, AS WELL AS BEING A TALENTED DIRECTOR, LAWRENCE KASDAN RETURNS TO THE *STAR WARS* UNIVERSE!



***Star Wars Insider*: How did you get involved in *Star Wars*?**

Lawrence Kasdan: I first met George Lucas in 1977. I had sold a screenplay to Steven Spielberg. Steven and George decided, based on that screenplay, that they wanted me to write *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. I was thrilled to do that. I was brand-new in the business and it was an amazing film to get for your first job. When I was finished with it, I took it up to Marin County to deliver it by hand to George Lucas. He threw it on the desk, and said, "C'mon, let's go to lunch." When we went to lunch, he said he was in trouble with *The Empire Strikes Back* because Leigh Brackett, who was working on it, had passed away. The draft was nothing like what George needed or wanted. He asked me to write *The Empire Strikes Back*. I was concerned because he hadn't read *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* but he said he would read it that evening and if he didn't like it, he would retract the offer. He read it, and I began working on *The Empire Strikes Back* several days later. It turned out to be a wonderful experience working with George and Irvin Kershner, who was the director of *The Empire Strikes Back*. We did it in six weeks. They were already building sets in England, so there was no time to waste. George had a story and I wrote the screenplay. When that was over, I went back to my original intention, which was to become a movie director.

I met Alan Ladd, Jr., who was running 20th Century Fox and releasing the *Star Wars* movies. He was offering me jobs to write, and I told him I didn't want to write; I wanted to direct. He asked what I wanted to direct, and I told him the story of *Body Heat*, which became my first film. After it was written, Ladd said he would make it, but he asked that I get someone to look over my shoulder as I was a first-time director. I went to George Lucas and asked him to do it, and he agreed. George was very generous with me and so supportive in many ways.

After *Body Heat* I moved on to my next movie, which was *The Big Chill*. Then George came to me and asked me to write *Return of the Jedi*, which became my second *Star Wars* movie, directed by Richard Marquand.

How did you first meet Kathleen Kennedy?

After Steven Spielberg bought my original screenplay, *Continental Divide*, he introduced me to George Lucas. We were all going to do *Raiders of the Lost Ark* together. I had no place to work on the screenplay, so I worked in Steven's office while he was off directing *1941*. So, I wrote *Raiders of the Lost Ark* at Steven Spielberg's desk and, true to his word, he barely showed up those six months. Kathy Kennedy was Steven's assistant at that time, in 1977, and she really had not been there very long. She was in and out a good bit between the set and the office, but we became friends. So we've had a long, good friendship. We have vacation homes near each other, and we've been through a lot, with a lot of movies under the bridge. We haven't worked like this for a long, long

"THE ORIGINAL *STAR WARS* TRILOGY IS FUNKY. IT PUTS ON A SHOW."

This page: Former art director, Norman Reynolds, and former producer Robert Watts, reunite with Kathleen Kennedy and Lawrence Kasdan on set at Pinewood Studios!

time, but it's great to be back working with Kathy. When George and Kathy decided to reignite the saga, they came to talk to me about writing some of it.

When did you first meet J.J. Abrams?
I had met J.J. about five years before all this started, at a charity event in Hollywood. He was very friendly and I was happy to meet him. I had a wonderful, positive impression of him. After I became involved in the new saga, the question came up as to who was going to direct Episode VII. Kathy Kennedy was very generous in including me in that process. When we went to talk to J.J., who was everybody's first choice, I started to get to know J.J. for the first time. That was in early 2013. We all went to his office and talked about what a new *Star Wars* would be like. His ideas about what should happen in the next trilogy were like mine, and I was enthusiastic about the idea that he'd direct it. We were all thrilled when he agreed to do it.

Do you remember the key elements that needed to be in the film?
In talking to J.J. Abrams, right from the start, there was a meeting of minds about the



things we wanted the new *Star Wars* to be. How it would be similar to the first trilogy. How would it be different, because times have changed and it's been imitated so much. It's hard to make things look fresh. But all our thoughts were similar. The movies had to get back to tactile [effects and sets], rather than CGI. One of the wonderful things about the first trilogy is that it's kind of funky and puts on a show. The creatures in the first one are crude, but become more sophisticated in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Then came more effects and sophistication.

But even through *Return of the Jedi*, there's a tactile feel like we're actually on a set somewhere shooting this movie. All of us wanted to get back to that feeling, which we thought maybe had drifted away in subsequent movies. So, that was common ground. Then, things that interested us in the story were similar. It was a family saga, and we talked about how we would continue to play it out in ways that are very interesting not just for new generations but for the people who saw it originally, 40 years ago. So, you're paying tribute to a tradition, a saga that has made an impact beyond anyone's imagination. You're trying to be supportive of it, loyal, honest, and respectful of it, and at the same time, move it forward.

How much did you talk about balancing visual effects with the practical?

We discussed balancing the effects and the physical properties of the movie endlessly. It was the primary issue for us. How do we take a human story with relatable themes and keep it feeling like a real story that's been done by actors on real sets?

The sets certainly do feel like *Star Wars*. How did they go about getting that iconic feel?

Rick Carter and Darren Gilford, the production designers, created an environment that's so powerfully redolent of the *Star Wars* saga.





"I USED ONE WORD FROM THE BEGINNING, IT MUST 'DELIGHT.' IF WE DO THAT, WE'LL HAVE SUCCEEDED."

It has to do with the shape of the lights, the shine on the floor, the shape of the corridors. Creatures you remember from 40 years ago are in this movie, and that's kind of fantastic. And, Michael Kaplan, the costume designer, totally entered the universe of *Star Wars* in this, his first *Star Wars* movie, and created a whole new generation that fit in with *A New Hope*.

Did you and J.J. Abrams feel that the lead was always going to be a strong female?

There was never a question. It was not just J.J. and I, but Kathy and everyone else involved as well. We aimed very strongly toward one of the protagonists being a woman right from the get-go. It cries out for that. Leia was a wonderful character, but she was one of the only women in the original trilogy. This saga demands more in female leadership. We want to see more characters like that. As movies go, we'll see more. We knew that this one had to be centered on both a girl and a boy.

Was it fun to revisit the classic *Star Wars* characters?

It's great to come back to characters you love. Leia and Han are great people to write for, and now I've done it a lot. For someone who is their age, there's a poignancy about how we lose our physical resilience. We deal with many things over the a course of a lifetime. Some take a toll and some show up in lines in our faces. When you stop resisting it, it can be a glorious thing. You can appreciate itand you're grateful for this journey that put you through so many different paces. When you see Carrie Fisher and you see Harrison Ford, you see all that. We've followed them since they were so young. They grew up on camera. For Harrison, it's been non-stop movie stardom, which is a burden in itself. Very few people have had the long, varied career that Harrison has. Harrison was in *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, but he was also in *Witness*, *Clear and Present Danger*, and so many more. He played fear and aspiration, and had heroism and

J.J. ABRAMS ON LAWRENCE KASDAN

"One of the most surreal and wonderful things was getting to know and collaborate with Lawrence Kasdan. He's one of the most thoughtful, brilliant, considered, opinionated, funny, collaborative people I've ever met. He's a hero of mine. If the movie didn't go forward or if something went wrong, I wouldn't have changed the investment of time. If there were an auction to work with Larry Kasdan in this way, I'd never stop bidding. There I was working on scenes with Han Solo, and Larry would be like, "I don't think Han would say that. It's not very Han." I'd be like, okay, and I'd think, *Well, he would know. He wrote Han Solo in some of the best moments in cinema history."*



Clockwise, from top left: Kylo Ren surveys the destructive power of the Starkiller; Finn and Poe prepare for battle; Rey and BB-8 meet on Jakku; Maz Kanata passes Luke Skywalker's lightsaber to Leia.

neuroses. I don't think anyone can watch Harrison walk back onto the *Millennium Falcon* as Han and not be thrilled. He looks so right and so comfortable.

In the same way, Carrie Fisher had a cerebral nature at 21 and she's got it now. We're trying to have everyone come through with who they are. The dream in a movie is to bring out what's best in an actor, whether they're 12 or 70. Acting is magical; it's mysterious. Why someone can do it, I could never figure out, and I spent my whole life with actors. I wanted to be an actor and I couldn't.

What is your hope for this film?

I used one word from the beginning, it must "delight." When you have John Williams writing the music, you're part of the way there. When you have this group of craftsmen creating the images, you're part of the way there. When [director of photography] Dan Mindel shoots a movie, you're going to be delighted and when J.J. directs a movie, you'll be delighted. We all know that there's going to be an audience for this movie, but we want them to feel satisfied when it's over. We want them to say, "It delighted me, made me laugh, made me excited, and the images affected my body in a way I have no control over." That's what great movies do. That's what anything that really hits the chord does. You sit in an auditorium with an orchestra, or a single guitar, or a rock concert and they are somehow capable of touching something in you that you have no control over. It's beyond reason, beyond criticism, beyond preconceptions or disappointment. I was engaged, I was enraptured, I was delighted for a certain amount of time. If we do that, we'll have succeeded.

INTERROGATION DROID!



EACH WEEK ON *THE CLONE WARS*, JEDI MASTER YODA OFFERS SAGE ADVICE TO HIS FELLOW JEDI. *INSIDER* QUESTIONS HIS ALTER EGO, ACTOR TOM KANE, TO SEE WHAT WORDS OF WISDOM HE'D OFFER IN THE FOLLOWING PECULIAR SCENARIOS. WORDS: CHRIS SPITALE



Yoda answers some tough questions. But will we be able to understand the answers?

Dark Father Knows Best: Luke wants to spend all his time racing speeders, hunting womp rats, and cantina-hopping. How can Dad Vader lay down the law without inciting teenage rebellion?
Take the crystal out of his lightsaber, he should. No blue milk will he get with his cookies tonight.

Extreme Hovel Makeover: Luke's humble Tatooine abode may have been recklessly torched, but the structure's still solid. How do you spruce up the charred adobe?
Some fresh stucco and paint, and look like new it will. The "barbecued Beru" smell? Much harder to get rid of, that will be.

Coruscant Crime Scene Investigation: Who's trying to kill Senator Amidala this week? Help C-3PO and Jar Jar figure it out! The only clues are a toothpick, a bola, and a drop of green blood.
Serious, are you? A newborn Huttlet, figure that one out he could. But Threepio and Jar-Jar? Hmm not the brightest lasers on the Death Star, are they?

The Baron: Help dashing Lando Calrissian select the girl of his dreams! The finalists are a tantalizing Twi'lek, a Snootie songstress, and assassin Asajj. Who should he give the poola blossom to?
Know Lando well, you do not. Select the girl of his dreams? Many dreams Lando has, and almost as many girls!



NAME: TOM KANE
ALIAS: YODA

FIRST APPEARANCE: *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008)

Who's the Bossk? How does a Trandoshan handle his domestic duties when the head of the household, Aurra Sing, spends too much time at work, and the youngest of the clan, Boba Fett, has a serious attitude problem?
Aurra Sing away too much? A problem, that is not! In Boba Fett's face Bossk should not get, as one encounter with Bossk-breath is enough to make even a Sith think twice. Lord Vader's mask, you would need!

Three Ewoks and a Wokling: Logray, Chief Chirpa, and Teebo find an abandoned baby Ewok in a basket on the doorstep of their bachelor pad. Do they raise the little furball or shirk the responsibility in favor of the Ewok party life?
Find a Wokling, have they? Fortunate, they will find this. A better "Chick Magnet" than a Wokling there is not in the entire galaxy!

"The Force is strong with this one."

–Darth Vader, *Star Wars: A New Hope*



BRING THE *STAR WARS* GALAXY TO YOUR TABLETOP

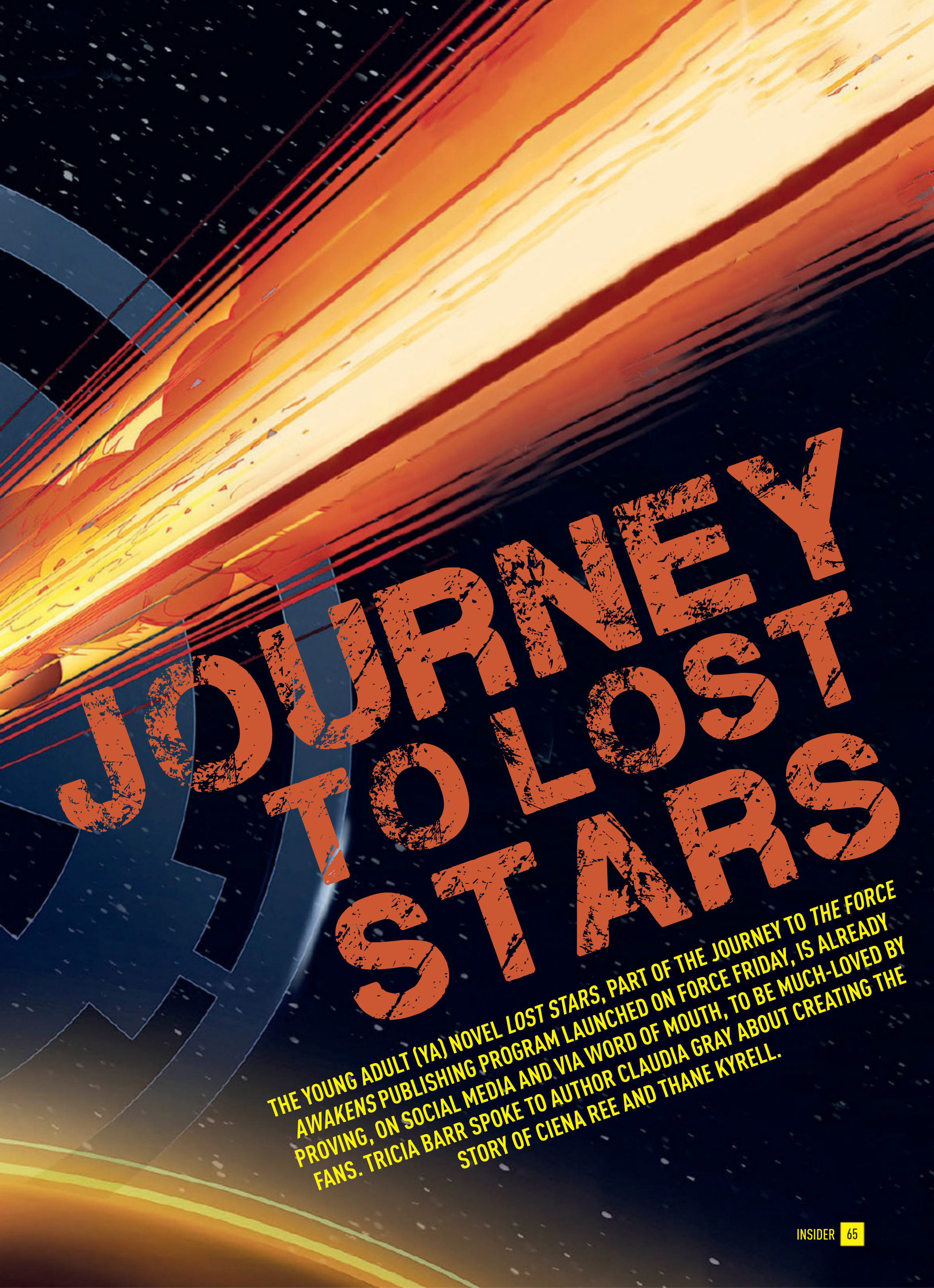
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JOURNEY TO LOST STARS

THE YOUNG ADULT (YA) NOVEL *LOST STARS*, PART OF THE JOURNEY TO *THE FORCE AWAKENS* PUBLISHING PROGRAM LAUNCHED ON FORCE FRIDAY, IS ALREADY PROVING, ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIA WORD OF MOUTH, TO BE MUCH-LOVED BY FANS. TRICIA BARR SPOKE TO AUTHOR CLAUDIA GRAY ABOUT CREATING THE STORY OF CIENA REE AND THANE KYRELL.

At Celebration III, my first *Star Wars* convention, all of the books panels were standing-room-only events. For example, one panel I attended featured Matthew Stover previewing his upcoming novelization of *Revenge of the Sith*. Fans of the Expanded Universe, now called Legends, were keen to see more from the author of *New Jedi Order: Traitor and Shatterpoint*. Many of the panel's attendees were regulars from message boards, with tags hung on our lanyards that identified our forum usernames. One by one, fans went to the microphone, and it became apparent from the parade of insightful questions how much about storytelling—point of view, characterization, dialogue—the audience had absorbed through interaction with the great storytellers writing *Star Wars* novels. This is as true of *Star Wars* authors and their wonderful stories now as it was then.

Today, the fandom discussion of *Star Wars* reading has moved into the realm of blogs and social media. Singing the praises for *Lost Stars* on Twitter at first was a lonely proposition, as most people had chosen other Journey to *The Force Awakens* books to tackle first. Dave Baril, for example, had started with Del Rey's *Aftermath* and DK Publishing's *Absolutely Everything You Need To Know*. Others' "purely glowing reviews" convinced Baril to give *Lost Stars* a try.

Unfortunately, some fans had initially bypassed *Lost Stars* because it was labeled as Young Adult. Too often the "YA" designation means books are immediately —and wrongly—dismissed as lesser quality or unworthy of grown-up consumption. Refinery 29's article on "30 Young Adult Books Every Actual Adult Should Read" includes "a list of well-written, engaging, thematically complex books that are likely to appeal to readers of any age," including classics such as *The Book Thief* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, and avoid some of the more obvious choices like *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter*, or *Catcher in the Rye*. The common thread across all of these novels is morally complex stories about finding ones self through personal challenge within larger frameworks of social-political upheaval in the storytelling setting. *A New Hope* and all the *Star Wars* movies that followed it work within similar conceits.

Outside of *Star Wars* fandom, YA novels have proven tremendously successful with readers of all generations. One of the interesting elements of modern popular YA, which straddles the teen-adult demographic quite successfully, is the avoidance of what many consider standard young audience endings. For example, *The Hunger Games* turns Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* on its head when the Gamesmakers refuse to give Katniss and Peeta a fatal star-crossed lovers' ending—that series also does not offer a fairy-tale conclusion, either. Again, *Return of the Jedi* has parallels to the conceits of YA storytelling by offering a tangible victory for the underdog rebellion that succeeds in blowing up the second Death Star, but only an abstract validation of Luke and Padmé's belief there was good in Darth Vader. It is not surprising to observe that a return to the YA spirit of the *Star Wars* movies is finding great payoff in the marketplace, whether with longtime books fans or first-time *Star Wars* readers.

Ultimately, word of mouth unites *Lost Stars* with more and more readers every day, with newly minted teenage and adult *Star Wars* fans discovering the book.



Left: Author Claudia Gray.

Opposite page, right: Leia faces Tarkin, just prior to the destruction of Alderaan.



At New York Comic Con, Claudia Gray announced her new adult *Star Wars* novel, *New Republic: Bloodline* set six years before *The Force Awakens*, which makes it a perfect time to get to know her and her approach to storytelling.

"I ASKED IF THE IDEALISTIC GIRL COULD JOIN THE EMPIRE WHILE THE CYNICAL GUY JOINS THE REBELS. THE BOOK BEGAN TO TAKE SHAPE FROM THERE."

***Star Wars Insider*: What are your earliest *Star Wars* memories?**
Claudia Gray: The movie came out when I was seven years old, so while I vividly remember loving it, going to see it repeatedly (four times, I think), and playing variations on *Star Wars* with all my friends, it's hard to pick out a specific memory or memories as being the very earliest. Surely the X-wing simulator I made in my closet has to be from the first year or two. One thing that still stands out in our family history was right after *The Empire Strikes Back*—my brother and I would get different action figures, to make sure we got the widest array of them. I allowed my brother to take Lando to school, where he shamefully *traded my Lando*—for a lowly Hoth ranger, no less! We continue to bicker about this. We are in our forties.



Were you given an objective for *Lost Stars*?
The basic concept was "*Romeo & Juliet* meets *Star Wars,*" with childhood friends falling in love; the idealistic girl would join the rebels, and the dark, cynical guy would join the Empire. I asked if the idealistic girl could join the Empire while the cynical guy joined the rebels. The editor loved that idea, and the book began to take shape from there. In the end, I hope it came out less *Romeo & Juliet*, more *Casablanca*. It felt important for the war to shape every stage of their romance.

Ciena Ree and Thane Kyrell grow up as citizens of the Empire. The worldbuilding around their home planet, Jelucan, shapes their reactions to the government they serve as Imperial officers. Did you create the valley kindred and second-wave cultures first, devise a backstory that built a foundation for the ending you wanted, or was the process more organic?
The fundamental question at the beginning was, "Why would a good person serve the Empire?" At the beginning, that loyalty can be a matter of believing in the government, hearing only propaganda about the other side, etc.—but at a certain point, that person's fundamental values have to come into play. So the culture of the valley kindred began to take shape from the question of what values would keep someone in Imperial service, namely a very strong belief in honor and duty. Then you ask what kind of culture wouldn't mix well with that, and you get the more materialistic, hedonistic second-wavers. Thane and Ciena very naturally took shape along with those societies.

Thane is an easily recognizable *Star Wars* archetype: a person who isn't inclined to trust authority in the vein of Han Solo or Anakin Skywalker. Likewise, Ciena has similarities with the prequel trilogy Jedi, both blinded by a sense of duty. How did you tackle the fine line of keeping her character sympathetic yet tragically flawed?
Ciena's honor matters to her so much; she swore an oath to the Empire, has managed to actually do some real good in itsservice, and cares deeply about her friends who serve alongside her. Also, the impact of the first Death Star's destruction had to be

From left to right: Darth Vader makes his presence felt on the Death Star; Mon Mothma leads the rebels on *Home One*.



huge for her. She lost one of the most important people in her life there, meaning that she was never going to think well of the Rebel Alliance. Giving her a strong, relatable reason for distrusting the rebels helps us understand why she'd stand with the Empire.

Fans have often wondered about the personal impact of Alderaan's destruction. *Lost Stars* reveals how the Death Star's first target affects individuals. Nash Windrider's reaction as an Alderaanian was a twist, but once it was revealed, it made sense. How did you decide to make an Alderaanian into an Imperial zealot?

On Netflix, there's a documentary called *Crazy Love*. It's about a man and woman who were dating in the 1960s or so. She began to drift away from him; he attacked her with acid, mutilating her face and nearly blinding her. He went to prison. When he was released, they got married —this man she never really loved before and hardly even seems to love now. Interpretations of the movie and the real-life relationship will differ, but what I took from it is that sometimes we will cling *so tightly* to the very thing that hurt us, because that's the only way we can make ourselves believe we didn't really get hurt that badly. Forgiving the wrongdoing can sometimes be the first step to minimizing it. You hide the scar, then you deny the scar. After Alderaan's destruction, Nash has nothing left but the Empire. So the Empire has to become everything to him, or else he's completely destroyed.

"WOULDN'T WE ALL BE FREAKED OUT BY VADER'S PRESENCE? HE'S A SEVEN-FOOT-TALL GUY WITH BLACK ARMOR, AND A TENDENCY TO STRANGLE PEOPLE WHO DISPLEASE HIM."



Mon Mothma's encounter with Thane brought a lovely touch of humanity to a larger-than-life character. Why did you want to use her in Thane's evolution as a rebel?
I always loved Mon Mothma. She is the only other woman we ever get to know in the Rebellion besides Princess Leia, so I always wanted to know what she was like and see more of her. So it was exciting to have a chance to write her! Also, at that point, I needed a mentor figure for Thane while he's struggling with fighting against Ciena, but I wanted the scene to have humor instead of being purely sad. Giving Thane a retroactively embarrassing moment with the head of the *entire Rebellion* seemed to fit the bill.

Darth Vader's ominous presence is something that Ciena feels physically whenever he is near. What inspired your portrayal of her interactions with Vader?
Wouldn't we all be freaked out in Darth Vader's presence? He's a seven-foot-tall guy with black armor, heavy breathing, and a tendency to strangle people who displease him. That's as ominous as it gets.

YA and romance have become synonymous, and for many it is one of the key ingredients of *Star Wars*. Why do you think romantic stories captivate audiences?
At its best, romance is fundamentally a story about synthesis. Two forces—even if they're opposites—combine and become stronger together. That's true from Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, who teach each other to be more cautious and more humble, respectively —all the way to Han and Leia, where he helps her down from her pedestal to have fun and she helps him discover the less cynical, more noble side to his character. (To some extent, Thane and Ciena's love story is star-crossed because they *can't* reach that point of synthesis, even though they have made each other better in so many ways.) In my opinion, human beings are almost hard-wired to respond to that kind of a story. We love fiction precisely because it can offer the kind of satisfying resolution reality is so stingy with.

What are your thoughts on the relationship between fandom and creators in this evolving age of social media?
I've been really lucky so far; my interactions with fans have been overwhelmingly positive. But I think you have to keep listening to your internal creative impulses, making stuff out of your own imagination, and have faith that somebody out there is going to get what you're going for. I'm also a huge fangirl, but I keep my fannish identity separate from my professional one. Sometimes I just want to play like any other kid in the sandbox. If I didn't have the joy of being a fan, it would take a lot of the fun out of being a creator.

MORE TO SAY HAVE YOU?

Connect with Claudia Gray and Tricia Barr on Twitter: @claudiagray and @fangirlcantina.

WHY THE *STAR WARS* SAGA'S NEWEST BAD GUY IS ALSO THE MOST DANGEROUS. WORDS: BRYAN YOUNG

THE POWER OF THE DARK SIDE: KYLO REN

"Villains have been so important in film history," Roger Ebert once said, "you could almost argue there wouldn't be movies without them. Film is the most dynamic storytelling known to man and it lends itself to melodrama and conflict: good guys versus bad guys." And of *Star Wars* specifically, he said that, "each film is only as good as its villain."

It's hard to argue with a man held as the gold standard of film criticism, and it's through this lens we'll be taking a look at Kylo Ren and what he adds to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens.*

Through the entire classic saga, the heroes of the Republic, then the Rebellion, are plagued by the phantom menace, Darth Sidious, and his grand plan for the Sith. Along the way he had some of the most fearsome right hands of doom, from Darth Maul and Count Dooku to General Grievous before finally settling on the worst of them all: Darth Vader. Each of these villains were some of the best



to grace the silver screen, but the shadow of Darth Vader looms large in the newest installment of the Skywalker saga of *Star Wars* films.

We talked to a number of *Star Wars* experts about what they think makes a great villain and how Kylo Ren stacks up to this standard.

Paul S. Kemp is the author of *Lords of the Sith*, which made him a logical first choice to turn to:

"A great villain is one whose villainy makes sense, whose drives are understandable, even if not sympathetic. We don't know all of Kylo's backstory, but he appears in some ways to have been a failure, as both an aspiring Jedi and perhaps also as a son. That sense of failure and the insecurity it creates festered, and to overcome both he turned to Vader, who—to Kylo—embodied strength, confidence, power, and maybe even served as a kind of proxy father figure since Han, obviously, did not. That's all relatable, right? We can understand that. Of course, emulating Vader doesn't actually fill his emotional holes, so he piles frustration and rage onto his insecurity and *boom*, we've got this emotionally rich character who vacillates between a rage-filled teenager and a frightening would-be Sith Lord. He's a character on the edge—or the bridge, if you prefer—and we're watching his formative years.

I found even the small glimpse of him we got in the film to be a fascinating one."

Holly Frey is the host of the top-rated podcast *Stuff You Missed in History Class*, but is also an intense *Star Wars* fan who writes for *StarWars.com:*

"To me, the ingredients for making a great villain are: intensity, style, charisma, unpredictability, and a steadfast belief that their cause is just.

In Kylo Ren, we're seeing the kernel of a true villain—almost like a villain embryo. He's got all the ingredients, and we're actually getting to see the evil soufflé bake. That makes for an interesting ride, because you don't actually know how it will turn out. Seeing a villain wobble in their development is really compelling.

On a scale of Ozzel to Greedo, both great villains that I love, I'd wager Kylo Ren is somewhere around Bossk, which is high praise indeed."

C. Robert Cargill is a long time film critic, the author of *Dreams and Shadows,* and is the screenwriter of upcoming *Dr. Strange* motion picture for Marvel Studios. Here's his take on Kylo Ren:

"A great villain has to be more than just an obstacle; they have to mean something to the audience, to the story. They have to represent some ideal or philosophy or concept that makes them more than just something we want to see stopped. They have to deepen the story every bit as much as the hero does. The most interesting thing about Kylo Ren is the meta nature of him. Here we have a movie that wants to live up to the legend of a nearly 40 year-old franchise, and in it



"A GREAT VILLAIN HAS TO BE MORE THAN JUST AN OBSTACLE; THEY HAVE TO MEAN SOMETHING TO THE AUDIENCE, TO THE STORY."
—C. ROBERT CARGILL



we have a villain that wants to live up to the legend of the villain in that franchise. Ren is always grasping for that legend, trying to live up to it, worried at every moment that he might not be able to be the man his grandfather was—that he might fail himself, his grandfather, and in a very meta way, us, the audience. It's a bold thematic statement worn on its sleeve and I admire it for that."

Michael A. Stackpole is a legendary name amongst *Star Wars* fans, as he wrote *I, Jedi,* and the first five books of the X-Wing series, among others.

"A good villain is driven, internally consistent, ruthless and remorseless and, for me, elegant. Kylo Ren hits most of those attributes pretty well. I the presentation and I am looking forward to seeing what happens next."

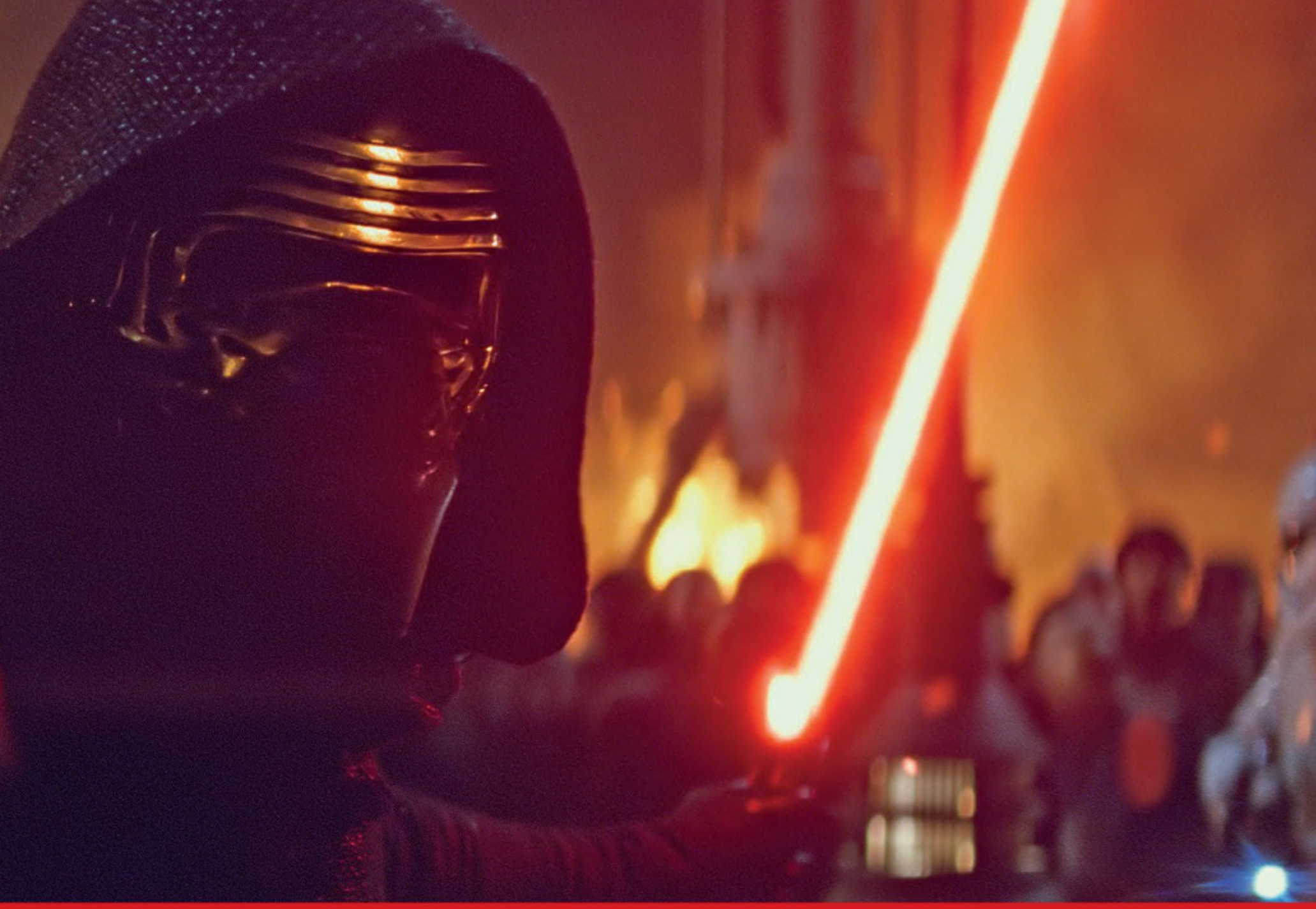
Amy Ratcliffe is a world-renowned expert on *Star Wars,* a fellow contributor to *Star Wars Insider,* and co-host of the *Full of Sith* podcast:

"The most interesting villains are conflicted ones. I want someone who is unsure and pulled between good and bad, light and dark. I'm also fascinated by villains who act based on righteous intentions. That's incredibly dangerous. And Kylo Ren—he is unquestionably torn. He wants to be as cold and ruthless as Darth Vader, but he feels a pull to the light. His emotions, rash behavior, and uncertainty make him fascinating.

Kylo Ren is the villain *Star Wars* needed. In some ways, he's a parallel of Luke. When Luke underwent his training, he was focused on pursuing the light side but he was tempted, albeit briefly, by the dark side. Kylo's dealing







"KYLO REN IS THE VILLAIN *STAR WARS* NEEDED. IN SOME WAYS, HE'S A PARALLEL OF LUKE." —AMY RATCLIFFE

with the opposite, and it makes him a formidable threat, and more nuanced than the villains who have come before him. In the scene when Kylo kills his father, I tear up first when Kylo says, 'I'm being torn apart.' His emotion is so raw. I've never felt that from another villain in *Star Wars*."

As the author of *Aftermath*, the first book bridging the divide between *Return of the Jedi* and *The Force Awakens*, **Chuck Wendig** wouldn't let us *not* take his opinion on Kylo Ren's villainy:

"For me, a villain at the surface has to be cool and has to be scary, right? Like, you need someone who is a real bad news kind of character, someone who enters the scene and, with presence, lets you feel awe in the truest sense of the word. But that's not really enough, to me. You have to go deeper, you have to have a villain who has more going on—remember, villains don't know they're the villains. They think they're the heroes! They are the protagonists of their own story. Vader is great when he first steps onto the *Tantive IV*, but he gets

"A GREAT VILLAIN IS THE SORT THAT CAN HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH THE HERO, BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE A FASCINATING CONVERSATION."
—CHUCK WENDIG

really interesting with *The Empire Strikes Back* when you learn that he's—uh, spoiler—Luke's father. That utterly complicates both his and Luke's mission and lends an emotional challenge that wasn't there before. Kylo Ren gets that complication earlier, right out of the gate with *The Force Awakens*—he's far more human than Vader is, and far earlier in his journey of transformation to the dark side, too. He's scary because he's familiar to us. He's scary because he's human—not some killing machine, but a person who believes—or who is gaslighting himself into believing—in the crusade he's undertaking. For me, a great villain is the sort that can have a conversation with the hero, because you know it's going to be a *fascinating* conversation. When I look for examples of great villains, one that I always come to is René Belloq from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, every conversation he has with Indiana Jones reminds the audience that he's merely a shadowy reflection of our hero.

Kylo Ren does the same for Han Solo, not only in their one scene together, but through every other interaction he has as well. We see that all of the elements that made Han Solo and Anakin Skywalker great characters separately combine to make a monster.

Kylo Ren is every bit the shadow of Luke as he is his own father and grandfather. Where Luke would rather kill himself than kill or join his father in the dark side, Kylo Ren would rather kill his father than embrace the light.

It's a stunning parallel that allows us to add Kylo Ren to the pantheon of *Star Wars* villains and we know that he will hold his own amongst that number."

MORE TO SAY HAVE YOU?

You can follow Bryan Young on twitter @swankmotron.



USE THE FARCE



HOOHAH! *STAR WARS INSIDER* TAKES A LOOK AT THE LIGHTER SIDE OF *STAR WARS*, AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF *MAD* MAGAZINE.

WORDS: ARIE KAPLAN

MAD magazine might not be the first thing that springs to mind when it comes to *Star Wars*, but whenever a new *Star Wars* movie or TV show has debuted, *MAD* has always been there to parody it. That's been the case ever since the beloved humor publication spoofed *A New Hope* in *MAD* #196 (January 1978). In fact, by 2007 there were enough MAD *Star Wars* spoofs to fill a book—namely the Del Rey collection *MAD About Star Wars*, authored by former Lucasfilm employee (and then-*MAD* editor) Jonathan Bresman.

During the past 40 years, *MAD* has skewered the saga so frequently that—as of this writing—the last four issues of the magazine (up to and including *MAD* #540, August 2016) have all included at least one article or comic strip lampooning *The Force Awakens*. And, in its ongoing quest to make fun of all things *Star Wars*, *MAD* has used the galaxy far, far away to satirize everything from politics to commercialism. Just as the Jedi are encouraged to use the Force, the writers, cartoonists, and editors at *MAD* have consistently used the Farce.

As George Lucas mentions in his foreword to *MAD About Star Wars*: "I grew up in an agricultural town in the 1950s and 1960s, which was not exactly the place for questioning authority. But then *MAD* magazine came along." He goes on to say that, by satirizing everything in the adult world, the irreverent humor publication showed him, "more often than not, the emperor, as it were, had no clothes."

This revelation—that the way things really are and the way they're presented to the public can be two separate things—had a profound effect on Lucas. It made him realize that if he wanted to see the status quo change, he had to make that change himself. Indeed, he's spent the bulk of his filmmaking career making movies about characters who fight to change the status quo, such as Luke Skywalker and Indiana Jones. As a way of paying homage to his childhood influence, Lucas hired legendary *MAD* cartoonist Mort Drucker to draw the poster art for his 1973 film *American Graffiti*.


RICHARD
WILLIAMS



Over the years, Lucas has enjoyed *MAD*'s constant skewering of the *Star Wars* universe. To Jonathan Bresman, this makes perfect sense. After all, the first issue of *MAD* was published in 1952, when Lucas was in elementary school. "George is of the *MAD* generation," Bresman explains. "*MAD* was on the same wavelength as ILM and George were."

Bresman points out the article "The *Star Wars* Log" (MAD #230, April 1982) as evidence of this harmony. Written by longtime *MAD* scribe Frank Jacobs and illustrated by Harry North, the feature is a fictional "top secret" file, ostensibly from the desk of George Lucas himself, detailing what the remaining films in the *Star Wars* saga are going to be about (it was published after *Empire*, but before *Return of the Jedi*). It includes the following passage: "Both Boba Fett and Jabba the Hut [sic] were once comrades of Darth Vader, and this is brought out in our ninth film, "Yessir, That's My Boba" (No. 4 in the series). We find out that Luke Skywalker's lightsaber was once recharged by Boba Fett's father, who we suspect might be Chewbacca." As you can see, Jacobs accidentally predicted the eventual appearance of Boba Fett's father!

Jacobs' unintentional prescience isn't lost on Bresman. "Even though Jacobs is joking, he anticipated a lot of the prequels. He has stuff in the article about the Force being Luke's father, which kind of pre-dates the virgin birth of Anakin. And Jacobs has all this stuff about clones." Oddly enough, when "The *Star Wars* Log" brings up the subject of clones, Jacobs even writes that they will appear in "No. 2 in the series," which will be titled "Send in the Clones!"

In retrospect, it's amazing how much research Frank Jacobs did while writing "The *Star Wars* Log." He took the time to correctly name-check planets such as Alderaan, and though he misspells Chewbacca's homeworld as "Kazhyyyk," he must be given credit for even including a reference to Kashyyyk in the first place. Most comedy writers in the 1980s would not have attempted that level of accuracy when writing a "mere spoof," especially since—in that pre-internet era—they didn't know that there was an audience for such knowing references. But *MAD* writers were (and still are) different. They, alongside *MAD*'s illustrators and editors, have always added extra layers and details that a reader might only catch after reading a particular piece for the third or fourth time. For *MAD*, it is all about the details.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BLECCH

According to Bresman, this attention to detail is a key reason why *MAD*'s *Star Wars* parodies have always worked so well as both parody and satire. They were written and illustrated by people who understood and admired the *Star Wars* saga. "There was kind of an interesting dynamic going on," Bresman reveals. "Because George

COVER STARS

MAD MAGAZINE HAS LAMPOONED *STAR WARS* ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS OVER THE YEARS. HERE ARE SOME OF THE FUNNIEST EDITIONS!

Alfred as Darth Vader, *MAD* #196, January 1978

The *MAD Star Wars* Musical, *MAD* #203, December 1978

Alfred as Yoda, *MAD* #220, January 1981

Mr. T as Darth Vader and Alfred as Wicket, *MAD* #242, October 1983

Alfred as Jabba the Hutt, *MAD* #354, February 1997

Star Wars Characters' Bodies Spelling Out "*Star Wars*" *MAD Star Wars* Spectacular, summer 1999

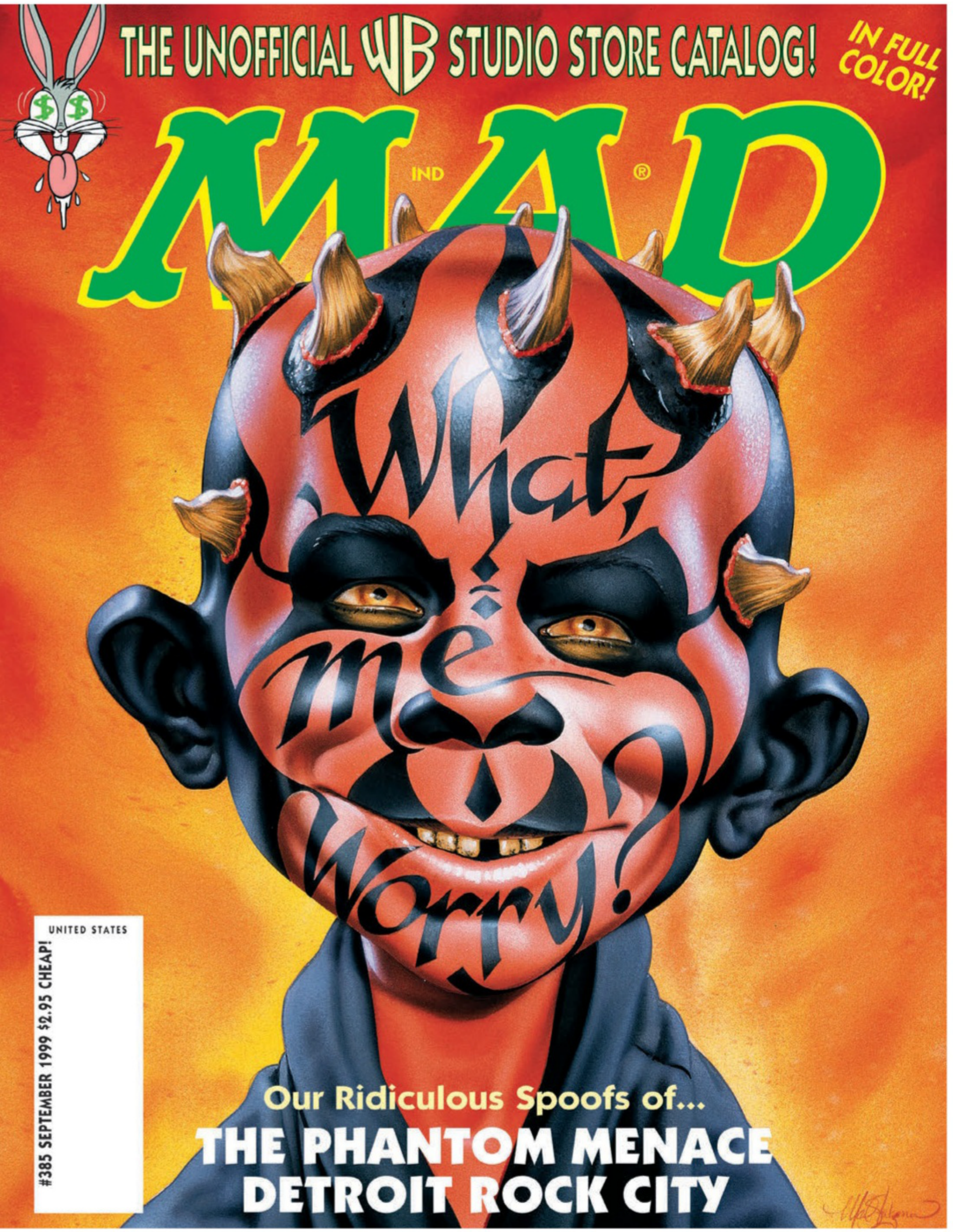
Collector's Covers Parodying the Episode I Poster, *MAD* #383, July 1999

Alfred as Darth Maul, *MAD* #368 September 1999

Collector's Covers Parodying *Attack of the Clones*, *MAD* #419, July 2002

Alfred as Emperor Palpatine, *MAD* #454, June 2005

Alfred as a First Order stormtrooper, MAD #532 April 2015


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and all his Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) colleagues sort of imbibed the *MAD* sensibility (while growing up); and MAD, in turn, is parodying something created by people who imbibed that sensibility. So they've got this great feedback loop going."

Bresman sees this "feedback loop" flowing through many of the *MAD Star Wars* parodies that have been published during the past four decades. The parody of *Return of the Jedi*, "Star Bores: Rehash of the Jeti," (*MAD* #242, October 1983), is a prime example. Written by Dick DeBartolo and illustrated by Mort Drucker, the piece opens with a group shot of the *Star Wars* cast of characters, in which Lando Calrissian is surrounded by Ewoks, as well as the dwarves from Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, and much-loved Muppets Kermit the Frog and Fozzie Bear.

The drawings of the Muppets in general, and Fozzie in particular, were a reference to Yoda being played by Frank Oz, who also played Fozzie Bear. "*MAD* draws in all the aspects of pop culture that are floating around out there when creating the parodies," Bresman explains, "which is kind of what George was doing when constructing the *Star Wars* movies. He was drawing on *Flash Gordon*, he was drawing on Frank Oz and the Muppets, and he was drawing on the fairytale tradition. So [*MAD* and George Lucas] were sort of eating the *Lady and the Tramp* spaghetti from opposite ends, and coming closer together in this great pop-cultural kiss."

Part of that "great pop-cultural kiss" is the fact that, beginning with that January 1978 parody of *A New Hope* ("Star Roars," written by Larry Siegel and Dick DeBartolo, and illustrated by Harry North), *MAD* artists started putting some very specific details into the asteroid fields they were depicting. They had no way of knowing it, but the ILM artists were putting similar details into the special effects sequences of the actual *Star Wars* films.

"If you look at Mort Drucker's asteroid fields [in his parodies of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*], you'll find shoes and belt-buckles and baseballs and stuff like that," says Bresman. "Drucker didn't realize it, but if you look at the DVD commentary on all those movies, ILM was doing the same stuff. They have potatoes and shoes and all kinds of random debris in there."

Bresman attributes this to *Star Wars* and *MAD* being similarly layered with details. *MAD*'s first editor, Harvey Kurtzman, was known for drawing detailed thumbnail sketches for all of the *MAD* stories he wrote or edited, often going so far as drawing tissue paper overlays for his artists to follow. The artists he worked with, such as Will Elder, sometimes compared Kurtzman to a film director in that he would fully pre-visualize and "direct" every panel and every scene of the stories he was writing and editing.

Kurtzman left *MAD* in 1955, when the magazine was three years old, and the acerbic humor publication has changed and evolved quite a bit since then. However, one thing that has remained constant is its use of tiny background details and its obsession with accuracy. A *MAD* parody must resemble the original work it is parodying in every possible way. So it is not surprising that Bresman sees parallels between George Lucas and Harvey Kurtzman. "Lucasfilm has this very hand-crafted ethic to it, in the same way that *MAD* does," Bresman states. "George would hire these world-class draftspeople and these world-class designers, and he'd pre-visualize every scene. It's kind of like the film version of the way Kurtzman worked with Elder and the others." It's fitting that one of Kurtzman's best-known *MAD* stories was a parody of the newspaper strip *Flash Gordon* ("Flesh Garden," written by Kurtzman and illustrated by Wally Wood, from *MAD* #11, May 1954). *Flash Gordon* was, of course, one of Lucas' biggest inspirations when creating *Star Wars*.



THE FURSHLUGINNER AWAKENS

But George Lucas isn't the only *Star Wars* filmmaker who's a *MAD* fan. J.J. Abrams is a devotee of the magazine as well. In fact, Abrams has visited the *MAD* offices in New York City, and he wrote the foreword to the 2007 book *Spy Vs. Spy 2: The Joke and Dagger Files*, by David Shayne (a collection of *MAD*'s "Spy Vs. Spy" comic strips, which chronicle the pantomimed, slapstick escapades of two secret agents). Since Abrams created the secret agent-themed television series *Alias*, he was a natural choice to pen the foreword to the book.

Speaking of Abrams, *MAD*'s parody of *The Force Awakens*, entitled "Star Bores: The Snores Awaken," appeared in *MAD* #539 (June 2016). Written by David Richards and illustrated by Tom Richmond, it begins with J.J. Abrams and frequent collaborator Greg Grunberg (Snap Wexley in *The Force Awakens*) discussing some critics' complaints about the film. After numerous well-placed satirical swipes, it ends with Rey encountering a mysterious, hooded man in Jedi robes, who removes his hood to reveal... George Lucas! It's a nice twist ending that comments on the *Star Wars* franchise itself, which was initially created by the "Jedi Master" Lucas, but which is now in the hands of a new generation of heroes.

"The Snores Awaken" certainly won't be the last of *MAD*'s *Star Wars* parodies (there's another one in the next issue), and *MAD* won't stop spoofing the saga any time soon. "It's a really rich universe," says Bresman. "So there's any number of angles you can mine it for. I think that's why *Star Wars* is unique, and why it feeds into *MAD* so well. Not just from a story perspective, but also visually. There's so much for *MAD* to work with!"

It's safe to say that the Farce will be with us, always...

Arie Kaplan is an author and comedy writer who has written more than two dozen articles for MAD *magazine (three of which were* Star Wars *parodies). He has written two LEGO* Star Wars *books for Scholastic:* Face Off *(published September 2016) and* The Official Stormtrooper Training Manual *(coming January 2017). Visit his website at ariekaplan.com and follow him on Twitter @ariekaplan.*

MORE TO SAY

MAD About Star Wars, edited by Jonathan Bresmen is available now.

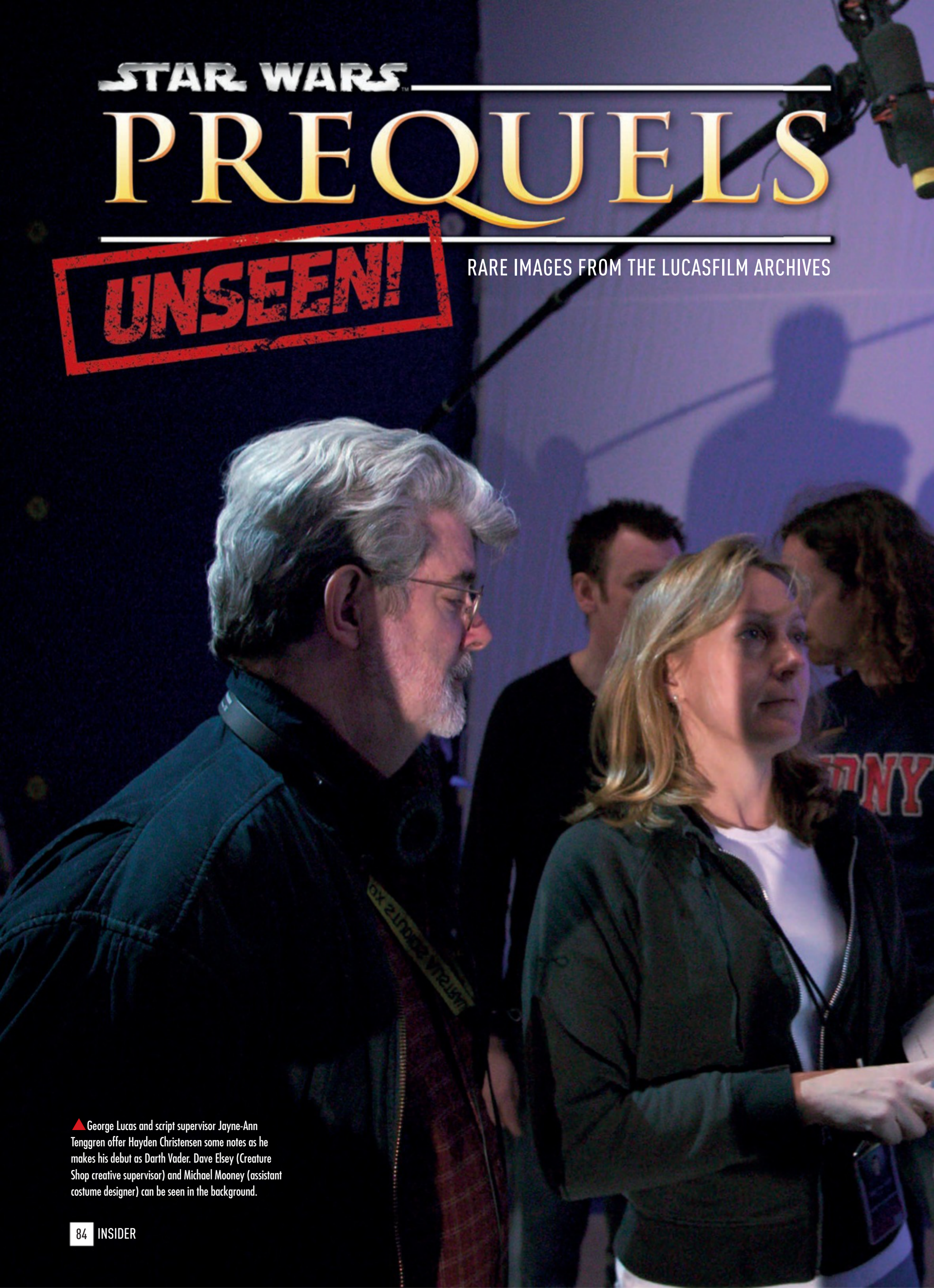
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RARE IMAGES FROM THE LUCASFILM ARCHIVES



▲George Lucas and script supervisor Jayne-Ann Tenggren offer Hayden Christensen some notes as he makes his debut as Darth Vader. Dave Elsey (Creature Shop creative supervisor) and Michael Mooney (assistant costume designer) can be seen in the background.





▲ Producer Rick McCallum shares a joke with Anthony Daniels on the *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* set.

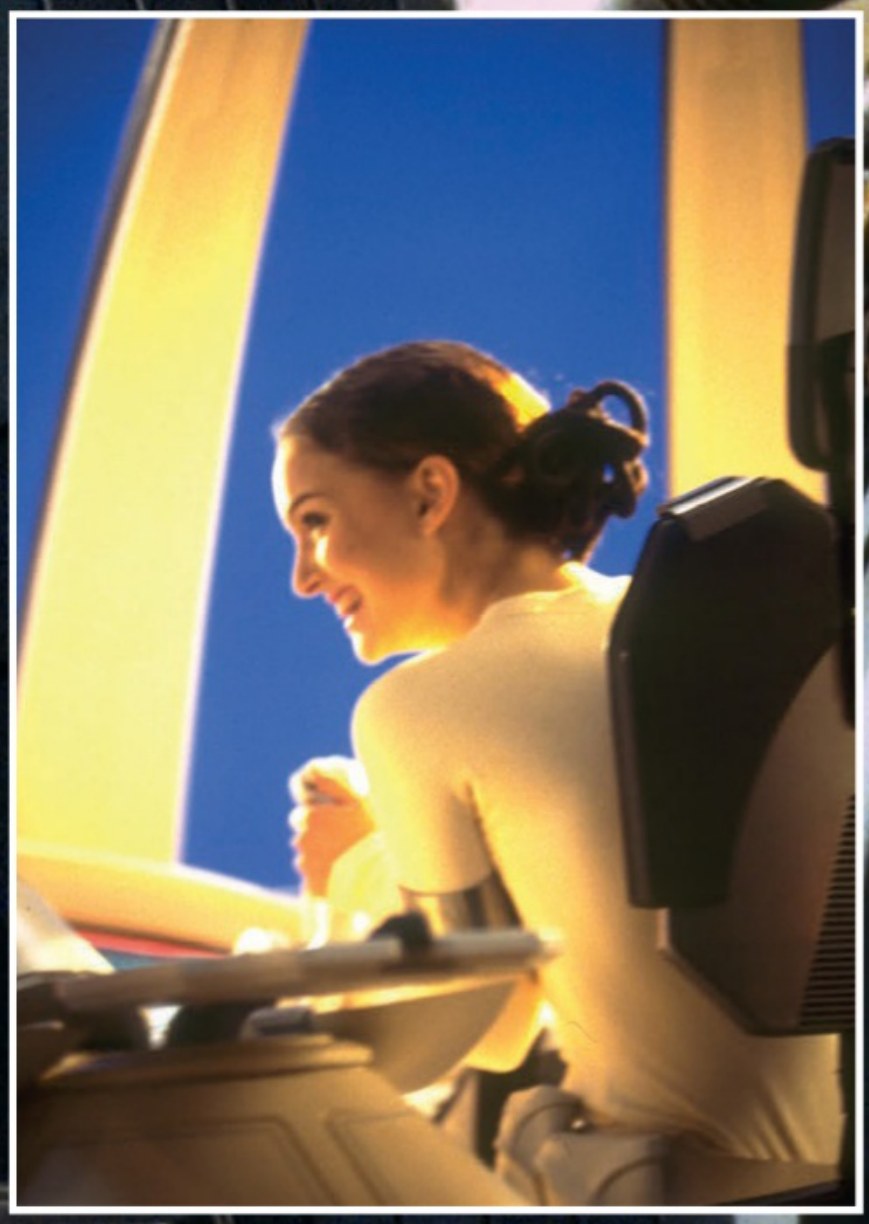
▼ Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor) hands over baby Luke Skywalker to Beru Lars (Bonnie Piesse) as her husband, Owen Lars (played here by stand-in Hamish Roxburgh) looks on. This closing scene from *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* was shot at Fox Studios, Australia.

▼ George Lucas talks through the battle in Palpatine's office with Kenji Oates (Saesee Tiin) and Samuel L. Jackson (Mace Windu). Lucas holds a model of the office that was used to plan shots.





▼ Jay Laga'aia (Captain Typho), Natalie Portman (Padmé Amidala) and Veronica Segura (Cordé) play out a dramatic scene on the a bluescreen set at Fox Studios, Australia. (Photo by Sue Adler, Episode II, June 30, 2000)



▲ Natalie Portman (Padmé) on the Naboo yacht cockpit set. (Photo by Sue Adler, Episode II, June 28, 2000)

◀ Temuera Morrison and Daniel Logan (Jango and Boba Fett) aboard the *Slave I* set (Photo by Sue Adler, Episode II, July 31, 2000)

▲ Hayden Christensen (Anakin Skywalker) in action during the shooting of the Geonosis arena battle. (Photo by Keith Hamshere, Episode II, May 4, 2001)

▼ On location near Tozeur, Tunisia, a Rodian podrace crew member stands by the Ratts Tyerell racing pod cockpit. Clegg Holdfast's podracer engines appear in the background. (Photo by Gtles Keyte, Episode I, October 13, 1998)



An unnamed extra in a Rodian mask waits for his order on the Dexter's Diner set, Fox Studios, Australia (Photo by Lisa Tomasetti, Episode II, August 7, 2000)

Nash Egerton (Obi-Wan Kenobi stunt double, and brother of Owen Lars actor, Joel) leaps into action on the Fox Studios set. (Photo by Giles Westley, Episode II, August 22, 2000)

▲ A stolen moment between Padmé Amidala (Natalie Portman) and Anakin Skywalker (Hayden Christensen) in the lake retreat garden on Naboo. (Photo by Lisa Tomasetti, Episode II)



▲ Faye De Bremaeker (creatures trainee) and Mark Coulier (sculptor) look after a Rodian on the Watto's Box, Mos Espa Arena set at Leavesden Studios between takes. (Photo by Keith Hamshere, Episode I)



▲Anthony Daniels (C-3PO) makes his way down the Naboo Cruiser landing ramp on Stage 3 at Fox Studios, Australia (Photo by Ralph Nelson, Jr., Episode II)



▼ Ray Park (Darth Maul) and Liam Neeson (Qui-Gon Jinn) in action on the bluescreen set at Leavesden Studios. (Photo by Keith Hamshere, Episode I)

▼ Jobal Naberrie (Trish Noble) in a scene ultimately deleted from *Attack of the Clones*. (Photo by Paul Tiller, Episode II)

▼ Lily Nyamwasa (Stass Allie) and Orli Shoshan (Shaak Ti) take a break on the Geonosis set. (Photo by Lisa Tomasetti, Episode II)

▼ Extras populate the Dexter's Diner set. (Photo by Paul Tiller, Episode II)

▼ Jamella Hassan (costume standby) adjusts Scott McLean's (stunt double, Jango Fett) armor on the bluescreen Geonosian arena set. (Photo by Giles Westley, Episode II)



▲ Ewan McGregor flies into action filming the asteroid chase as Obi-Wan Kenobi. (Photo by Sue Adler, Episode II)





◀ Jedi Child May (Phoebe Yiamkiati) and Jedi Child Jack (Alex Knoll, son of visual effects supervisor John Knoll) practice their lightsaber skills. (Photo by Lisa Tomasetti, Episode II)



▲ Darth Maul (Ray Park) leaps over Qui-Gon Jinn (played here by Liam Neeson's stunt double, Andrew Lawden) as they fight it out in the Tatooine desert. (Photo by Giles Keyte, Episode I)

▲ Jake Lloyd (Anakin Skywalker) with a Tatooine droid (lawn mower) on the Mos Espa Main Street set with the Main Unit on location near Tozeur, Tunisia. (Photo by Giles Keyte, Episode I)

▼ R2-D2 and C-3PO (Anthony Daniels) renunited on the Tatooine location in Tunisia. (Photo by Paul Tiller, Episode II)

▼ Nute Gunray (Silas Carson) goes over his lines. The remote control device is used to operate his facial features. (Photo by Paul Tiller, Episode II)

▲ A Tatooine Nikto alien Podrace crew member leaning against one of Sebulba's podracer engines on the Mos Espa arena starting grid, Tatooine near Tozeur, Tunisia. (Photo by Giles Keyte, Episode I)



▼ Ahmed Best (Jar Jar) (addresses the not-yet-added Senate while Jay Laga'aia (Captain Typho) looks on. (Photo by Sue Adler, Episode II)

▼ Bruce Spence (Tion Medon) prepares to shoot a sequence on Utapau on Stage 1 at Fox Studios, Australia. (Photo by Ralph Nelson Jnr., Episode III)

May the force be with you

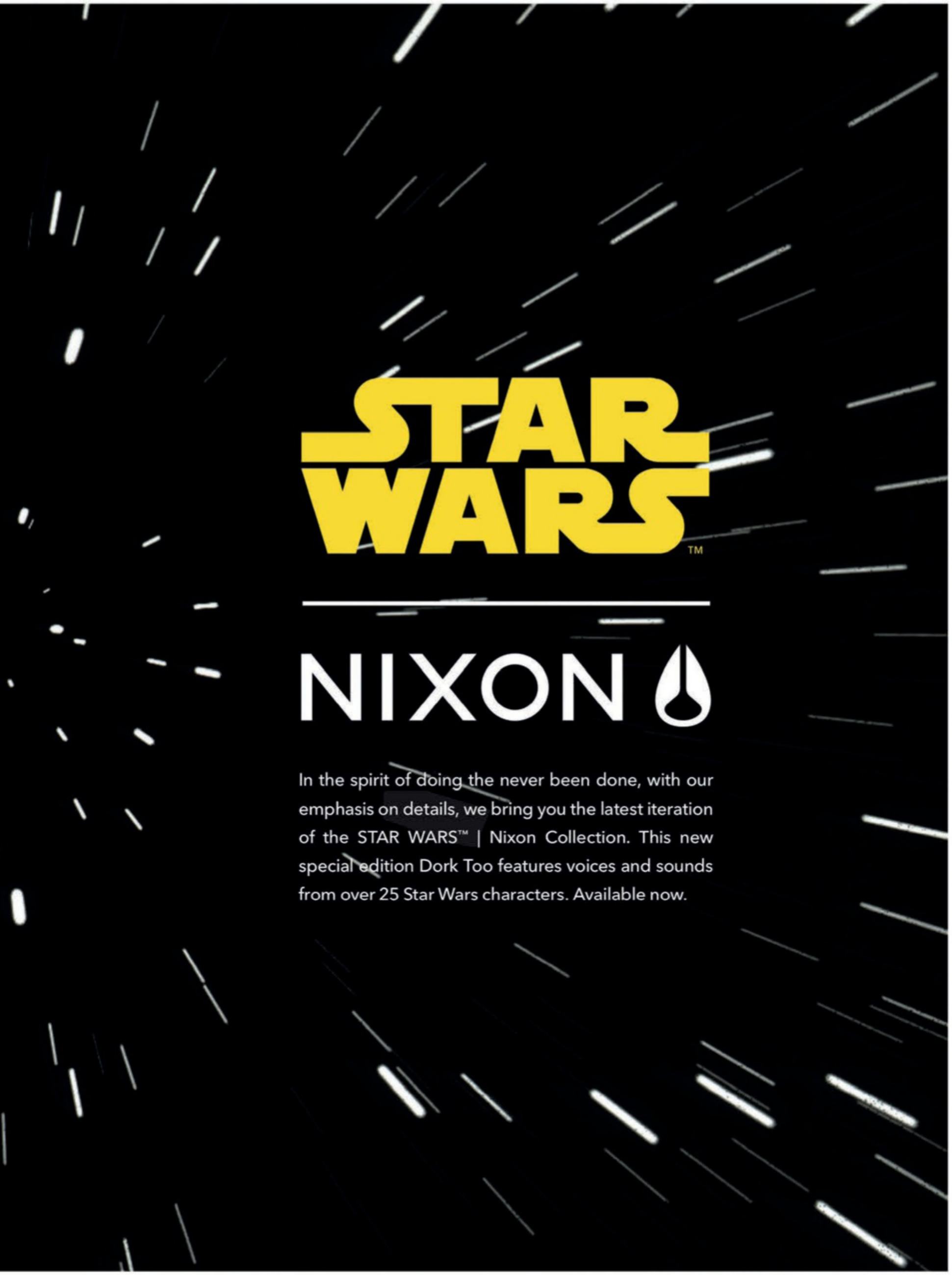
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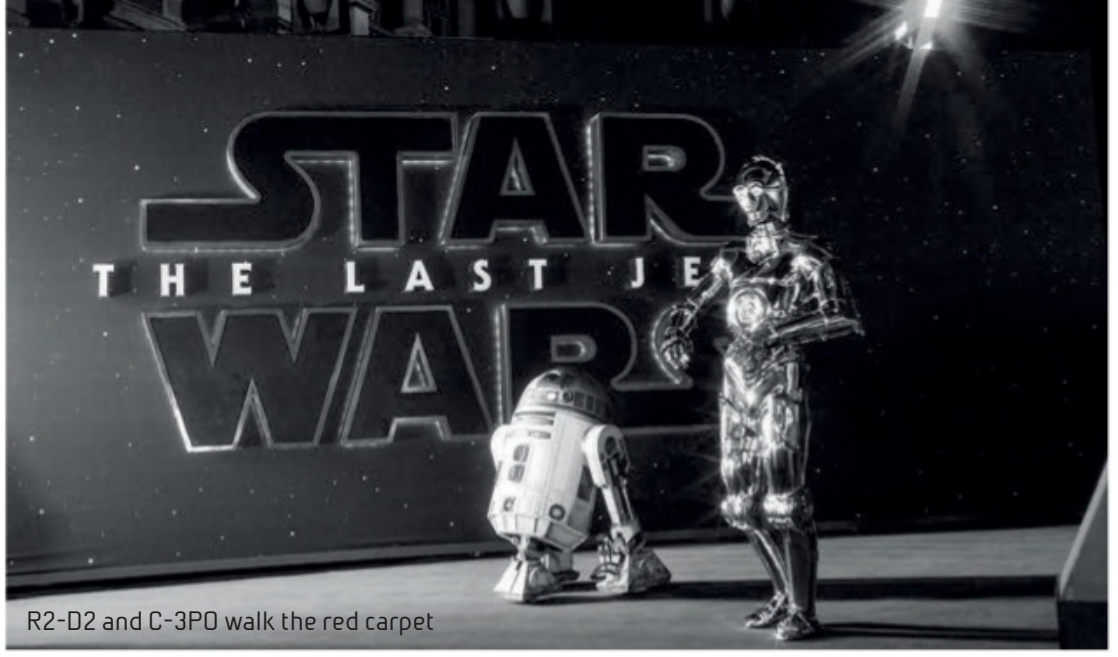
Tales From The Red Carpet

THE LAST WORD ON *THE LAST JEDI*

In December 2017, the cast and crew of *The Last Jedi* arrived in London, England, for a prestigious Royal premiere. *Star Wars Insider* braved the winter chill to speak with the big names…

INTERVIEWS: JONATHAN WILKINS





R2-D2 and C-3PO walk the red carpet


Daisy Ridley (Rey) arrives at the premiere.


Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) with wife Marilou.

Rian Johnson, the writer and director of *The Last Jedi* gave off an amazing aura of calm despite the excitement and frenzy of expectation that surrounded the film's London premiere. "It feels great that people have been enjoying the movie," he told *Star Wars Insider*. "I was just excited for fans and crowds to see it for the first time."

When asked about working with the late Carrie Fisher, Johnson was enthused yet thoughtful in his response. "First and foremost, she was a writer, and that's how we first really connected. We had a lot of really nice moments on set, but the times I remember her best were when we were hanging at her house before the shoot. She was digging out books for me that she wanted to talk about. She was writing *The Princess Diarist* [Fisher's personal recollections from the set of the first *Star Wars* movie] when we were filming, and she showed me all the diaries from 1976. I feel really lucky to have had a little bit of time to know her."

Fisher left an incredible legacy as an icon of empowerment, and the saga is reflecting the societal change that she championed, with *The Last Jedi* boasting the most diverse cast of all of the films to date. Was there a conscious decision to reflect the real world in the movie?

"It felt right, it felt good as I was writing it," Johnson explained. "*Star Wars* should reflect the world as it is today and the world as it actually looks around us. Movies are doing that more and more now. It's nothing but a good thing."

Still looming large for filmmakers playing in the *Star Wars* sandbox is its visionary creator, George Lucas. What did he make of Johnson's film?

"He was very gracious," Johnson revealed. "I grew up not just loving *Star Wars*; I attended the same film school that George Lucas had studied at because I'd read about it in a book and discovered that he went there. To be able to chat with him and hear his kind words about the movie we made was pretty good."

In sharp contrast to his 'blink and you'll miss it' appearance in *The Force Awakens*, Mark Hamill has lots to do in *The Last Jedi*. Were there any surprises for him? "We planned it all out pretty meticulously," he said. "What I didn't expect was, when we were shooting, I kept having ice-cold water dropped onto me. I was trying to work out how I was going to deliver the dialogue and then… *Brrr!* It was all I could do to not fall over!"

Given his status as a *Star Wars* veteran, Hamill was protective over the new cast, though he also admitted to feeling a tinge of jealousy at their adventures. "The cast is so spectacular, everyone is talented in their own way. I felt a strong sense of nostalgia! I used to be the orphan discovery with hidden powers, now we've got Rey. I used to be the hotshot, impulsive X-wing fighter pilot, and now we've got Poe Dameron. I used to be the one sneaking around ▸

enemy territory in disguise, now we've got Rose Tico and Finn. So I had to fight the irrational urge that it's a bunch of strangers rummaging through my old toy box playing with my old toys! But basically now at this age, I'm happy to let the kids do more heavy lifting."

Given that Luke Skywalker is now the elder statesman of *Star Wars*, would Hamill compare his role to that of Sir Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi?

"At first, when I read the script [for *The Last Jedi*], I thought, 'this is really taking me out of my comfort zone.' We've seen benign, wise Jedi before, and nobody can do it better than Alec. But I think being pushed in that way was a good thing.

"I was so lucky to work with someone I admired for so long," Hamill added. "He was so gracious with his time. He stayed in contact, writing to me with beautiful calligraphy in old-fashioned ink. I would see him in London, and we'd go out to dinner. He was one of the greatest actors ever."

In a much-documented visit, the British Royal Princes, William and Harry, toured the set during the shoot. Hamill seized the chance to solve a mystery that had given him sleepless nights since the making of *Return of the Jedi*. "I used the opportunity when the princes came for a tour to solve something that had been bothering me since 1982. When George told us that Carrie and I were brother and sister, I said, 'Wait a minute, if Luke's Princess Leia's brother, doesn't that make me royalty?' She said 'No!'

"When I met the princes, I said, 'My mother was Queen Amidala, my father was Lord Vader, my sister is Princess Leia. Doesn't that make me royalty?' Unfortunately, it was a split decision. William said yes, Harry said he needed more information!"

With Luke Skywalker being one of the characters most widely reproduced on material as diverse as cereal boxes, T-shirts, masks, and of course action figures Hamill is able to see the funny side of his fame, as well. "I just enjoy it for the pure joy of being a Pez dispenser," he joked. "I don't care about the money, I just love being on the underoos!"



Kelly Marie Tran (Rose Tico) enjoys the moment.



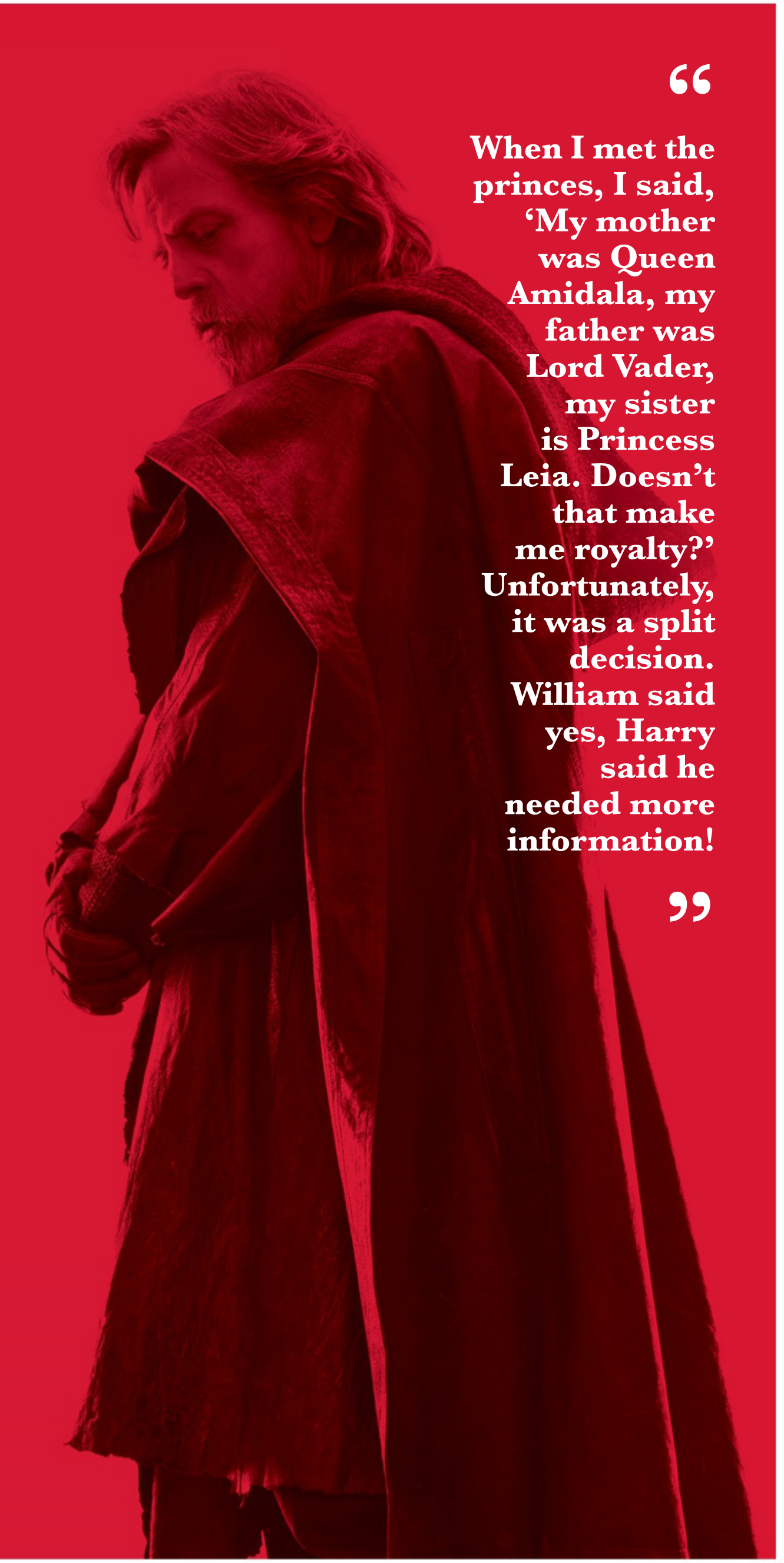
Stormtroopers escort John Boyega (Finn).

As a recent addition to *Star Wars* movies, Kelly Marie Tran freely admitted that, at times, she had been taken aback by her experience making *The Last Jedi*. "This was my first substantial role in a very large movie. I'll remember the moments we had on set for the rest of my life," she reckoned. "You know, I was this completely new person, and it says so much about my fellow cast and crewmembers that I felt at home on that set, because everyone was so welcoming and open. I really felt like part of the family.

"I just loved that Rian had this sort of child-like wonder about everything," she continued. "Everything felt fun, and then you'd be doing a scene and hear his little laugh, and I'd think, '*We're doing it, we're doing it!*' It just felt like we were hanging out in someone's backyard making a movie for ourselves. And I think that's really special."

Despite being badly injured during the climax of *The Force Awakens*, Finn has a lot of action in the new movie, and John Boyega was more than up for taking on Finn's nemesis, Captain Phasma.

"The fight with Phamsa was a challenge, because the weapon was different for me this time," he told *Insider*. "There was a lot of stunt training, mostly with Gwendoline [Christie], and she has a really long reach. I needed to dodge and pirouette around her at all times."



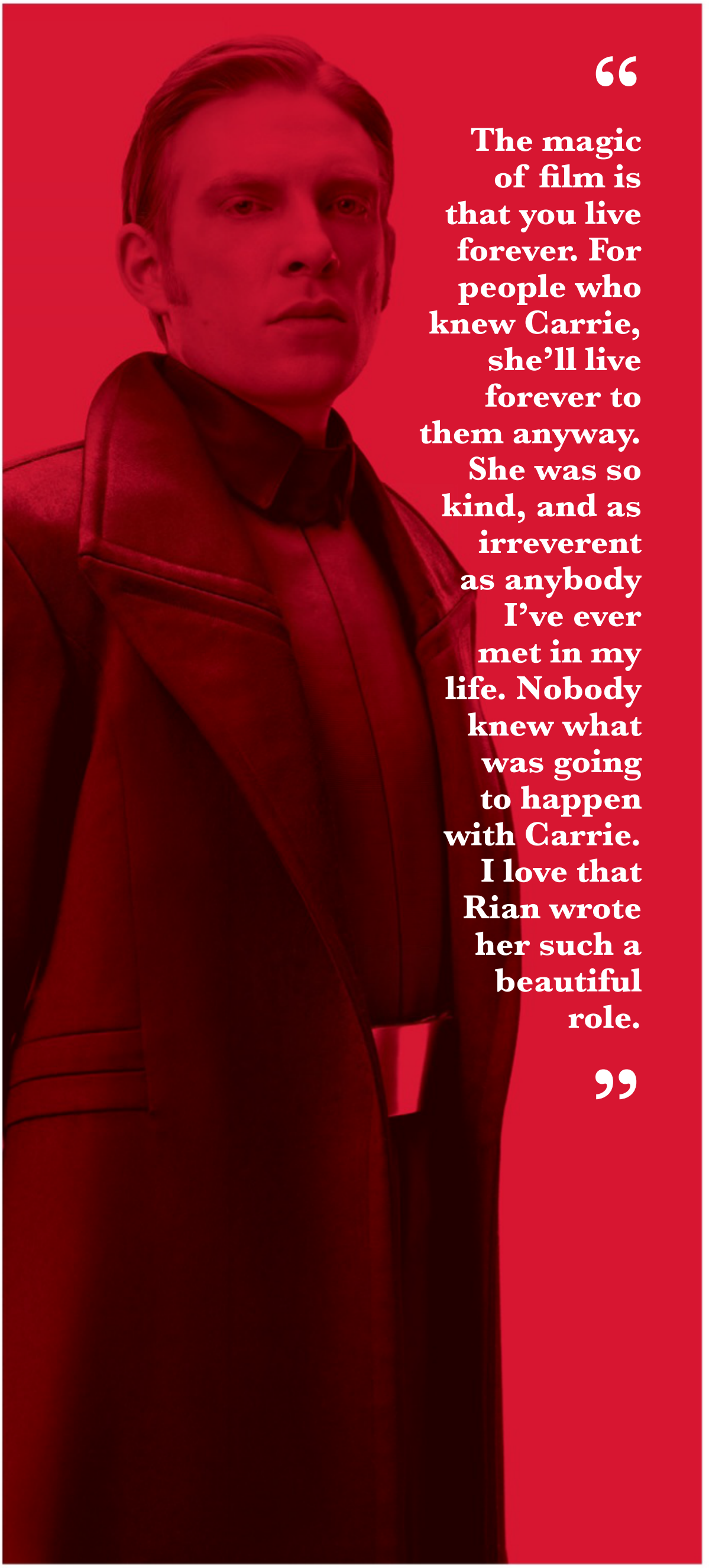
“When I met the princes, I said, ‘My mother was Queen Amidala, my father was Lord Vader, my sister is Princess Leia. Doesn’t that make me royalty?’ Unfortunately, it was a split decision. William said yes, Harry said he needed more information!”

Given the intense, non-stop nature of *The Last Jedi*, the script would surely give most producers’ nightmares, but Ram Bergman was laid back in the face of intense space battles, alien casinos, and islands of porgs. “It’s funny—when I read the script for the first time, all I cared about was the story and the characters. Rian and I had worked on a fair few drafts before we submitted a version we were happy with to Kathleen Kennedy. Rian thought it was a small movie, and I didn’t necessarily think it was that big a movie. Kathleen called me to say how much she loved the script and that this is a giant movie! She said, ‘How are you going to do this?’

“When we started diving into it, we realized the scope was really big. Fortunately, Rian was able to deliver the script a year in advance, so we had a lot of time to figure out what we needed to make the film. It wasn’t that hard. If you have someone like Rian who has a clear vision that he can articulate, it makes the process easier. When the project is driven by a person who can write, direct, and knows every element and aesthetic that he wants, with the best people in the world working for you, the rest falls into place.”

As the promotional tour for *The Last Jedi* drew to a close, Johnson and Bergman were already looking forward to an exciting future project—an all-new *Star Wars* saga that will hit theaters at some point after Episode IX releases. In London, Bergman was clearly thrilled to be staying in the galaxy far, far away. “First of all I’m excited to be making more movies with Rian Johnson,” he said, “and now on top of it we can make a new trilogy of *Star Wars* movies. Life is good! I’ll do it for the next 10 years. If you’re working with the nicest people and best people, on behalf of the fans, what’s not to love?”

Domhnall Gleeson’s performance as Hux in *The Last Jedi* sees the general as angry as he is desperate in his attempt to please Supreme Leader Snoke and destroy the Resistance. Given the characters evil actions, could Gleeson find a way to identify with him? “Playing something different is more fun than playing the same thing all the time,” he reasoned. ▸



“I’ve played a few good guys, and now it’s nice to play someone people would describe as being on the dark side. Of course, as an actor, I’m on his side when I’m playing him. He wants order in the galaxy, he thinks things are out of control, he’s scared of the Force—I think he probably has a point! There’s lot’s about him that I understand, but he also has a few character traits that are probably not the best!

“Rian and I talked about the idea of Hux being like a kicked dog, because he’s kind of undermined in the film, but we don’t lose the idea of him being able to cause some damage. We talked about how eventually he is going to bite back.”

Of his castmates, Gleeson was especially glad to share many scenes with veteran English comedy actor Adrian Edmondson.

“He’s amazing. I watched his shows all the time when I was a kid,” he said. “I’m a huge fan of his, and he’s also a really nice man. He’s very funny in the film, but in a very understated, classy way. He’s the real deal, so it was an honor to work with him.”

Gleeson also has fond memories of Carrie Fisher. While not sharing any scenes with her, he still recalled her generosity on set. “Carrie was really cool about coming up to people, and not making it a thing to have to approach her and say ‘Hi, I’m in the film, can I say hello?’

“The magic of film is that you live forever. For people who knew Carrie, she’ll live forever to them anyway. She was so kind, and as irreverent as anybody I’ve ever met in my life. Nobody knew what was going to happen with Carrie. I love that Rian wrote her such a beautiful role.”

After sharing the role with Peter Mayhew in *The Force Awakens*, Joonas Suotamo has now graduated to playing Chewbacca full-time. The affable Finnish actor was excited about returning to play the character in all his scenes, and enthused “It’s the best thing I could possibly hope to do for a living.”

But while Chewbacca is back in action, he is without his long-time best friend. “I do miss working with Harrison Ford,” said Suotamo. “He was so much fun on set, and he kept me in my place!

He was very serious about playing the role of Han Solo."

Paying tribute to Peter Mayhew, who is credited as a special advisor on the new film, Suotamo revealed that the retiring actor told him to bulk up a bit. "Peter and I had a long discussion before *The Last Jedi*. He told me how Chewbacca moves, and how he thinks. In the movies, you don't get subtitles of Chewbacca's thoughts, but now I know what he's thinking."


Laura Dern (Amilyn Holdo) speaks to the press.


Daisy Ridley (Rey).

With her cool demeanor and instantly iconic hair, Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo is one of the breakout characters in the new movie. Award-winning actress Laura Dern couldn't be more delighted with her character's image. "It's deeply important that she is so feminine and so in control," explained Dern. "We all felt that a leader should be able to be feminine and not have to be one of the boys to lead. I thought that was a great choice in terms of the design, the hair, and the costume."

Despite being a big movie in terms of scope, Dern was pleased to find that the day-to-day reality was actually much more akin to a small production. "It felt protective, safe, and collaborative," she revealed. "It was like an independent movie in way. Periodically I'd look up and see Chewbacca or R2-D2 walking past, which reminded me of what I was doing! It was the greatest party I've been invited to."

Capturing the imagination of audiences across the world, Rey is very much a hero for our times. Daisy Ridley is now firmly established as an acclaimed star, with a variety of diverse roles showcasing her singular talent. Yet few of her roles have required as much physical preparation as *The Last Jedi*. As befits a Force-user who veers to the light side, Ridley was very much up for the challenge. "It was so rigorous, but I enjoyed pushing myself," she said. "It's amazing what you can do.

"The big fight with Kylo Ren and Snoke's guards involved a lot of stamina. It took two weeks to shoot. It was hard work just to keep up with everything. I think that if I just learned the basic choreography, that wasn't really doing it justice. I had to fight and act. I hadn't been working out in the year between making *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*—I'd been strength training. When we got back into filming we didn't have the time to train that we had the first time around, but I felt stronger. I have to say, I felt pretty badass!"

With unexpected plot twists placing the characters and actors outside of their comfort zone, Ridley relied on her director and co-star to provide continuity. "Mark [Hamill] and I have both talked about our unexpected reactions to reading *The Last Jedi*. We were very lucky that we had a couple weeks rehearsal with Rian where we could just talk through everything. Working with a new director and a new co-star is pretty big stuff. I felt like we were working through an actual relationship. I seem to remember it working chronologically—or at least it seemed to in my mind. As our relationship was growing, I think the characters' relationship was growing, as you see it on-screen."

Rey is at the forefront of a shift in modern cinema that is increasingly presenting female characters as strong, positive role-models. However, despite playing the best-loved hero on the big-screen right now, Ridley admitted that films aren't always her thing.

"I was always a book person, rather than a film person," she shared. "All the heroes I knew were in books. Books have never discriminated quite in the way films did. I have two sisters and grew up in a very loving household, so for me I had everything I needed ▸

right there at home. If I had been more of a film person, it would've meant a great deal [to realize sooner how ground-breaking Rey is]. I really didn't see the disparity so much, because I haven't had access to so many *Star Wars* films. The way people have responded has been so wonderful, and I think it is only a good thing."

Ridley was also on hand when Princes William and Harry took their tour of the *Star Wars* set. "I'm not great at small talk, so I found it a bit awkward, really." Ridley laughed. "The wonderful thing is that there are so many people involved in the making of the film who have worked far longer and far harder than the actors. To be able to take the princes to the creature workshop, and the props and costumes departments—where people aren't always publicly recognized for the work they do—felt pretty cool."

Given that Poe Dameron was not initially scripted to make it into the second act of *Star Wars*: *The Force Awakens*—let alone the second movie of the new trilogy—the Resistance pilot has done pretty well for himself. "I just begged for my life until they agreed that I could make it off of Jakku!" laughed Oscar Isaac, who plays the swaggering fighter ace. "It's definitely a good feeling to be alive."

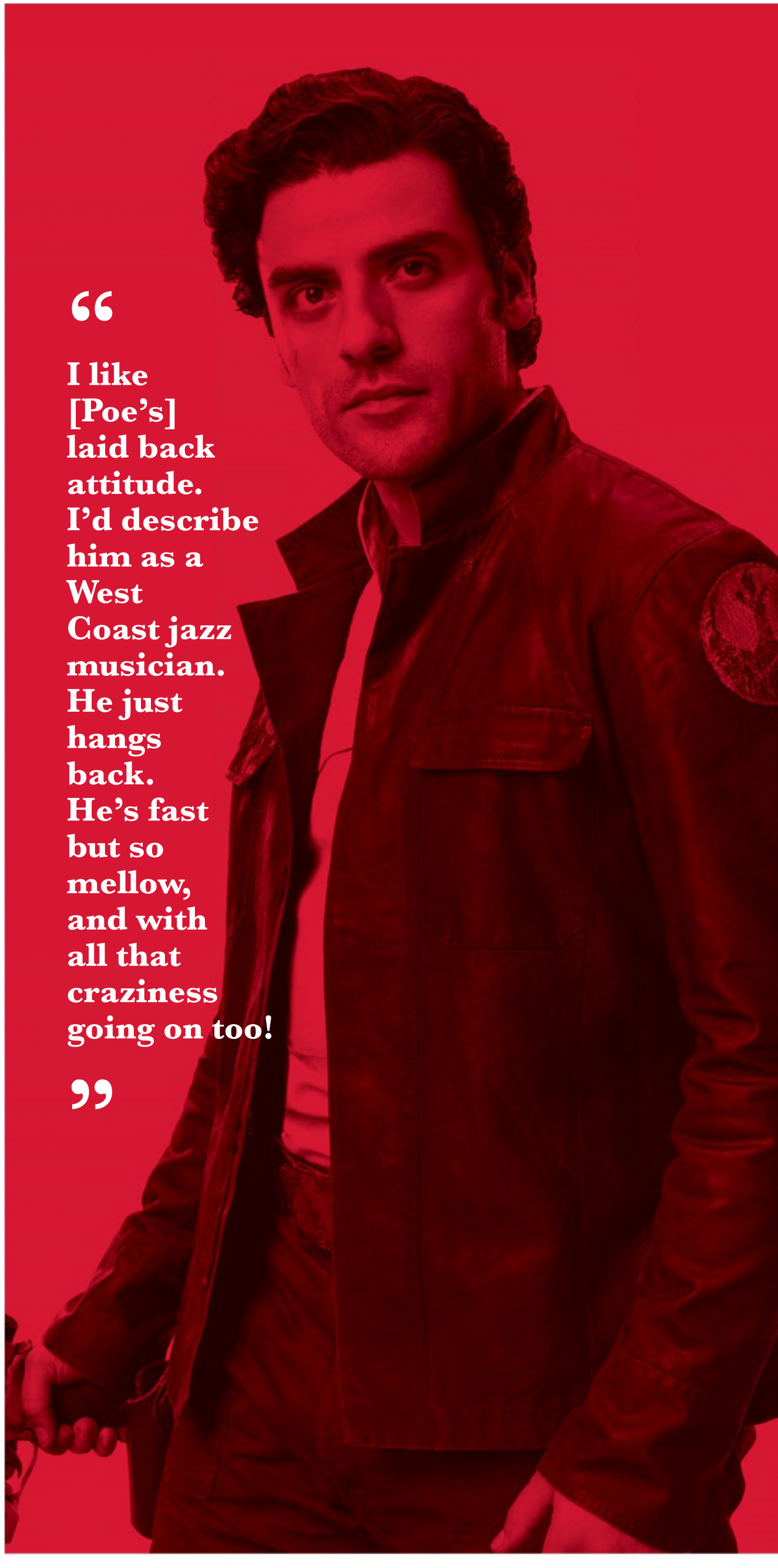
The actor was quick to define the appeal of his character, who has become a fan favorite. "I like his laid back attitude. I'd describe him as a West Coast jazz musician. He just hangs back. He's fast but so mellow, and with all that craziness going on too!" he said.

"I remember when we were reading the script in Rian's office with Carrie. We were just improvising and trying all sorts of crazy stuff to figure out how to play those scenes. There was a real looseness to it within all of the wildness."

Isaac relished that experience, and how Johnson developed his character.

"I was really excited to see what kind of role Rian created for Poe in the story. The conflict he has to deal with is brutal. He took away the one thing that Poe knows how to do so well—jumping into an X-wing and blowing things up—so Poe had to deal with being grounded."

Isaac echoed Laura Dern's feeling that the set felt a lot more intimate than



the average movie blockbuster. "I was fortunate to have so many scenes with Laura. We were on set in our jeans and T-shirts, rehearsing, and talking about our different motivations. Just to take that kind of time in such a huge movie is pretty special. I was really happy with that, and also, of course, very happy to be working with Carrie again."

One of the busiest actors in Hollywood today, Andy Serkis returns to the *Star Wars* saga in *The Last Jedi* as the mysterious, much theorized-about, Supreme Leader Snoke. Though the character is irredeemably malevolent, Serkis needed to find good in him to play the role. "You have to identity with him in some way," he set out. "I don't believe in the concept of pure evil, but I think that we're all very capable of incredible darkness, as well as incredible creativity and love. So you have to look honestly at yourself and think: *What part is there I can possibly connect to?* That's your job as an actor. You have to use your imagination to find that part of you. We all have to admit what we're capable of. It's very important to try and humanize 'evil characters' in some way. There's a vulnerability we tried to approach that is born out of fear—fear that the First Order is in a shoddy state, and not being handled terribly well by Hux and Kylo Ren. The thing about Snoke is that there's this public hologram appearance he uses to scare people, and then there's the wizard behind the curtain. He is so frail and fearful because he dreads this powerful feminine energy that he knows is coming to take him down."


Andy Serkis (Snoke) meets the fans.

Having worked with many acclaimed and award-winning directors, including Peter Jackson and Steven Spielberg, Serkis was clear about what makes Rian Johnson stand out as one of the greats. "The greatest directors are visionary," he said, "but at the same time, they are collaborative with actors. There are some who are great visionaries and world-builders, but when it comes to performance, they don't have a clue. There's no point in making something look spectacular if you don't care about the characters."


The Last Jedi alumni gather at the Royal Albert Hall.

The Chairman of Walt Disney Studios, Alan Horn, said he was all too aware of the seemingly impossible task of maintaining a high standard as the *Star Wars* saga continues. "There's an accumulated affection and expectation with the fans as we go forward," he said. "George Lucas started it, and J.J. Abrams did a wonderful job of carrying it on. I'm thrilled with the work of Rian Johnson. His vision will last forever."

What made Rian Johnson the perfect choice to create the new film? Horn was adamant in his response. "First of all, he is a cinephile. He really knows film and he has a great eye. He carries a camera with him everywhere, and takes pictures of everything. The film was mostly cast before he took the picture. But he's so relatable and comfortable that I think the cast really responded to him."

Such was Johnson's success on set, he was snapped up to create the recently announced all-new trilogy. Horn said he is excited about where the director will take the franchise in the future. "We haven't collectively decided what that new trilogy will be, but it's going to be very exciting. The *Star Wars* universe is broad and wide, and there's lots of opportunities to develop characters that haven't been seen before. The good thing about Rian is, not only did he direct the picture, he wrote it. He's a true auteur. Once his screenplay is ready, we know that he will run with the ball and score!"

LUKE SKYWALKER

THE WIZARD'S JOURNEY



In *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, Luke Skywalker goes beyond his Hero's Journey to embark on a different type of adventure...

WORDS: TRICIA BARR

In discussions of the Hero's Journey in contemporary storytelling, Luke Skywalker is one of the most frequently cited examples. Joseph Campbell—the academic whose work on the subject influenced George Lucas' writing—viewed Luke's path in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) as a modern execution of what he called the "monomyth:" the archetypal hero's story common to every culture and era. Likewise, Christopher Vogler—who reframed Campbell's ideas into a model specifically designed for cinematic storytelling—used *A New Hope* as one of his primary examples in his 1992 book *The Writer's Journey*.

Yet Luke's story did not, of course, end with *A New Hope*. What seemed like a complete Hero's Journey in that film was expanded and developed upon in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1981) and *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983), making the path from farmboy to Jedi far more involved than simply using the Force to destroy the Death Star. The prequel trilogy then expanded the story of Luke's father, and how the pieces came to be in place for Luke's own journey.

In the new trilogy, the Hero's Journey belongs to Rey, Finn, and Kylo Ren. Each has progressed along their own path as the story has unfolded. But Luke's journey is not over. In the events between trilogies, Luke has gone from Jedi Knight to Jedi Master, and then disappeared into exile. Having elevated him to mythic status within his own fictional universe in *The Force Awakens*, the latest trilogy has one more cycle for Luke to complete in *The Last Jedi*: that of the Wizard's Journey.

The Wizard Archetype

Wizards are a familiar and longstanding archetype in fiction—whether the magic-wielding sorcerers of high fantasy or the technological masterminds of science-fiction. The iconic examples are easy to name: Merlin, *The Lord of the Rings*' Gandalf, and Harry Potter's Dumbledore in the first category; and in the second, the Doctor (as in *Doctor Who*), the *Back to the Future* Trilogy's Doc Brown, and Plutarch Heavensbee (*The Hunger Games*). Frequently, though, these characters don't have a story arc of their own. They may be revered for the role they play as mentors to a younger hero undertaking the Hero's Journey, but they are not separately undergoing a metamorphosis to become a better version of themselves. That is the difference between a character who represents the wizard archetype and a character whose Wizard's Journey brings them through a final heroic cycle to reach self-mastery.

In *Star Wars*, a Jedi Knight may reach the rank of Jedi Master by training an apprentice, but few will attain the transcendent understanding of the Force that brings the spiritual wisdom to become more powerful than one can possibly imagine. Of all the masters seen in the prequels and *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* on TV, only three have become one with the Force after death: Qui-Gon Jinn, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Yoda. Each has completed a Wizard's Journey in order to do so (although Anakin seems to score a free pass in Return of the Jedi), but for the most part this has occurred beyond the view of the audience. *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999) establishes Qui-Gon's iconoclastic perspective on the Force—the source of his differences with the Jedi Council—but we do not see how he acquired the views that became vindicated later. ▸

- Obi-Wan learns much from his former master during his long exile on Tatooine, but we only saw the origin and end of that process in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) and *A New Hope*, not his progress in between. For Yoda, *The Clone Wars* offers a brief glimpse into his spiritual and philosophical transformation, when he visits the mysterious Force Priestesses and learns how to reconnect with Qui-Gon during the Season One episode, "Destiny."

In *The Last Jedi*, however, we see a Jedi Master take his Wizard's Journey onscreen. In his first interactions with Rey, Luke is very much the archetype of a wizard mentor—and an especially grumpy one at that. But then the story moves him forward, and he becomes not simply a Gandalf, or a Yoda in *Empire*, but something more: Rocky Balboa learning to become a teacher and mentor to Adonis in *Creed* (2015); Captain America redefining his nature and purpose as a hero in the face of fundamental conflicts over power and accountability in *Captain America: Civil War* (2016); and in *The Hunger Games* movies, Haymitch and Finnick evolving to become not merely former victors and allies to Katniss, but icons of the rebellion in their own right. Luke fulfills his Wizard's Journey before our very eyes.

01



Luke Skywalker's Heroic Cycles

The first iteration of a Hero's Journey, according to Campbell and Vogler, is what a modern audience would call the "origin story." The hero has some special gift—a connection to the Force, the ability to wield magic, an innate or artificially induced superpower—and must learn to use that gift in the course of succeeding on a quest. Luke blows up the Death Star, then later saves his father. Katniss wins the Hunger Games, then helps liberate Panem. Wonder Woman defeats Ares, and saves the World of Man.

Once the hero's origin story is completed, they can progress through further heroic cycles. Each new adventure brings a new metamorphosis. Each new transformation compels the hero to redefine their identity, reconciling who they have been with who they are now becoming. As one cycle builds upon another, the hero draws progressively closer to their true self.

"In the events between trilogies, Luke has gone from Jedi Knight to Jedi Master, and then disappeared into exile."

For comparison, this iteration of heroic cycles is quite distinct from more contemporary forms of storytelling in which the character becomes more powerful over time. With its origins in roleplaying games, and now common in videogames, the concept is a familiar one: ongoing adventures provide the character with experience which allows them to "level up" in power, unlocking increasingly stronger abilities and requiring opposition from increasingly dangerous adversaries. The best creative storytellers will ensure that the characters' aspirations and motivations evolve alongside their abilities, but often—especially in YA fiction—a gaming-style focus on "power creep" predominates over personal growth. Arguably the *Star Wars* Legends tales struggled over time with this dynamic, particularly in relation to Luke and other Jedi, by focusing on combat prowess or feats of the Force rather than exploring their emotional crises or spiritual development.

In the films, Luke's origin story establishes the basis for his subsequent heroic cycles. In *A New*



"Luke is not the first Jedi Master to face terrible tragedy at the hands of a fallen apprentice..."

02





03



04

01 Luke Skywalker's heroic journey begins in *Star Wars: A New Hope*.

02 Luke (Mark Hamill) hears Leia's plea for help from his mentor, Ben Kenobi (Sir Alec Guinness).

03 In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke finds a new mentor in Yoda (Frank Oz).

04 Luke's compassion takes him to Cloud City to rescue his friends.

Hope, he learns of his ability to use the Force, and successfully draws upon this gift to fire the torpedoes that destroy the Death Star. He also meets the mentor and friends who will shape his journey, along with the adversary who seeks to thwart his victory. In his first iteration of the Hero's Journey, he has only begun to discover the power of the Force, and the man he will become.

In *Empire* and *Jedi*, Luke's continuing Hero's Journey refines his self-awareness as he transforms from apprentice to Jedi Knight. He learns more about the Force, and the dangers of the dark side that come hand-in-hand with the light. The story also reveals the core nature of Luke's heroism: his compassion. He is less concerned with Jedi tutelage on Dagobah than with saving his friends on Cloud City. He steps away from the battle against the Empire to rescue Han Solo from Jabba the Hutt. He risks everything to confront Vader and the Emperor, his belief in success founded in his faith that he can reach the good that still remains within his father. On the second Death Star, Luke's moment of triumph comes when he tosses away his lightsaber and truly becomes a Jedi. It's a show of emotional fortitude in the face of extreme adversity that inspires Anakin to return from the dark side. Luke saves his father, not through combat or with the Force, but with compassion and unconditional love.

Luke completes at least one more heroic cycle prior to *The Last Jedi*, though its details remain hidden. Like the audiences of the 1980s, who wondered about offhand references to the Clone Wars or the Kessel Run, today's fans can only infer from brief bits of dialogue in the films and nuggets of backstory in novels and comics. Those hints indicate that after redeeming his father, saving his friends, and defeating the Empire, Luke's compassion becomes writ large. He endeavors to fulfill the task ▶

Yoda set for him: to pass on what he has learned, and rebuild the Jedi to once again serve the cause of peace and justice in the galaxy. He searches far and wide for information about the nature of the Force and the Jedi Order of old, seeking whatever knowledge the Empire has not erased or destroyed. Later, he establishes a training temple and takes on a dozen students as Jedi apprentices, including his nephew, Ben Solo. Over time, this heroic cycle takes Luke from being a Jedi Knight to a Jedi Master.

Luke continues to travel in search of knowledge, training Ben at his side. This means the young man is far away from his parents when the galaxy learns the truth that his mother, Leia, is the daughter of Darth Vader (as detailed in the novel *Bloodline*). Along with Supreme Leader Snoke's manipulation, this revelation plays a large part in Ben's turn to the dark side, which finds its full expression one fateful night at the training temple. When Luke senses the extent of the darkness already within Ben, his instincts urge him to prioritize his compassion for others over his compassion for one young man capable of inflicting so much suffering. In the instant it takes for Luke to pull back, recognizing his own mistake in thinking that carrying out one horrific deed would prevent many more, it is too late. Ben has already seen the ignited lightsaber in Luke's hand, and unleashes a heinous vengeance.

05 Luke risks everything to confront Darth Vader and the Emperor in *Return of the Jedi*.



05

Everything You Just Said is Wrong

Luke is not the first Jedi Master to face terrible tragedy at the hands of a fallen apprentice, of course. At the end of *Revenge of the Sith*, Obi-Wan and Yoda go into exile having seen their greatest protégé turn to evil. They hide the newborn Skywalker twins and commit to wait, biding their time on the fringes of the galaxy, until the moment is right to finally make a move against the Sith. After the destruction of his training temple, and the massacre of most of his students, Luke too goes into exile. Unlike his teachers, though, Luke is not hiding with a plan to re-emerge. Instead, Luke has chosen to live out his final years on Ahch-To alone, so that—when the time comes—the Jedi way will die with him.

While some fans struggle with where Luke starts his Wizard's Journey, his backstory suggests he was less prepared to face the emotional toll of being a Jedi Knight compared to Obi-Wan and Yoda, who received a sophisticated education in the Jedi Temple and were taught from their youngling days of their value in the galactic balance. Similarly, his sister, Leia—who throughout the novel *Leia: Princess of Alderaan* is shown failing but persisting—has learned from a young age to accept failures while continuing to fight on.

When Rey arrives to break Luke's seclusion, he explains his refusal to take up his old lightsaber in simple terms. The galaxy, he says, does not need Luke Skywalker. The idea that he could stand alone against the First Order armed only with a laser sword is a fantasy, he scoffs. There is no "One." It is time, he insists, for the Jedi to end.

"It is Yoda who guides Luke to see the one final lesson he must learn: that failure is not a reason to quit…"

06



07



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In his Wizard's Journey, Luke discovers the same lesson that he imparted to Rey and Kylo: that everything he said was wrong.

Luke holds himself to blame for creating Kylo Ren. In Rey's strength in the Force, he sees only danger, not potential. The guilt he carries for his error that night in the training temple drives his refusal to train anyone else in the ways of the Jedi. The Jedi Order of old failed due to its hubris, and so, Luke believes, did he.

It is Yoda who guides Luke to see the one final lesson he must learn: that failure is not a reason to quit, but a source of knowledge for the challenges ahead. Luke's failure came not in Ben Solo's fall to the dark side, but in Luke's own reaction to it, both in exiling himself from the galaxy and in rejecting Rey's plea for training and guidance. A Jedi does not fail when his objective is not achieved; a Jedi fails only when he no longer seeks any objective at all.

In that moment, Luke recognizes a fundamental truth: it may be too late to save Ben Solo's soul, but it is not too late for Luke Skywalker to make a difference once again.

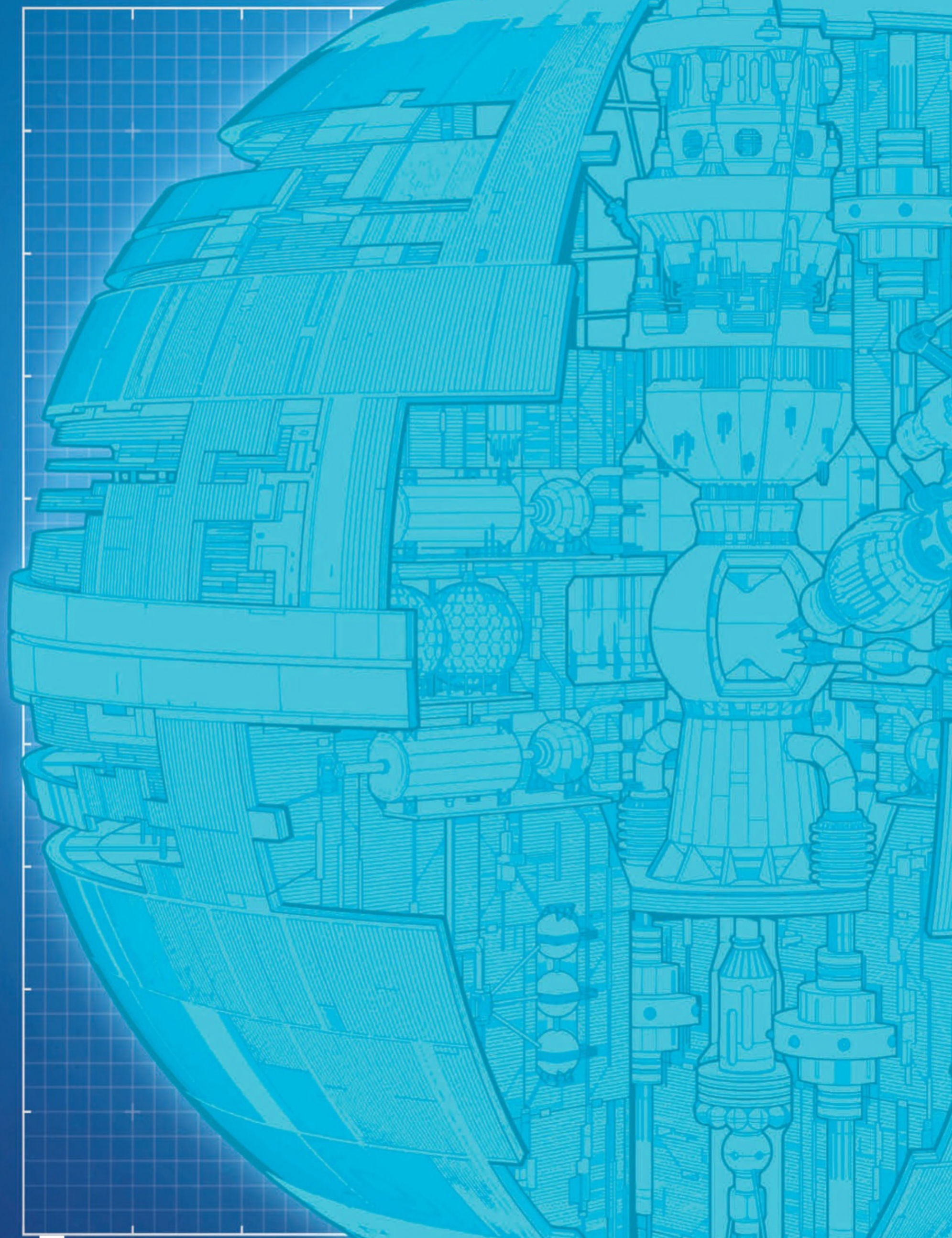
Luke completes his Wizard's Journey by accepting this truth about himself and his role as a Jedi Master. Leia is in danger; the Resistance is at the brink of annihilation. On the verge of military conquest by the First Order, the galaxy needs a spark of hope. Luke bids farewell to his sister, apologizing as much for his own choices as for the fates of Ben and Han. He releases his guilt and regret. And then he does what Rey had asked. He becomes a legend.

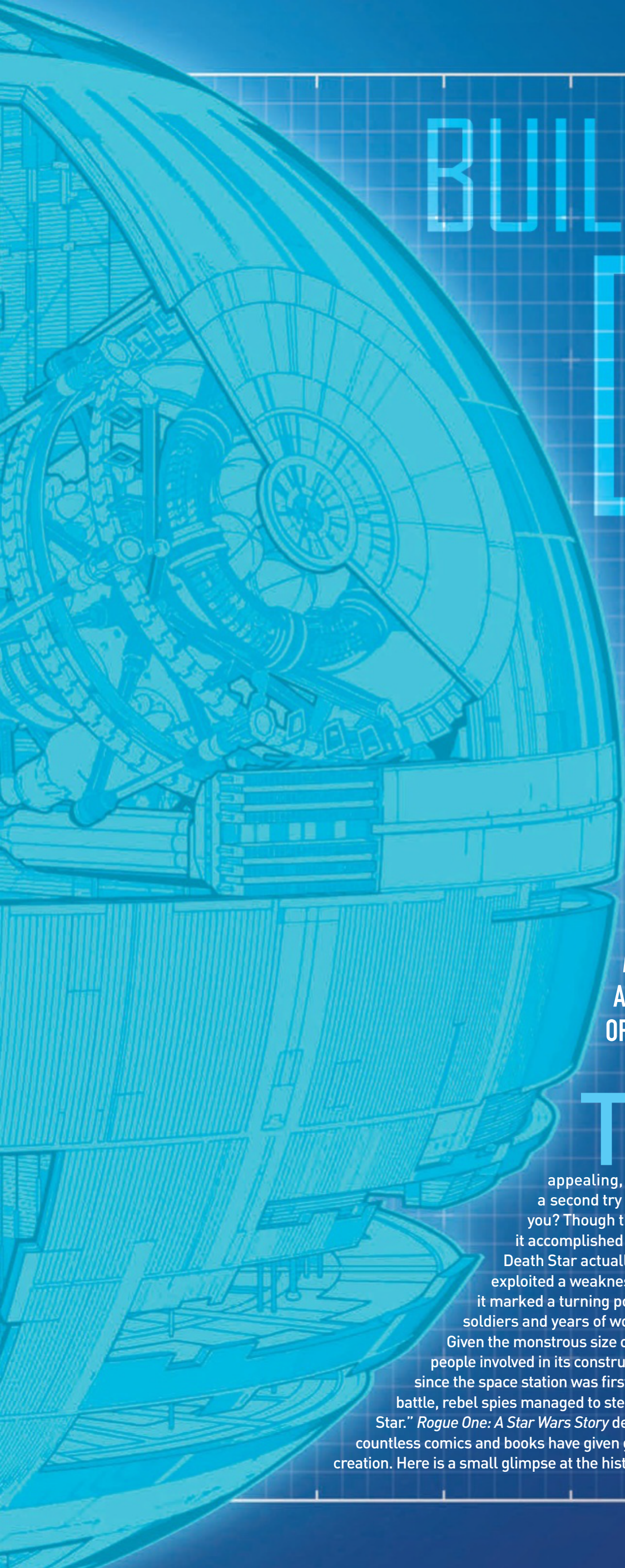
06 Luke refuses to take up his old lightsaber when Rey (Daisy Ridley) returns it to him.

07 Luke sees only danger in Rey's strength in the Force.

08 In *The Last Jedi*, Luke insists there is no "One."

09 Is it time for the Jedi to end?





BUILDING THE DEATH STAR

THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON*'S APPROACH TO THE DEATH STAR IS ONE OF THE *STAR WARS* SAGA'S MOST DISTINCTIVE SCENES. AMY RATCLIFFE LOOKS AT WHAT WE KNOW OF THE IMPERIAL BATTLE STATION, SO FAR...

The Death Star. The mighty battle station constructed by the Empire at Emperor Palpatine's behest was the ultimate weapon. The concept of a weapon the size of a moon capable of wiping out entire planets was so appealing, the Empire returned to the Death Star playbook for a second try after the first attempt met an explosive end. Hey, wouldn't you? Though the weapon was meant to instill fear across the galaxy—and it accomplished the objective by targeting and blowing up Alderaan—the Death Star actually brought destruction to the Empire. When the Rebel Alliance exploited a weakness and turned the weapon into an expensive fireworks show, it marked a turning point in the Galactic Civil War. The Empire lost millions of soldiers and years of work and resources in a single blow.

Given the monstrous size of the Death Star, you can imagine the number of materials and people involved in its construction. Stories published in recent years have filled in the gaps since the space station was first mentioned in the opening crawl of *A New Hope*: "During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the Death Star." *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* delves into how those spies get their hands on the plans, while countless comics and books have given glimpses of what went into building such a devastating creation. Here is a small glimpse at the history of the "ultimate power in the universe."

The Death Star in orbit over the moon of Jedha.

AN IDEA IS BORN

Palpatine was evil. His lust for ultimate power thrusts the galaxy into two different wars and had a disastrous effect. However, Palpatine was a skilled planner. He was patient beyond belief; he excelled at playing the long game. The first look at his plans for the Death Star came all the way back in *Attack of the Clones*, 22 years before the Battle of Yavin. See? Long game. In the film, Poggle the Lesser handed over the Death Star design to Count Dooku on Geonosis for him to deliver the plans to his master. The Geonosians were responsible for crafting the initial blueprint. Poggle told Dooku, "The Jedi must not find our designs for the ultimate weapon. If they find out what we are planning to build, we're doomed."

The top secret project began then, kept hidden from even the Jedi. The Clone Wars weren't even over, but Palpatine felt rather confident about the outcome.



Emperor Palpatine, the master planner.

WHO'S THE BOSS?

Not to keep referencing the immense size of the Death Star, but given its mass, the fact that the project was kept under wraps from all but the necessary parties is remarkable. The sheer amount of raw material that had to be brought to the table was one consideration. The Empire used their people where they could, but it wasn't always possible. They had a lot of mouths to keep quiet.

As the Emperor had a full docket leading a double life as Palpatine and Darth Sidious and also manipulating the rest of the known universe, he had to appoint a right hand man to oversee the project. As we learn in the novel *Tarkin*, by James Luceno the Emperor initially thought



The planet-shattering superlaser is fitted onto the Death Star.



The rebels plan their action.

Dodd Rancit was the right person for the job. He served under Republic Intelligence during the Clone Wars and worked with Captain Wilhuff Tarkin at the time. When the war ended, Rancit moved to the Galactic Empire and his first assignment was on Sentinel Base, an outpost supporting construction of the Death Star. He didn't last. He was removed from the project and appointed as the head of the freshly created Navel Intelligence Agency.

The responsibility for overseeing the Death Star shifted over to Moff Tarkin. Ever the overachiever, Tarkin had suggested the symbol of power to Palpatine during the Clone Wars. Tarkin faced challenges in his post at Sentinel Base—sabotage, shipment delays, and supply shortages all led to missed deadlines—but he proved his merit. He navigated the problems and kept creation of the battle station more or less on track for three years. Palpatine rewarded Tarkin, promoting him to Grand Moff.

Then there was Orson Krennic, the brutal and ambitious director of Advanced Weapons Research for the Empire. His obsession with the completion of the Death Star drove him to enlist his old friend, the scientist Galen Erso, whose brilliant mind was an important cog in the battle station's constuction.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Where do you stage the construction site of the most giantic weapon in the galaxy? Darth Sidious chose the space above Geonosis because access to the planet was restricted to all but a few. It ensured no passersby would wander in and discover the project.

The project unfolded in secrecy for years above the planet. The Empire used beings much like they used supplies. The novel *Star Wars: Aftermath*, by Chuck Wendig, revealed Wookiee slave laborers were among the aliens forced to operate equipment utilized in the enterprise. While the space station came together in Geonosis' orbit, the Empire had to staff off-world manufacturing facilities to create the multitude of parts and pieces needed to complete the weapon. They used a system of stations and depots to make the supply line difficult to trace.

To maintain secrecy from the prying eyes of the Senate and such tireless rebels as Saw Gerrera, the Death Star was moved from Geonosis to Scarif in the years before *A New Hope*. When the crew of the *Ghost* travels to Geonosis in the episode "the Honorable Ones" from *Star Wars Rebels* Season Two, they find remnants of construction modules. The Imperials and the Death Star were gone, and furthermore, no life remained on Geonosis. The *Darth*

Vader comic, issue #4 provided illumination on that front: the Empire sterilized the entire planet and killed the Geonosians except for a single queen. The move ensured the Geonosians wouldn't discuss the behemoth being built in their space.

MATERIAL NEEDS

Scrolling through a datapad to look at the supply list for the Death Star would probably take a while. The incredible volume of even basic materials such as metals required exploiting planets around the galaxy. The Empire swooped into places such as Lothal to ravage natural resources. The galaxy paid a heavy price for the Death Star.

As tricky as it might have been to gather everyday materials, it was even more difficult to find the key component for powering the Death Star's superlaser: kyber crystals. The Force-attuned crystals are best known for powering lightsabers, but they've played a role in making superweapons for time immemorial. Legends say ancient Sith used the large kyber crystals for that purpose. The unfinished *Clone Wars* arc "Crystal Crisis on Utapau" made mention of this, and one was shown in the *Star Wars Rebels* Season Two finale, "Twilight of the Apprentice." The Sith temple in the episode had an intact version of one of those superweapons.

Palpatine and the Empire scoured the galaxy for kyber crystals, tapping into every promising origin point. "Crystal Crisis" illustrated Palpatine's desperation to get the materials. They did find an easy to obtain store on Ilum. The Jedi Order traveled to the planet for a ritual wherein younglings searched for the crystals to make their lightsabers. But only a year after the Empire started, they'd drained the resources of Ilum. In the young adult novel *Ahsoka* by E.K. Johnston, it is revealed that the Empire's invasion was so complete the destruction was visible from space.

The rebels hampered the Empire's efforts to attain kyber crystals when they could. They didn't know precisely what the Empire intended for the crystals, but they suspected it involved weaponry. The *Ghost* team stopped an Imperial convoy moving crystals in the *Star Wars Rebels* Season One episode "Breaking Ranks."



Darth Vader, the Emperor's lethal enforcer.

A FAILED EXPERIMENT

All the hard work and careful engineering was successful; the weapon functioned as it was intended. Tarkin executed a successful test upon Alderaan. However, one small piece of the station was overlooked. With the technical readout of the battle station in their hands at the base on Yavin 4, the rebels examined the plans thoroughly and spotted a flaw in the Death Star's design: the thermal exhaust port.

What's surprising is that something this detrimental wasn't addressed. All we know is that the Emperor's disappointment in the error was palpable in the *Star Wars* and *Darth Vader* comics, which were set after the events of *A New Hope*—Palpatine all but took his wrath and laid it bare in Vader's direction.

The rebels' hard-won knowledge about the thermal exhaust port almost wasn't enough to win the day. The rebel attack on the Death Star over Yavin 4 saw many casualties, and the small target made the mission extremely difficult to complete. Thankfully Luke Skywalker, aided by the Force, was able to find his target as the Empire prepared the final coundown to obliterate the Rebel Alliance, once and for all.

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PRACTICAL MAGIC

THE SURPRISING EFFECTS OF THE PREQUELS



THERE'S A COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT THE VISUAL EFFECTS FOR THE PREQUEL TRILOGY WERE EXCLUSIVELY DIGITAL. WHILE IT'S TRUE THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY FRAME OF THOSE FILMS PASSED THROUGH A COMPUTER, THE MYTH PERSISTS AND ROBS THE BRILLIANT ARTISANS WHO WORKED ON THE PREQUELS OF THEIR DUE. BRYAN YOUNG TALKS TO THREE OF THE MODEL MAKERS AND ARTISTS BEHIND THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF THE PREQUEL TRILOGY TO DISCOVER JUST HOW OFTEN THEY BLEW OUR MINDS WITH THEIR STUNNING VISUALS.

Steve Gawley worked as a model builder on the original *Star Wars* trilogy, and his resumé beyond that reads as a who's who of all your favorite films: *Jurassic Park, Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit, Back to the Future,* and the *Indiana Jones* trilogy to name just some. When the prequels went into production Gawley was a supervisor in the Industrial Light & Magic model shop. Speaking about the difference in practical effects between the trilogies, he says, "*A New Hope* had 350 effect shots, *The Phantom Menace* has 2,000, so that's many times larger. On Episode I, we had five crews shooting miniatures at one time and we had 95 model makers."

Don Bies is a name you might recognize as one of those model makers. He worked in the model shop for the prequels, but he was also the man in charge of R2-D2 on those films and was tasked with handling the Lucasfilm archives from 1988 to 1996. The mockumentary *R2-D2: Beneath the Dome* was his brainchild. He was on set for most of the prequels, operating R2 and performing other tasks. "I was told that we made more models in the third film alone than the entire original trilogy combined. They were mainly building spaceships, and they could use the same spaceships over and over again. They only had to build four versions of the *Millennium Falcon*. The Death Star was a very simple model. For the prequels, we were building entire environments. We were building all of Theed City, the Mos Espa arena, Tipoca City, and a lot of the Geonosis landscape and environments there. The podrace alone had a number of models that were built; there was the



big podrace starting line, there was the announcer booth, and there was Jabba's viewing room. Because the scale of these things was so vast, the amount of people was more."

The digital effects team spent much more time marrying physical models and actors on physical sets together than creating environments out of the digital ether. Bies explains that, "the only set that was completely digital, with a model environment and actors shot against blue screen, was Tipoca City. And even some of that, such as Jango Fett's apartment, was a real set. We had other elements, such as the landing platform with Obi-Wan's ship—that was a full-sized practical set.

"When we were doing Episode III, we shot for days on the bridge of General Grievous's *Invisible Hand*," he says. "That was a great set to be on. There was bluescreen outside of it—but there was bluescreen on *The Empire Strikes Back* with a lot of those ship sets as well. For the prequels, there was a lot of practical stuff. There was a lot of creature stuff that they did, too. They had whole creature departments for all three of the films. We had practical on all the films."

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Over the course of their time building models, the team discovered that the best effects came about with collaboration between the model shop and their digital counterparts. "In the past we had to find ways to hide the rigging," Gawley says. "We had to be able to hold the model on all six axes: bottom, top, port side, starboard side, front, and rear, to hide those model mounts. But the digital department could just erase it so we could actually do more and more things. We used to spend a lot of time hiding things. Now they have just wonderful tools that they can use in computer graphics."

No matter how primitive or advanced effects were, Gawley insists there's nothing that beats the sun for lighting the models they built. "A lot of our models were environments, and sunlight on a miniature outside looks very real. For Episode I, we built a mini set, so to speak, on a backlot, and it was on wheels so we could shoot motion control outside any time of the day. The reason we could do that was we could rotate the set to the sun. So we could keep that similar—the same light setup for that particular shot."

That lighting technique is something that dates back to the dawn of cinema. Thomas Edison's movie studio, "Black Maria," operated on the exact same principle. It was a full-size set with glass ceilings built on a turntable to get the most out of the sun over the course of the day.

One model maker whose specialty was lighting is another name you might recognize: Grant Imahara. Imahara was seven years old when the first *Star Wars* film came out and, from that moment on, became a lifelong fan. Before he became







STEVE GAWLEY: "These behind-the-scenes photos represent a small fraction of the miniature photography models, sets and characters that the ILM model shop made for *The Phantom Menace*. I'm very proud of the work that these talented men and women of the ILM model shop completed for the film.

"A few years later, several practical model makers made the transition to the digital model shop. Today, many of the remaining practical model makers work for a company near the old ILM. They produce practical, working life-size 'training trauma mannequins' for the United States military. The mannequins are used to train military medics on how to treat severe trauma injuries sustained in the battlefield. The mannequins simulate very impressive injury actions that would be sustained during battle… Not for the faint-hearted."

Opposite page: "This is the ILM Model Shop crew photo from *The Phantom Menace*, taken on the miniature set of Theed City. There were about 20 people missing from the photo that day. Group photos are often not planned in advance, hence the missing people." (From the personal collection of Steve Gawley)

This page, from top: "This is the battle droid ILM model shop crew photo. We built 10 of these full size droids. They were white when we sent them to England for the shoot. After they arrived, George Lucas changed the paint scheme to a tan color that appears in the finished film." (From the personal collection of Steve Gawley); Dex's Diner, a practical model lit by Grant Imahara.

GRANT IMAHARA PERSONALLY RIGGED THE NEON LIGHTS FOR THE EXTERIOR OF DEX'S DINER.

a star on shows like *Mythbusters*, he spent ten years working in the model shop at ILM, and worked on all of the *Star Wars* prequels. "The realization that you're creating something that will be part of this film legacy is a whole different level of excitement," he reveals.

Imahara took a special pleasure in working on the Trade Federation battleships, which he viewed as the prequels' version of a Star Destroyer. "I did that with a combination of neon lights around the outer perimeter, fluorescent lights that feed into fiber optics for the main body, and then I started to incorporate a lot more cold cathode tubes. It was probably my favorite because it was one of the biggest ships we'd done in the model shop. It was between eight and ten feet in diameter. It was massive."

Making these models would be even easier today, according to Imahara. "You can go on Amazon now and order a string of LED lights for less than $12," he explains. "If you wanted to, you could even have it arrive the same day. I would have killed for something like that in 1999. When I was working on *The Phantom Menace*, if you wanted a string of LEDs, you had to wire them one by one by yourself."

Imahara used the best technology he could get his hands on to light the models on Coruscant, even personally rigging the neon lights for the exterior of Dex's Diner, and the whole street it sat on.

CITY BUILDING

Digital technology helped advance the model building in other ways as well. Laser cutters, precursors in some ways to 3D printing, were on the cutting edge of technology and required computer aided design (CAD) to manipulate. As one of the younger engineers in the shop, Imahara took it upon himself to help the other, more old school, model makers learn this new digital skill, as well as hone his own models with it. "Eventually, I ended up teaching a class, and most of them ended up







using the laser cutter for their own projects," Imahara says. "I laser cut the entire floor of Theed City. Theed was a huge project. There were lots of parts of buildings and other details, small railings, things like that, that are ideal for the laser."

In addition to their fascinating insights into the model making process, Gawley and Bies were also keen to highlight some moments that audiences might be surprised to discover were created using clever physical effects.

One of Gawley's favorites came from the podrace, which was shot with more practical effects than audiences would guess. "One of the things that I liked most was a shot in *The Phantom Menace* where Anakin and Sebulba were racing," he says. "Sebulba's bolts broke loose and he skidded on the ground, flipped up, and landed, and so forth, and we did it a couple times. We added this little piece of wood on the set floor on the outside shoot and disguised it as a rock. We catapulted the model to flip it up, and people think that's all digital. But that was a practical shot."

"Remember that podracer that goes into the pit and the pit droid gets sucked into the engine and shot off?" Bies asks, with a hint of glee in his voice. "That was a practical effect."

Perhaps one of the most surprising practical effects was Darth Vader's mask coming down on Anakin Skywalker's face at the end of *Revenge of the Sith*. It was actually a 1:1 model built by Bies himself, who'd campaigned to do it physically rather than digitally. "When I was at the archives, Vader's helmet that Luke removes in *Return of the Jedi* was one of my favorite props. We'd never seen the inside of it before, and I got to do that. That's probably my proudest thing that I got to do. I remember very clearly discussing with Ryan Church: It should look like it goes on, but it doesn't come off easy. So we had a lot of pointy things in there. Some of it was found objects. Those little, sharp, pointy things were actually hard drive leaders. There were these little connectors we used in electronic plugs called Molex connectors, and they look like little prongs and barbs, so we put those in there. And we laser cut some stuff in there. It was a lot of fun to build. I knew I was building something iconic."

"MOST PEOPLE THINK SEBULBA'S CRASH WAS DIGITAL. IT WAS A PRACTICAL SHOT."—STEVE GAWLEY

A SENSE OF WONDER

Talking to these model makers, there is a sense of wonder and nostalgia in their voices. Each of them has a story about being awed when BB-8 rolled out onto the stage at *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim, and Imahara actually confesses to be currently working on one in his garage.

"Of course I miss it," Imahara says.







Opposite page, from top: "Here's a shot of the Mos Espa podrace arena miniature. This large set was filmed outside using motion control photography. The set was on a large revolving table. This allowed the ILM FX camera crew to rotate the set during the day to maintain the lighting conditions. Note the ladder in the upper right background of the photo. That gives you an indication of just how large the miniature set was. Digital elements were added later." (From the personal collection of Steve Gawley); Sebulba crashes in a stunning practical effect!

This page, clockwise from top left: "This is the See-Threepio Anakin Skywalker built in the film. This full size puppet was George's idea for an inexpensive alternative to a computer graphics build. We built this from drawings made by the art director, Doug Chiang; This shows how the See-Threepio full-size puppet operated on stage. Note: His puppeteer, standing directly behind him in a green screen suit, was later extracted from the shot."; "Here's a shot of the queen's ship with the crew that built it. It was shot outside on a miniature set of the Tatooine landscape. We built a small mock up of the model. That was then scanned and refined by the digital model shop. We then took those files, and sent them to a vendor. The vendor sent us back the pieces we needed to make a fuselage casting. The wing tips and engine intakes were machined aluminium. The chrome surface is actually 'buffed aluminium tape'. The result is that the practical model and the digital model are exact copies of each other." (From the personal collection of Steve Gawley)

"In those days, I felt that given enough money and enough time, we had a group of people who were so talented that we could make anything. In the model shop, we brought together so many skill sets; there were carpenters, machinists, mechanics, engineers, painters, sculptors, mold makers, hard surface model makers, creature makers, costumers, people who knew about fur... It was such an incredible talent pool in the shop in those days. It was also a tremendous feeling that we were always a team and that we would *always* deliver. They used to have a saying that we'd never *not* delivered. The paint might still be drying as we wheeled it onto the shooting stage, and I might still be twisting wires together and soldering things while we were still on the stage, but we *always* delivered. And we always delivered as a team. Every one of those people was outstanding in what they did, and that's not a feeling you can say that you have all the time. It was certainly true then— when you got to the level of the ILM model shop, the reason you were there is because you were the best."





SITH STAR

FOR MANY, DARTH VADER IS THE DEFINING ICON OF THE *STAR WARS* SAGA. YET FOR ALL HIS PRESENCE IN THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY—AND HIS FORESHADOWING IN THE PREQUELS—IT TOOK A GROUNDBREAKING COMIC SERIES TO REALLY MAKE THE SITH THE STAR! WORDS: MICHAEL KOGGE

Star Wars Insider: _Darth Vader_ helped kickstart Marvel's _Star Wars_ comics line in 2015. How did it come to be one of the two launch titles?

Jordan D. White: One of the first ideas we had for the line was that we would have multiple ongoing series that happened simultaneously. It was definitely a departure from what had been done with *Star Wars* comics before, but it was much more in line with what Marvel does. When you buy comics for the various *Avengers* titles, they all take place together; and while they can be read separately, reading them together creates a richer universe. We wanted to do that with *Star Wars* as well. Once that idea was hatched, and it was obvious the main book would be *Star Wars*, and would follow Luke and the rebels. Darth Vader leading the second book was the natural next step. We followed Anakin's journey as a main character in the prequel trilogy, so it makes sense to keep following him into the original trilogy. There's a side of the character that we didn't know existed when those movies came out, but we had the opportunity to delve into it in a way that ties the two eras closer together.

Jennifer Heddle: When the series was in the concept stage I figured it would just be a fun read about Darth Vader kicking butt across the galaxy—not that there's anything wrong with that! But what Kieron and Salva made became much, much more. I realized by the end of the very first issue that this team was on to something special.

What made Marvel decide Kieron Gillen and Salvador Larroca were the ideal team?

JDW: I thought of Kieron because of his amazing ability to write compelling evil. When Kieron wrote *Uncanny X-Men*, it was a dark time for the X-Men and, in my opinion, one in which they were close to being super-villains. Even so, he made Cyclops and company very understandable and interesting. In addition, his work on *Uber* for Avatar Press is literally re-imagining the darkest parts of the 20th century and making them even more horrific, while still telling an engrossing story. Both of those series mixed in my head and made me sure he could get into the mind of the worst villain in the galaxy.

Salva is a huge *Star Wars* fan; and the moment we got word that we were getting the rights for *Star Wars*, we knew we *had* to bring his amazing talent to the *Star Wars* galaxy. It was just a question of on what title. He's been able to capture the tone of the series so perfectly, from the first scene of issue #1 with Vader striding into Jabba's palace, right up through the last scene of issue #25 with... Oh, people might not have read it yet. I should hold off!

Kieron, how did _Darth Vader_ enter your life? Is it true that you almost turned it down?

Kieron Gillen: One day I picked up the phone and it was Jordan. He asked if I'd be interested in writing the sister book to Jason Aaron's *Star Wars*. It was something of a surprise.

And yes, it's true I almost turned it down. The prosaic part is simple—I wasn't sure it would fit into my schedule. The more romantic part is that I wasn't sure I was the

MEET TEAM VADER!

KIERON GILLEN, writer

SALVADOR "SALVA" LARROCA, artist

FRANK PARISI, senior editor, Lucasfilm

JENNIFER HEDDLE, senior editor, Lucasfilm

JORDAN D. WHITE, comics editor, Marvel

HEATHER ANTOS, assistant editor, Marvel



right man for the job. I was aware that Marvel had a lot of writers who would kill to do it! In the end, I decided I was as qualified as anyone, which is a terrible piece of ego. One of the main criticisms of my work at Marvel is paying more attention than I should to the villains and their motivations, but here that is a positive boon. For that and a bunch of other reasons, I realized maybe I actually was the right person for the job.

Salva, what was your reaction to being offered penciling duties?

Salvador Larroca: Surprise! A year before starting, Marvel told me they wanted me and it was a tremendous joy. But I preferred to be cautious until the scripts were ready. When they confirmed I was definitely going to do it, I was thrilled.

Was *Star Wars* a big part of both your childhoods?

KG: My first movie experience was seeing *The Empire Strikes Back* in the cinema. It was my entry into pop-fantasy culture; and Darth Vader was my first iconic image of evil. That I get to write the prequel to my own introduction to this world is the sort of thing that could blow a few fuses if you consider it too long!

SL: Yes, of course. I saw the movies as a child and I've always been a great fan. I've always been fascinated by the character of Darth Vader. I'm afraid I've always gone with the villains! It is always more fun to draw villains than heroes—though in our story the Dark Lord is the hero, really.

What was your vision for the series at the start?

KG: When Jordan called it wasn't definitely a Darth Vader book. He told me if I had a better idea, go for it... But it was never *not* going to be Vader for me.

I viewed it almost like a historical novel because it's set in a distinct period in the saga. At the end of *A New Hope*, Vader is one of the few survivors to one of the biggest military disasters of all time, and he's at least partially to blame. But at the start of *Empire*, he's commanding the fleet, killing people at will, and generally has more power than ever. There's an implied story there—the fall and rise of Darth Vader—and that's what my arc would be.

The second key element, and the real emotional meat, is that between the two movies Vader realizes that he has a son. He realizes that the last 20 years of his life have been a lie. We had to do the inversion of the "I Am Your Father" scene—the "I Have a Son" scene.

I often use [the Netflix political thriller] *House of Cards* as a shorthand description for the series: A powerful man feels slighted and turns to tactics he would have previously shunned to reach new heights of power. That core vision remained, though the execution always wanders. You knew in your heart of hearts that the final panel of Vader's story would be him, on the bridge of the *Executor*, about to go after Luke.

JDW: It probably won't be *too* surprising to hear that one of our major touchpoints in talking about what this book would be was [the AMC drama] *Breaking Bad*. Even though the series is heavy with gut-wrenching emotion, it always found room for humor. I think Kieron referred to [the project] as a post-*Breaking Bad* take on Darth Vader at one point, and I think [he] is very right.

Salva, you've worked with several noted *Star Wars* scribes. How is Kieron different?

SL: Every writer is different, as every artist is, too. Kieron is very easy to work with because he is very visual in his descriptions. He is a very good writer and his scripts are fun, which is important for an artist. When you spend a lot of time with a story, you have to have fun with it, otherwise it becomes very hard.





Kieron, were you ever nervous pitching Lucasfilm some of your more... inventive ideas?

KG: Generally speaking, we had a "Don't self-censor" approach. Don't assume that Lucasfilm will say no; pitch it and let them say no if they want to. We wanted to test where the limits were, but we were never going to pitch anything that wasn't *Star Wars*. For me, *Star Wars* is very much in the space-fantasy mode. It's never been hardcore sci-fi, and that's its charm.

Characters such as the Mon Calamari cyborg Karbin have that wonderful "space fantasy" feel to them. What inspires these characters?

KG: I was trying to think of powerful archetypes that would work in the high-adventure mode that *Star Wars* runs on. That's where we get people like Aphra—fundamentally an ethically inverted Indiana Jones archetype—and Thanoth—basically the genius detective archetype, but an Empire loyalist. *Star Wars* is about these big, powerful characters, and finding novel ones is a big part of it for me.

Jen and Jordan, did any of Kieron's pitches stand out as especially playful or inventive?

JH: The first thing that comes to mind is the mental image I got when I read Kieron's script about the Geonosian queen being hooked up to an egg-laying machine: "Only her top part is flesh. The entire bottom half of her—the whole reproductive organ—has been replaced by a machine. It is basically the same shape as the organs would have been, but is clearly a machine. At the bottom, it has an egg-laying nozzle, but it's mechanical." I'm not sure "playful" is the word I would use to describe this, but it certainly is inventive! The suggestion of Triple-Zero as essentially a murderous C-3PO was also one of my favorite things. I knew it would work really beautifully and that fans would love it.

JDW: To me, the greatest and most joyful surprise was all the new and charming characters that grew in the series. From the beginning, it was clear that Kieron understood the Dark Lord and had great plans for him. But all the new characters came to life on the page in such awesome and surprising ways. Doctor Aphra, Inspector Thanoth, Triple-Zero... They all became such compelling additions to the universe. In retrospect, I am pretty surprised we got away with making the evil R2 and C-3PO. They are actively psychopathic! It's pretty outrageous, but it seems like everyone at Lucasfilm loves them as much as we do, which is amazing.

Heather Antos: The new additions to the *Star Wars* cast have by far been the most pleasing surprise that any editor, creator, or reader could have. Kieron, Salva, and colorist Edgar Delgado's ability to bring such life to them has been astonishing to say the least. They've only been around for just



under two years, but I now can't imagine the *Star Wars* universe without them!

Issue #24 has one of my all-time favorite Darth Vader moments, and one that I was shocked we were allowed to do. It's a battle between Darth Vader and his former self, Anakin. Of course, it all takes place in Vader's head, but the fact that we get to see Vader's perspective on what went down on Mustafar—however skewed that perspective may have been—was super cool to do!

Salva, who were your favorite characters to draw, other than Vader?

SL: I love Aphra. She is special for me. And Cylo of course, because it's me!

Kieron, what's your process in scripting an issue? What makes writing *Star Wars* different from other Marvel titles like *Thor* or *Iron Man*?

KG: It's *Star Wars*. That sounds like I'm joking, but that is the key difference, and changes everything. I had spent basically the previous six years writing in the Marvel Universe. Though the Marvel Universe is a place with a large variety of tones, it still has a characteristic timbre. *Star Wars* has its own mode, and it's different. It's also narrower—which I don't mean as a criticism. Our aesthetic goal was always "We're not doing a comic adaptation of *Star Wars*, but we're doing *Star Wars* on paper." When looking at my choices when scripting it's always through the filter of "Is this evoking what we see on the screen? Is this *Star Wars*-y enough?"

In terms of the actual process, it's similar. I work on a script every day until it's done; I then leave it in a drawer for a bit before polishing it later. The secondary stage is when I hand it into Marvel, who then passes it to Lucasfilm for approval. The relationship there also changed things, and they've been generous with ideas and resources. At Marvel, I tend to write in a hermetically sealed way. For *Darth Vader*, there have been moments when I've written in the script: "I can invent a new crime lord here for this role, but if there's anyone in this area of the universe you're using elsewhere, I can use them instead." Leaning into the interconnectivity was a characteristic element of the job.

Also when writing for Marvel I'm less likely to stomp around the house, pretending I'm breathing through a ventilator!

What does an artist like Salvador Larroca bring to a panel? Did he find things in your writing or storytelling you didn't notice?

KG: Salva is a monster. My friend Matt Fraction and he collaborated on their award-winning *Iron Man* run, so I'd seen Salva's work extensively before—and also knew about his blistering speed. That last attribute is the easiest thing to overlook. He illustrated the entire *Darth Vader* series, thus ensuring the book's visual consistency. It's easier to lose yourself in a world like that.

I could see much of what made him perfect in the *Iron Man* run: he does brilliant technology, both in terms of drawing it and designing it. Aphra's *Ark Angel* ship has a great *Star Wars*-feeling design that's not based on anything in-universe. He also does fantastic likenesses, which is obviously a boon when doing *Star Wars*. All that was stuff I hoped for, and he completely delivered. Plus, he's an enormous *Star Wars* fan, which screams from every page.

Probably the most unexpected thing he brought to the page was basing Cylo's likeness on himself. It must have been an odd day at work drawing Darth Vader killing him over and over! It's probably a metaphor for working on the book.

Salva, how did you and Gillen collaborate? Might your pencils have inspired new directions in the story?

SL: I don't know if my drawings have been able to inspire Kieron, I just hope he's as happy with my work as I am with his.

When you work with such a good script, your obligation is to give the best of yourself to maintain quality. Kieron's scripts have been excellent and I tried to work as best as I know. When it's easy to work with someone, a symbiosis occurs, and that is visible in the result. I think that is what happened to us.

I got inspiration only from the movies, and it is important to the fans that the comic characters are recognizable.



Can you describe the challenge of illustrating emotion for a main character encased in black armor and a mask?

SL: I do it with body expression and camera angles. It's a trick that is used in films, too. It is not the first time I have to deal with a character like this. Think of *Iron Man*, for example.

Kieron, you've previously said that Darth Vader was your first image of "evil," since *The Empire Strikes Back* was the first film you saw in a cinema as a kid. How did you keep Vader evil, yet also sympathetic enough for readers to follow him through the series?

KG: It was tricky working out how to present him without getting too close—and losing the essential mystique. That was something I worried about a lot. Our main solution was to show flashes of his inner life, but only at a distance. You'll have these single panels where you see a memory, but you can never be sure what the memory actually means to Vader. Plus, Salva and I really worked the "Silent panel of Vader staring into distance" hard.

In terms of maintaining sympathy, there were two main lines of attack. Partially it's that the story circles around Vader, and in some ways it's not *him* we're afraid of, but rather everyone around him. Have people we worry about near him definitely helps there—Aphra is key to the book.

The other line is the absolute opposite: by surrounding him with people who are worse than him. Robert McKee argues in his book *Story* about *The Godfather* that one of the reasons the narrative works is that while the Godfather is monstrous, he's still a better option than anyone else. People find themselves thinking, *If I was a Mafia Godfather, that's the sort of Mafia Godfather I'd want to be*. I definitely did that. Vader is bad, but Grand General Tagge is bad *and* tedious. At least Vader wouldn't corner you in a party and talk to you about his favorite graphs.

I [also] knew the book needed a variety of antagonists. If [the story] solely consisted of Vader killing rebels people would quickly lose interest. I mean, isn't it telling that the moments in the saga we all love most are when Vader mercilessly kills one of his fascist subordinates?

As *Darth Vader* developed over many issues, did the story or the characters go in different directions than originally intended?

KG: Oh yeah. Many have been a delight. When I realized exactly what Thanoth was going to tell Vader, and why it was shocking, it was a real, "Dude! Are you actually going to do that?" moment. I spent considerable time wondering whether there was any way I could save him. Aphra had a bunch of scenes like that, and writing her desperately squirming to try and escape her fate was a joy. She always had an idea, and her scenes with Vader were always alive. That first happened in issue four, when I realized that the first thing Aphra would do upon completing the mission would be to ask, "So . . . are you going to kill me now or later?" That unlocked the Vader-Aphra relationship for me.

The *Darth Vader* series also reveals that not every Imperial dies on the Death Star, as once believed. General Tagge returns in a bold new way to become a foil to the Dark Lord. Who made the decision to bring Tagge back into the fold?

JH: Using Tagge was a suggestion from Lucasfilm that came about during a meeting with Kieron early on. We wanted a foil for Vader who would feel like someone with a real weight behind him, someone that the audience would find believable as holding power alongside Vader and being in the Emperor's favor. Using a character from the conference room scene in *A New Hope* felt like the perfect solution. Everyone was excited about it. It was another bonus that Tagge was a character the audience no doubt already found obnoxious from the movie! You wanted to root against him from the start.

Kieron, how was it breaking story with fellow writer Jason Aaron on *Vader Down*, the crossover between *Darth Vader* and the *Star Wars* monthly?

KG: It was a lot of fun. All of this has been. I've known Jason ever since he was just starting *Scalped* and I was doing *Phonogram*. Also, we've had some experience in this kind of thing. Some of my fondest times in writing a shared superhero universe occurred when Jason was writing *Wolverine and the X-Men* and I was writing *Uncanny X-Men*. We batted stuff back and forth in a very casual way.

...THIS PROMISES TO BE AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT.

Vader Down was like that, but more so. We'd already done some close back and forth plotting on our first arc, building up towards issue six's "I Have a Son" reveal, but *Vader Down* was on a different scale from that. We had a variety of ideas, and our original thoughts for the series were miles away from where we ended up. It was a process of iteration, working on the synopsis, seeing where the issue breaks landed, and then just writing it. It was agreeably egoless in that way—we didn't even check which issue would be written by whom. As such, both of us got to write key scenes for each other's casts, almost by random. I'm still envious Jason got to write the initial fight between our two casts, though he's envious I got to write other cool stuff, so it evens out!

Why end *Darth Vader* with issue #25?

JDW: From the very beginning, Kieron always said this would be a finite story, that Vader is going through an arc, and that it would only really work if it had a conclusion. I am sure some will say we reached the end too soon, and a part of me might even agree—the part that just wants this team to keep making evil come true forever and always. But in the end, Kieron is right. The ending is an important part of this series, and it's stronger for getting there.

HA: Kieron has always had an ending in mind for the series. There was a story he wanted to tell, and he was able to do it in 25 amazing issues. I definitely wish the series could go on forever, but I think for a single story to have as much impact as this one has it *has* to end, you know?

Kieron, how would you say Vader's changed as a character from the first issue to the final issue?

KG: For me, it's a story of Vader awakening. Vader knows more of the truth now. As I said, he knows he has a son. Before this story the aim was to be the Emperor's fist. He's done that for 20 years. Now, at least consciously, he wants to seduce Luke to the dark side and rule the Empire.

Ironically, for all the darkness, this is a story of a man regaining his hope and his own destiny. It's just a particularly dark form of hope, which has allowed him to act in an even more ruthless way than before.

What were everyone's favorite moments or scenes?

JH: There are so many! The invention of Aphra is obviously a standout—so many of the great moments in the comic derive from her being a fantastic character. I especially loved Aphra teaming up with the bounty hunters to rob the Imperial ship—all with Vader's knowledge. That was one of the most fun stories for me. I loved the interplay within that group.



And I loved the cat and mouse game between Vader and Thanoth—giving Vader a worthy rival that actually kept me in suspense about who would come out on top! I think one of Kieron's real strengths on this comic has been surrounding one of the most unforgettable fictional characters of all time with other fictional characters whom you will never forget.

JDW: That is so difficult, as this is a series of amazing moments and characters. Right this moment, I will go with the character of Thanoth. He was so smart and interesting... and was a great antagonist for Vader precisely because he *wasn't* one. He was ostensibly on Vader's side, and it gave that whole second arc such a great layer of suspense—Vader is working with an investigative genius to solve a crime Vader had committed. Loved that. And Thanoth's return was also pitch perfect, if sometime we debated a bit about his final fate. I still hope, someday, we can read a murder mystery novel that takes place on the Death Star with Thanoth tracking down a killer in the Imperial ranks.

HA: Can I pick every moment that happened between issues 1 through 25? *No*? Fine. In that case, my favorite moment was probably when we did the interwoven scenes between *Darth*



Vader issue six and *Star Wars* issue six, when it was revealed to Vader that the troublesome rebel pilot was really his son, Luke Skywalker. I mean, what an *awesome* moment to reveal. It's such a pivotal moment not just for Vader, but for the entire *Star Wars* story as we know it!

SL: The sequences in which we tell Anakin's past, when we make a retrospective, based on the movies. That's very cool. And I am very happy the fans have been able to recognize the same Vader from the films in the comics. That is so cool because it's very easy to mess with such a difficult character to draw.

KG: Well, at least one of them would be in the last issue, and I wouldn't want to spoil that. Suffice to say we're really proud of the conclusion. I'm all about the denouement, me.

The first one is, I suspect, the one that would be on anyone's list. The "I Have a Son" scene. Salva paced it beautifully, and it's as iconic as anything that I've had my hand in while writing comics. It's a scene that any *Star Wars* fan would want to see, and I still can't believe I got to do it.

The second one would be issue 24. An issue-long vision quest isn't exactly what you expect this late in the game, but doing Vader's own cave-sequence-on-Dagobah worked shockingly well. We tried to make it mythic, and keep that sort of structure, and were very pleased with how it worked. If I had to pick one, while I was proud of the Obi-Wan and Anakin beats, Padmé whispering, "Stay" is one of my favorite panels in the whole book.

The third one... well, I can't pick between all the times that Triple-Zero and Beetee were monstrous and awful. I could probably do a top 10 of all the things the murderbots did. They were a consistent joy. And let's go with Thanoth and Vader's final confrontation. We did a lot of space epic in the book—obviously!—but sometimes all you need is two people in a darkened room.

Now, at its conclusion, how do you think *Darth Vader* stacks up to the other comics you all have worked on?

SL: At the top of my career.

JDW: Honestly, I believe in my heart that this will be remembered as one of the best Vader stories ever told. I think Kieron and Salva did that great a job.

HA: Kieron, Salva, and Edgar poured their hearts out onto these pages, and it really shows. I truly believe people are going to be talking about this series for a very, very long time come. How could they not?

Salva, would you ever take a trip down into the dark side again?

SL: I hope so, but who knows? I'd really love to. If I can, I'd do it.

Is this truly the end for Kieron Gillen and the Dark Lord of the Sith? Who was the master? And who was the apprentice?

KG: You strike me down and I will become more powerful than you can... wait, Darth. No, stay back. Let's talk this through—<*thud*>

Marvel Comics' *Darth Vader* series 1-3 are available now as trade paperbacks.

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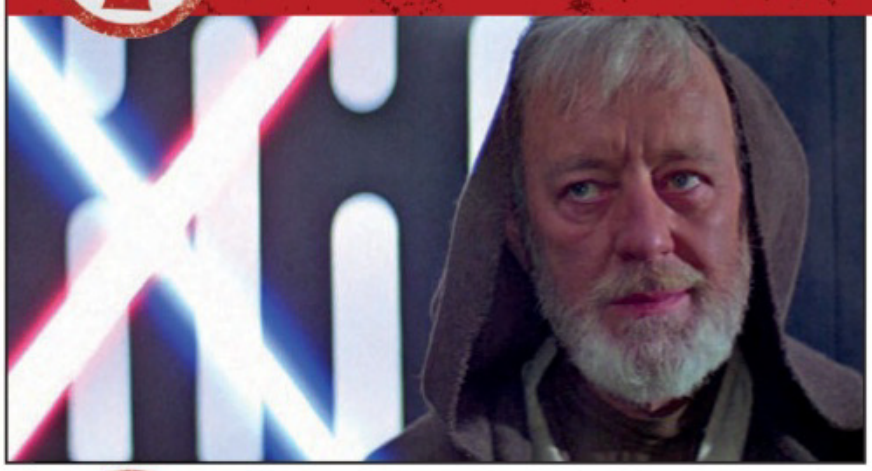
RED FIVE

JOE SCHREIBER'S FIVE FAVORITE STAR WARS DEMISES



Death has played a big part in author Joe Schreiber's Star Wars work, including the novels *Death Troopers*, *Red Harvest*, and *Darth Maul: Lockdown*. Who better to choose five fantastic Star Wars fatalities?

1 BEN KENOBI'S DEATH



Death is rarely forever in the *Star Wars* universe, and Obi-Wan, of course, comes back later in the trilogy—but to this day, the moment on the Death Star when he allows Vader to kill him is still devastating. A crucial part of the story, Ben's death actually means something, both narratively and metaphysically. He risks his life to disarm the tractor beam, and then engages Vader in combat knowing there's no way that he can possibly defeat the Sith Lord physically: "If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine." That's a pretty revolutionary thought, and Kenobi makes good on it in a way that shapes the way we think about the Force, redemption, and resurrection in the *Star Wars* universe forever after.

2 GREEDO'S DEATH



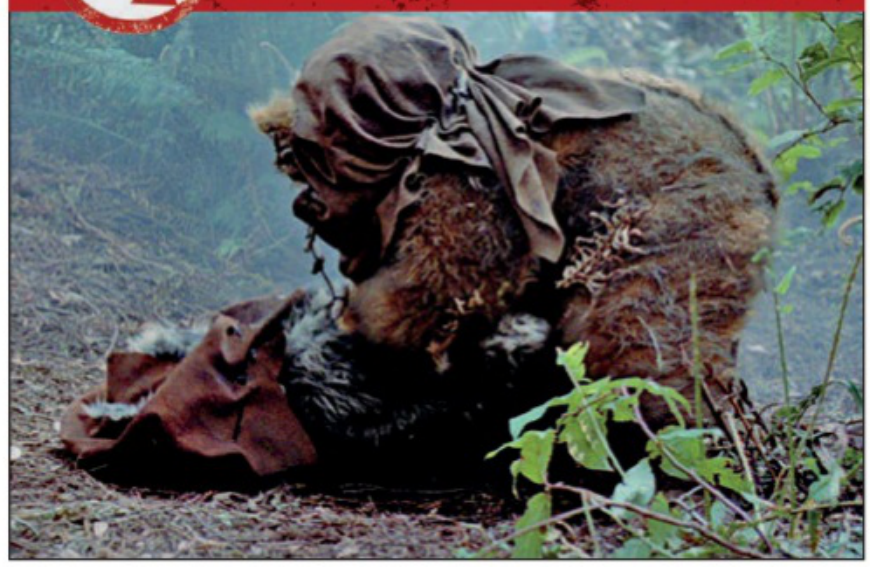
In many ways, these few crucial seconds of *A New Hope* have become the Zapruder film of the *Star Wars* galaxy, where the question of who fired at whom has developed an incredible significance. In our heart of hearts, no matter what we might like to think, we all know that Han shot first. Contrary to popular belief and revisionist history, the fact that he already had his blaster out and was ready to handle business doesn't mean that he's a cold-blooded psychopath. It simply works as a very clear and economical defining moment for his character—that he's not only able to handle himself in a fight, but that he's quick and canny enough that he wouldn't let a scoundrel like Greedo get the drop on him by drawing first. It also addresses the unrealistic detail that someone like Greedo—who really *is* a cold-blooded psychopath—would fire and miss his target at point-blank range. By personality alone, he's deadlier than Han, and Han knew it, which is why, when the time came, Han puts him down like a dog, without hesitation. Plus, the moment immediately afterwards, when Han tosses money to the bartender and says, "Sorry about the mess," is arguably the single coolest moment in the movie. At least I thought so when I was seven.

3 THE RANCOR'S DEATH



Okay, first of all, I love the way *Return of the Jedi* handled the rancor, and its battle with Luke has always been one of my favorite scenes from that movie (even in the old late-80s TV version where the bluescreen is so terribly obvious that I had to look away). Besides being excellently named, the rancor was originally conceived as "a cross between a bear and potato." How can you not love that? Also, the fact that [sound designer Ben Burtt] used a neighbor's dachshund dog for the noises that it makes is just awesome. But to me, having said all of that, the greatest thing that the rancor did was die. After crushing a femur bone in its jaws in an attempt to destroy Skywalker, this mighty beast finally dies under the crushing weight of a falling portcullis... and we're treated to a genuinely heart-wrenching moment where its keeper, played by Paul Brooke, breaks down in sobs, which were provided by a music arranger named Ernie Fosselius, who also wrote and directed the legendary parody *Hardware Wars*. Hey, at least it wasn't the dachshund.

4 NANTA'S DEATH



For years, the Ewok slain by AT-AT blaster fire on the forest moon of Endor was referred to simply by the *Tales from the Crypt*-esque name "Corpsey," primarily because... well, what else are you going to call a dead Ewok? Later, he was given a back-story and a special edition Toys 'R' Us action figure, along with Romba, the Ewok who stayed behind with his fallen comrade. Again, it's actually the mourning that makes this death memorable. The iconographic image of little Romba hunched over his friend, and the fact that *Jedi* takes a moment to acknowledge the finality of what's happened makes this, in a weird way, one of the trilogy's most touching throwaway moments.

5 VADER'S DEATH



Depending on how much you examine it, the final moments of Anakin Skywalker's life may or may not serve as a kind of fathoms-deep echo of Obi-Wan Kenobi's own death. Like Kenobi, Vader dies after achieving a greater good—throwing the Emperor down the Death Star's reactor shaft, to save his son. And in dying, Vader reveals the final underlying and transformative power that simply could not have emerged under any other circumstance. Just as Obi-Wan promised that being struck down would allow him to come back more powerful than ever, Vader—in extremis—finally removes the horrific mask that made him a dreadful vision of death and evil throughout the trilogy, exposing his human face underneath. Paradoxically fragile, this newly revealed humanity, ultimately, is what redeems him in our eyes, exposing that there is good left inside him after all. Born out of utter desperation, the moment never would have come out if Vader hadn't, at that exact second, been facing certain death. When I think about it now, his demise bookends Obi-Wan's death so neatly that it makes me wish it had been planned out that way from the beginning, although I'm pretty sure it wasn't.

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