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R2-D2'S OPERATORS ON THE MAKING OF A DROID

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW:

**Timothy
Zahn**

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to the Empire* author
on creating Grand
Admiral Thrawn!

The High Republic

Author Claudia Gray
on the golden age
of the Republic!

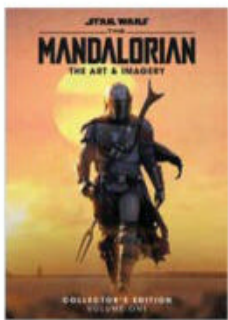
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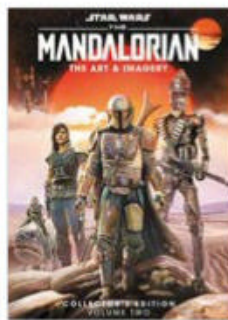
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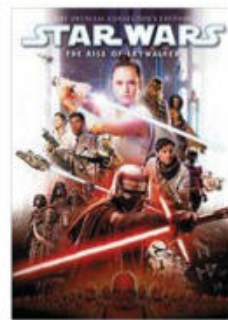
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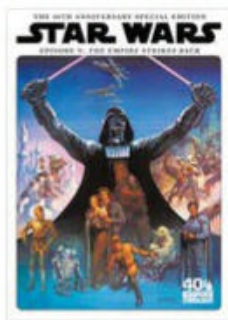


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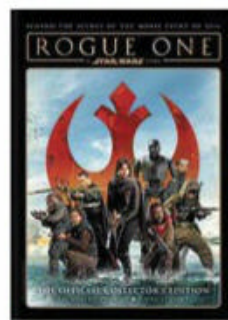
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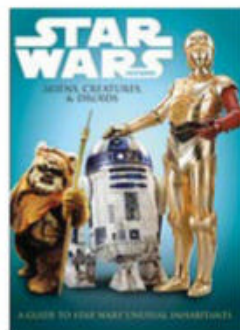
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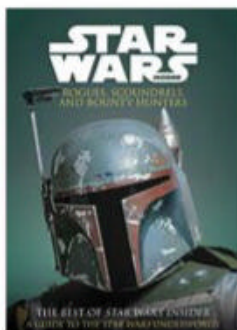
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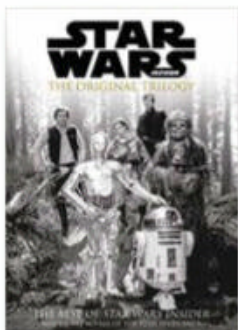
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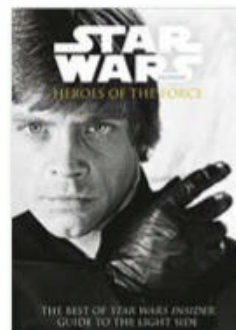
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WELCOME...



Can you imagine a world where *Star Wars* was over? That actually happened, a long time ago, right here on Earth. The saga had been receding in the public sphere for a few years, barring a couple of Ewok adventures and a dwindling supply of action figures. Even the Marvel Comics we'd been collecting since 1977 had come to an end. All things must pass, as they say. At the tail end of the 1980s, we had to find other things to obsess about.

So, imagine how it felt to walk into a bookstore in 1991, having been starved of new adventures in a galaxy far, far away seemingly forever, only to be faced with something entirely unexpected: A stack—a *huge* stack—of hardback novels with two big, warmly familiar words emblazoned in gold on the cover. I'll tell you: I froze. I gasped out loud and scared an old lady. I couldn't believe my eyes. *Star Wars*... was back?! I remember shaking with glee as I hurried to the checkout, a copy of Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire* clutched to my chest. I felt like I'd come home!

30 years on, this issue of *Insider* has an appropriately literary feel, as we talk to Zahn himself about the enduring popularity of what has become known as the *Thrawn Trilogy*. We also chat to author Claudia Gray about her new adventures in *The High Republic*, there's exclusive fiction from the era written by Cavan Scott, and Kristin Bayer tells us what it was like to write the Skywalker family biography. As if *Star Wars* was ever really gone. What on Tatooine was I thinking?

May the Force be with you.

Christopher Cooper
Editor

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS...



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Kristin was a card-carrying *Star Wars* fan before she had reason to own a wallet. Now she's an associate editor at StarWars.com.



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[@Prefect_timing](#)

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Scientist and science writer Melissa visits Comic-Con every year to purchase new *Star Wars* paraphernalia for her pet dog.



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Cavan has written *Star Wars* for Marvel, IDW, Del Rey and Disney books, and is one of the creators behind *Star Wars: The High Republic*.

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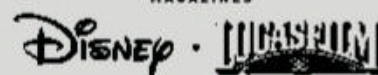
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Relive the adventures of Mando and Grogu in our companion to Season Two of *The Mandalorian*!

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STAR WARS
INSIDER

LAUNCHPAD

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The Bad Batch are back, and badder than before!

May The Clone Force 99 Be With You!

Celebrate this *Star Wars* Day with *The Bad Batch* on Disney+

O

f all the thrills and dramatic events enjoyed by fans in the final season of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*

(2008-2014, 2020), the introduction of Clone Force 99 (better known as the Bad Batch) was up there with the most exciting. Now their adventures are about to continue in an all-new animated series.

Starring Dee Bradley Baker as the voices of the entire Bad Batch—Hunter, Crosshair, Wrecker, Tech, and recent recruit Echo—the series debuts on the Disney+ streaming platform on May 4,

with the second episode premiering on Friday, May 7. New episodes will then arrive weekly, every Friday

Speaking to the Official Disney Fan



Club magazine, Baker described the series as “a beautifully written show,” adding, “It takes what we found in *The Clone Wars* to another level of depth and awesomeness. It’s real *Star Wars* in the best possible sense.”

The series follows the exploits of the Bad Batch as they negotiate the new realities of the Galactic Empire, following the fall of the Republic. Along the way they will encounter a powerful rising star of Imperial might, Admiral Tarkin, as played by Stephen Stanton who reprises the role he previously voiced for both *The Clone*



Wars and *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018). Connecting the new series with another Disney+ hit is Fennec Shand, the assassin and elite mercenary played by Ming-na Wen in *The Mandalorian* (2019-present), who guest stars in several episodes of *The Bad Batch*. After her participation in the series was announced last December, Wen told *StarWars.com* that Shand would still be “cutting her teeth” as a bounty hunter in the new series, promising a more reckless character than the resolute Shand from *The Mandalorian*. “She’s willing to take greater risks because she doesn’t know what the consequences are,” Wen revealed.

Star Wars: The Bad Batch is executive produced by Dave Filoni, Athena Portillo, Brad Rau (who also serves as supervising director), and Jennifer Corbett, the head writer on the series. The show is produced by Josh Rimes, with Carrie Beck as co-executive producer.





Galaxy's Best

Awards season puts *Star Wars* in line for multiple wins

The annual film and television awards season was in full swing as this issue of *Star Wars Insider* went to press, with virtual ceremonies due to announce which nominees would take home assorted statuettes. *Star Wars* productions inevitably featured in the shortlists of several esteemed organizations.

Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (2019) was up for no less than 12 Saturn Awards—presented by the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films—including Best Science Fiction Film. Daisy Ridley (Rey) was among the nominees for Best Actress, while there were Best Supporting Actor nominations for both Adam Driver (Kylo Ren) and

Ian McDiarmid (The Emperor), with J.J. Abrams in the running for Best Director. Nominations for behind-the-scenes roles included Best Production Design (Rick Carter, Kevin Jenkins), Best Film Costume (Michael Kaplan), Best Visual Effects (Roger Guyett, Neal Scanlan, Patrick Tubach, Dominic Tuohy), and Best Film Composer (John Williams).

Giancarlo Esposito—Moff Gideon in *The Mandalorian*—received a nomination for Best Guest Starring

Performance on Television for his role in the show, which itself was nominated for Best Television Presentation. *The Clone Wars* was nominated for Best Animated Television Series.

The Producers Guild of America also gave a nod to the makers of *The Mandalorian*, with Jon Favreau, Dave Filoni, Kathleen Kennedy, Colin Wilson, Karen Gilchrist, John Bartnicki, and Carrie Beck sharing a nominating for Outstanding Producer of Episodic Television. Favreau was also recognized by the Director's Guild of America with his nomination for Outstanding Directorial Achievement for Season Two, Chapter 9: “The Marshal.”

Star Wars Insider extends our congratulations to all the nominees.



Bad to the Bone

New batch of galactic heroes go mobile!

A new marquee event happening now in *Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes* introduces some exciting playable characters to the mobile game, namely Hunter, Wrecker, and Tech from the upcoming animated series, *The Bad Batch*!

Throughout the month of April, players are able to unlock members of Clone Force 99, each of whom packs a unique kit of specialties that will help enhance the player's galactic team. Perfectly pitched for those new to the game, a level cap of just 30 is required to access them.



Take Command

Republic Commandoes Back in Action!

With *The Bad Batch* about to debut on Disney+, now seems like the ideal time to remember another elite team of clone troopers: Delta Squad! Under the command of squad leader RC-1138, otherwise known as "Boss," this rugged military unit were the stars of the hugely popular 2005 PC and Xbox videogame, *Republic Commando*, and thanks to Lucasfilm Games and Aspyr they're back in action—only this time on the

videogame consoles Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, and PlayStation 5 (via the platform's backwards compatibility).

The port of the tactical *Star Wars* shooter, upgraded for playability on modern hardware, allows players to command their unit through an increasingly difficult succession of dangerous missions, and faithfully recaptures the unique appeal of the original. Available at [Nintendo.com](https://www.nintendo.com) and store.playstation.com now.





The Look of Boba Fett

Coming back from the sarlacc

ranks of stormtroopers. Sideshow and Hot Toys' Deluxe Sixth Scale figure set of Boba Fett features extraordinary details that portray the mercenary in both his wandering robes and iconic armor. Approximately 12-inches tall and accompanied by an array of weapons, accessories, and clothing, the Deluxe Boba Fett set retails for \$495.00 and can be pre-ordered at [Sideshow.com](https://www.sideshow.com).



Temuera Morrison's appearance as a robed Boba Fett at the end of *The Mandalorian* (2019-present) episode "The Marshal" sent chills throughout the *Star Wars* universe, but fans had no idea what was yet to come. Once he retrieved his armor in "The Tragedy," the bounty hunter became an unstoppable force who mercilessly plowed his way through

THE LIGHT SIDE

By Jamie Cosley



A Spice Dream Team

Seasonings become as smooth as a Tatooine dune

Lightsabers are widely known throughout the galaxy as the weapons brandished by the heroic Jedi Knights and their enemies the Sith. Uncanny Brands brings the two sides together for an uncharacteristically cooperative mission: seasoning your meals! The Lightsaber Electric Salt & Pepper Mill Grinder set includes a red saber with a Darth Vader hilt and a blue saber with



a Luke Skywalker hilt. The battery-powered pair stands 8 3/4-inches tall and will grind your peppercorns and salt to your preferred consistency. These tasty grinders are available in stores now, retailing for \$39.99.



Courageous Clones

A good match from a Bad Batch

Fresh off of their debut in *The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020), the independently minded members of Clone Force 99 are riding an emotional wave into their own series, aptly titled *The Bad Batch*. As such, team leader Hunter, sniper Crosshair, and Wrecker are the

latest characters to join Hasbro's The Black Series line of 6-inch action figures. Whether working on a covert mission or fending off a company of battle droids, the soldiers from the Bad Batch are ready to serve. Each figure retails for \$20.99, with an expected shipping date of June 2021.

A great batch of action figures from Hasbro!

The Star Wars DotColumn

Fascinating features and articles from the digital vaults of StarWars.com

Add [StarWars.com/Insider](https://www.starwars.com/insider) to your browser bookmarks to enjoy *Insider's* pick of the best of the official *Star Wars* website.

Which *Star Wars: The High Republic* Jedi are you?

StarWars.com's quiz takes you into the golden age of the galaxy far, far away, with a test that will define your Jedi persona.



The Potential of Finn

Artist Mel Milton on the character portrayed by John Boyega, the inspiration for the stunning portrait he painted for Black History Month 2021.



Joe Johnston: Designing An Icon

The legendary *Star Wars* art director talks about designing the galaxy's baddest bounty hunter and the original set of Mandalorian armor.





A Jedi in Jade

The Force is powerful with this pendant

The Jedi normally frown upon the notion of attachments, but even Master Yoda will understand if you become enamored with the Jedi Master Diamond Pendant from *Star Wars* Fine Jewelry. The impressive pendant features a green jade stone carved in Yoda's image, with diamonds around the edge that shimmer like the galaxy's countless stars. Although the decor of Yoda's hut on Dagobah was sparse and subdued, one wouldn't be surprised if he had one of these gems secreted away somewhere in his cosy abode. Order yours now by visiting StarWarsFineJewelry.com.

Aim straight for stormtrooper supplies!



Trooping in Style

Travel the galaxy with this luxurious luggage

Whether you're off to secure Cloud City or guard the archives at Scarif, the Herschel Supply Company's *Star Wars* line of stormtrooper bags offers your detachment the perfect way to carry your supplies as you deploy the garrison. Reflecting the classic look of Imperial troops, each bag incorporates minute details from the unmistakable armor that adorns the Emperor's stormtroopers. Feeling more like a Sith Lord or a bounty hunter? Herschel has you covered, as their line also features bags that are based on Darth Vader's signature black armor and Boba Fett's camo-like green garb. Head over to Herschel.com to order yours today!



Join the Scouts

Show off your speeder bike credentials

Ask any Imperial scout trooper about the forest moon, and they will let you know that their ranks received a bad reputation during the Battle of Endor. The fearless soldiers who patrolled the lush foliage around the second Death Star's shield generator risked their lives zipping through the woods on their

speeder bikes, chasing after rebels and Ewoks alike. That tradition continued in *The Mandalorian*, where scouts loyal to the Imperial Remnant attempted to keep the Empire's flame burning in the Outer Rim. You can show your support for these daredevil troopers with Impact Merchandising's Speeder Bike Club T-shirt, available now.



MANDO MERCH



The latest bounty on which to blow your beskar

A CLAN OF TWO

The notorious duo from the Outer Rim comes to life

The Mandalorian chronicles the ongoing adventures of Mando and his traveling companion Grogu, who were bonded as a clan of two under the Mudhorn signet by the Armorer. Just as Mando upgraded his beskar armor over the course of the series, Kotobukiya has added a 1/7th scale ARTFX model kit **A** to their range of highly accurate characters, depicting the Mandalorian and the Child in all of their Season Two glory. Equipped with his jetpack, blaster, and Mudhorn signet, the Mandalorian towers above Grogu, who can be positioned anywhere on the kit's base.

FRIENDS, FUNDS, AND THE FORCE

Keep your bounty secure in the hands of a reliable ally

Whether traversing sizzling deserts or traveling through the cold of space, the Mandalorian aims to keep Grogu safe, and trusts his Force-sensitive friend with his life. You can experience that same level of camaraderie with Monogram Products' The Child with Cup PVC Bank **B**. If Mando feels comfortable putting his well-being in Grogu's hands, then he might as well allow him to hold his beskar as well. Based on the Child's appearance in *The*

Mandalorian, the bank is available now and retails for \$19.99.



GAMORREAN GLADIATOR

A warty warrior fit for any underground wrestling ring

In *The Mandalorian*'s second season premiere, Mando witnessed gamblers cheering on Gor Keresk's deadly fight club as two mighty Gamorreans engaged in combat. Unfortunately for Mando, one of those brawny bouters attempted to stage dive right onto him once

Keresk sprang his trap to steal the Mandalorian's armor. Based on the concept sculpt posted by Jon Favreau on social media, Regal Robot's Gamorrean Fighter Concept Maquette Replica **C** is hand-painted and cast in heavy polyurethane resin. Standing 12 1/4-inches tall and priced at \$499.00, the Gamorrean replica is available now at RegalRobot.com.



Book Club

The latest *Star Wars* book releases are a satisfying treat!



Stellar Sweetness

Embark on a galactic gastronomic tour with *Star Wars: Galactic Baking*

What do the snowdrifts of Hoth, the desert dunes of Tatooine, and other remote points in the galaxy have in common? These alien worlds have inspired a number of delicious terrestrial dishes, which are now collected in the pages of *Star Wars: Galactic Baking*.

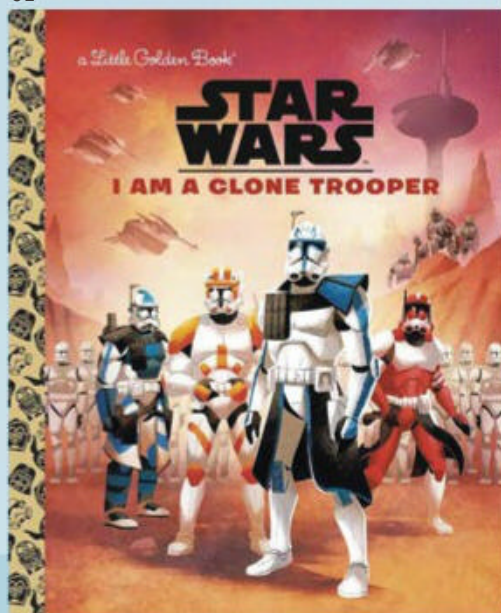
With over thirty mouthwatering recipes accompanied by beautiful food photography, this hardcover cookbook is perfect for hosting a *Star Wars* rewatch party, or to

simply enjoy experiencing flavors inspired by the flora and fauna of the galaxy far, far away. Perfect for cooks of all ages and skill levels, *Star Wars: Galactic Baking* includes such exotic recipes as Mustafarian Molten Lava Cakes, Cloud City Marshmallows, Life Day Cake, Loth-Cat Kibble, Keshian Spice Bread, Bantha Blue Butter Sandwich Cookies, and even Dagobah Bog Pie, with every dish an homage to the creatures, vehicles, and worlds of the *Star Wars* saga.

"I'm constantly amazed at the inventiveness of the chefs and cooks who work on our cookbooks," Lucasfilm Publishing senior editor Robert Simpson told StarWars.com. "It's fun to see the creative wizards at Insight Editions bring so many treats inspired by the movies and TV shows to edible life."

Star Wars: Galactic Baking brings otherworldly treats straight into your kitchen. Look for it in bookstores on May 4.

01

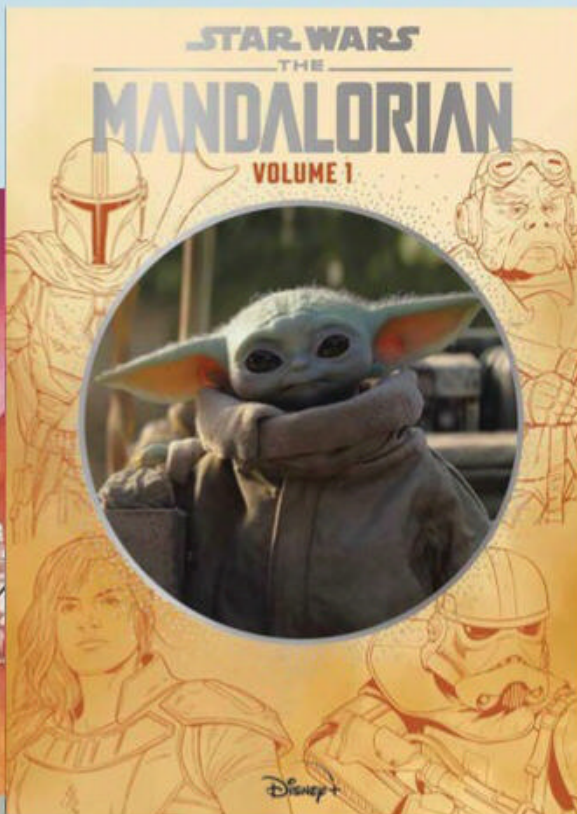


01

**Star Wars
Little Golden Book:
I Am Clone Trooper**

The clone soldiers grown on Kamino might all be identical down to their DNA, but *Star Wars* fans know that each of them are unique individuals in their own right. As seen in the animated series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020) on Disney+, characters like Captain Rex and Commander Cody forged their own heroic identities while serving under the Jedi during the Clone Wars. This Little Golden Book aims to introduce young readers to the most important clone characters from the *Star Wars* saga, with retro-stylized illustrations depicting epic scenes from the most famous battles of the Clone Wars. On sale on May 12.

02

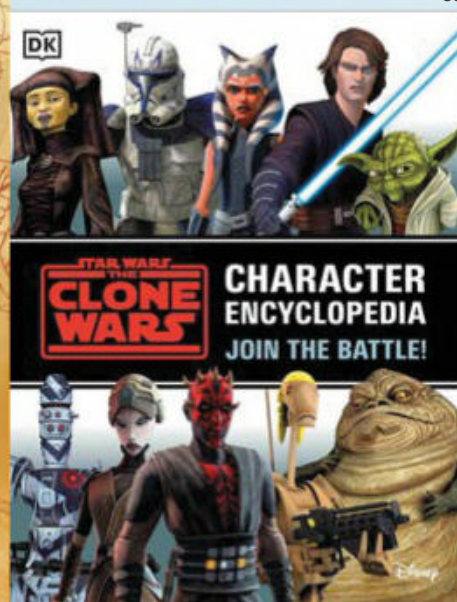


02

**Star Wars:
The Mandalorian
Storybook**

On sale on May 5, *Star Wars: The Mandalorian Storybook* is the latest hardcover from Disney Die-Cut Classics. With a mix of amazing visuals and intricate die-cut pages, this all-ages story retells the saga of the Mandalorian and the Child, as seen through the events of the first season of the smash hit streaming series. The armored gunfighter and his young charge are joined by ex-soldier Cara Dune, Bounty Hunter Guild leader Greef Karga, and the dependable Ugnaught rancher Kuiil in a string of adventures spanning the far reaches of the Outer Rim, staying one step ahead of Moff Gideon and the remnants of the fearsome Galactic Empire!

03



03

**Star Wars:
The Clone Wars
Character Encyclopedia:
Join the Battle!**

The Clone Wars may have ended its run, but with its characters guest-starring in *The Mandalorian* (2019-present) and a new spinoff series, *The Bad Batch*, soon to debut on Disney+, the animated series is hotter than ever.

DK Publishing's *Star Wars: The Clone Wars: Character Encyclopedia—Join the Battle!* is the perfect way to get up to speed on this vital era of *Star Wars* history, featuring more than 350 clones, Jedi, droids, bounty hunters, and other characters and teams from the Bad Batch to Bo-Katan Kryze. Written by *Star Wars* expert Jason Fry, this indispensable resource is in stores now.

Comics Roundup

Hunt down every issue or pay a high price for missing out on this month's *Star Wars* comics.

Take Cover!

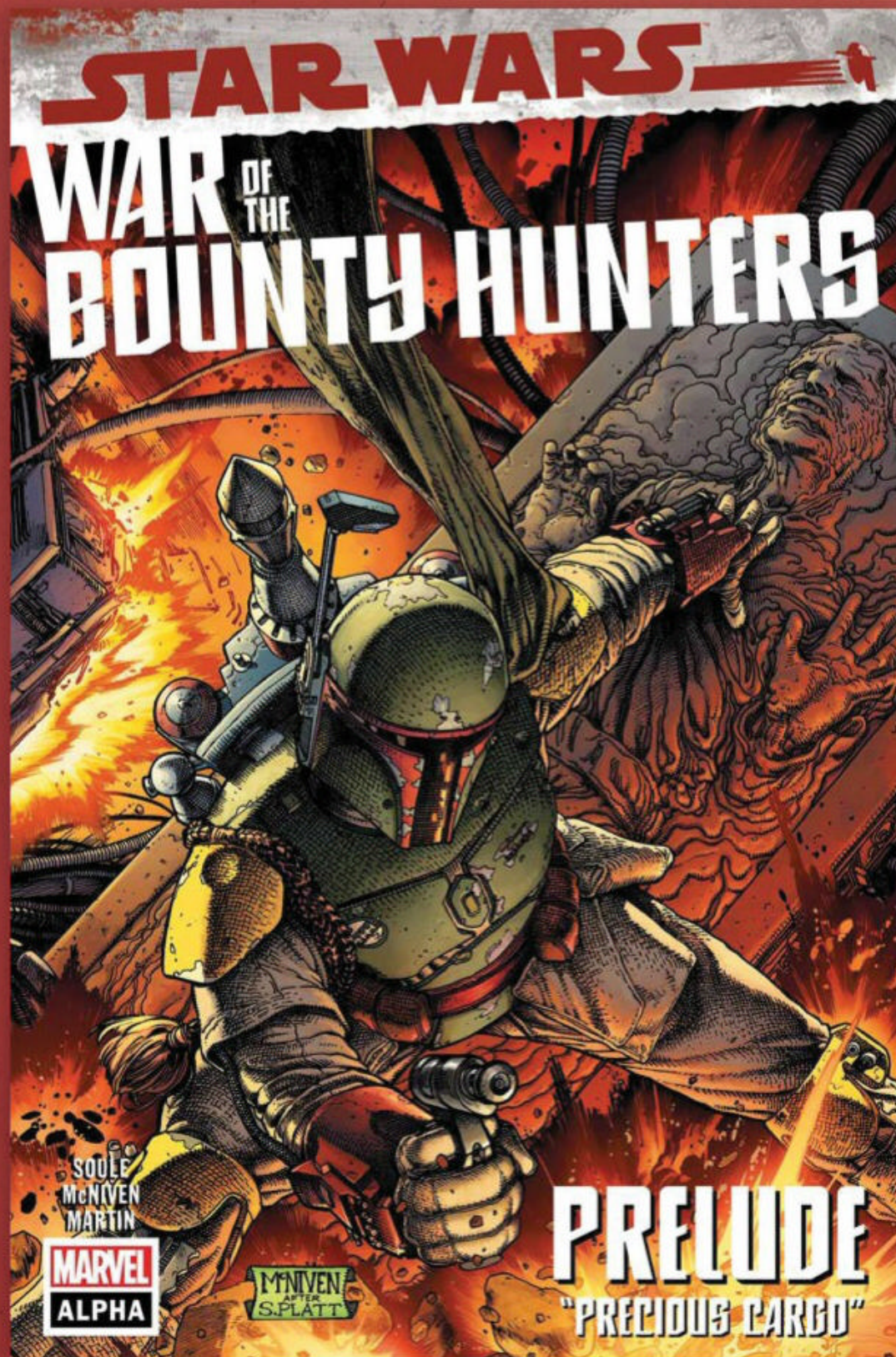
Prepare for mayhem in *Prelude to War of the Bounty Hunters*.

Across five issues releasing throughout May, Marvel Comics lays the groundwork for its massive event series, *War of the Bounty Hunters* (coming this June) with a run of connected stories from writers Charles Soule, Ethan Sacks, Greg Pak, Alyssa Wong, and their talented artist co-creators.

The epic *Prelude* event takes in each of Marvel's regular titles, with characters from the publisher's entire *The Empire Strikes Back*-era lineup preparing us for the imminent clash of galactic mercenaries, with Han Solo as the prize.

"This is a story about Boba Fett doing his thing but it builds into something much bigger, and that's what the best comic crossovers and big stories do," Charles Soule recently revealed to StarWars.com. "They tell a great story in and of themselves, but they're also the start of something, and they open a lot of new doors."

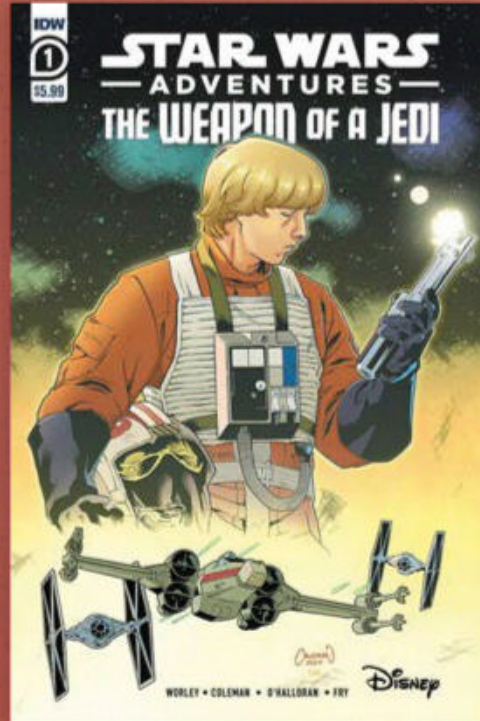
The preludes begin with "Precious Cargo," a one-shot courtesy of Soule and artist Steve McNiven, on sale May 5. *Star Wars* #13 arrives on newsstands on May 12, with "The Hunt for Han Solo," by Soule and artist Ramon Rosanas. Writer Ethan Sacks and artist Paolo Villanelli bring us *Bounty Hunters* #12 "Target Solo" on May 19, with Greg Pak and Guiu Vilanova taking point with *Darth Vader* #12, "Into the Trap" on May 26. Finally, *Doctor Aphra* #10 arrives on May 26 with "The Invitation," by Alyssa Wong and artist Ray-Anthony Height.



Star Wars Adventures: The Weapon of a Jedi #1

This two-part adaptation of Jason Fry's 2015 junior novel *Weapon of a Jedi: A Luke Skywalker Adventure* portrays the Rebel Alliance's newest hero during the aftermath of the Death Star battle, as Luke takes his place among the X-wing pilots of Red Squadron while struggling to understand inner stirrings that seem to convey the will of the Force. But with Darth Vader's Star Destroyers in hot pursuit, Luke has little time to indulge in self-reflection!

With art by Ruairi Coleman and a story adaptation by Alec Worley, *Weapon of a Jedi* from IDW Publishing is available in stores on May 26.



Star Wars: The High Republic Adventures #4

The era of the High Republic continues to unfold across multiple books and comics, as the Jedi face an assault from an unprecedented threat to galactic peace.

In issue #4 of the ongoing series from IDW Comics, written by Daniel José Older with art by Pow Rodrix, Zeen has followed the Jedi to Starlight Beacon, where she learns what it means to be a Padawan and begins her own training in the ways of the Force. Her best friend Krix, meanwhile, is struggling to survive aboard a Nihil ship. Featuring a cover by Harvey Tolibao, the issue is on sale May 5.



Star Wars Adventures #9

The latest issue of IDW's ongoing title chronicles a desperate mission undertaken by Mace Windu during the chaos of the Clone Wars.

Windu and the fast-strike clone troopers of Lightning Squadron are prepared for a Separatist ambush when they arrive on the planet Ridlay, but what they find instead is a shocking surprise! A backup story pitting Boba Fett against Han Solo, set before the events of *A New Hope* (1977), also features. The issue, written by Michael Moreci and Vita Ayala, with art by Michael Avon Oeming and Devaun Dowdy, is on sale May 26.



Incoming

Don't Miss These
Upcoming Releases



MAY

War of the Bounty Hunters Alpha Directors Cut #1

Marvel Comics

Writer: Charles Soule

Artist: Steve McNiven

Cover Artist: Steve McNiven

JUNE

The High Republic Adventures #5

IDW Comics

Writer: Daniel José Older

Artist: Harvey Tolibao

Cover Artist: Harvey Tolibao

Star Wars #14

Marvel Comics

Writer: Charles Soule

Artist: Ramon Rosanas

Cover Artist: Carlo Pagulayan

Doctor Aphra #11

Marvel Comics

Writer: Alyssa Wong

Artist: Minkyu Jung

Cover Artist:
Joshua "Sway" Swaby

Darth Vader #13

Marvel Comics

Writer: Greg Pak

Artist: Raffaele Ienco

Cover Artist: Aaron Kuder



Luminous Lore

Shining a light on *Star Wars: The High Republic*.

Til Death Do Us Part?

Keeve Trennis uncovers Sskeer's terrifying secret, in issue #5 of Marvel Comics' *The High Republic*, but is it too late?

Writer Cavan Scott and artist Ario Anindito continue to explore the High Republic in the latest installment of the ongoing Marvel Comics series, featuring a cover by Phil Noto.

Two centuries before the events of the *Star Wars* movies, in a time when the Jedi—at the height of their power—find themselves under assault from an unprecedented threat, Starlight Beacon faces a more immediate danger: a deadly infection! As a creeping alien horror overruns the symbol of galactic hope, Vernestra Rwoh and her Padawan Imri Cantaros work tirelessly to save its inhabitants.



Meanwhile, as Keeve Trennis tries to make sense of a shattering truth that has rocked her trust in Master Sskeer, the Hutts decide it's their turn to go on the offensive, with battalions of Gamorreans, Niktos, and battle-trained rancors facing off against a team of Jedi heroes!

Issue #5 of *Star Wars: The High Republic* is on sale May 12.



Profile: Master Sskeer

Species: Trandoshan
Status: Jedi Master
Height: 5 feet 6 inches
Lightsaber Blade: Blue

The Battle of Kur was a decisive point in the life of experienced Jedi Master Sskeer. Not only did he lose his good friend Jora Malli—a Togruta Jedi Master who was killed by the Nihil during the

fight—but he also lost his left arm. Some speculated that Sskeer blamed himself for Malli's death, and his friends certainly noticed a change in the already quarrelsome and opinionated Trandoshan. What no one realized was that he carried a dark secret that threatened to alter his entire world.

Sskeer's Padawan, Keeve Trennis, learned much under his tutelage, undertaking dozens of missions as he instructed her in the ways of the Force. As a result, the two formed a strong bond that continued after Trennis was formally elevated to the rank of Jedi Knight. 🕒

Light of the Jedi

Writer: Charles Soule
Publisher: Del Rey
Format: Adult novel
Available: Now

A Test of Courage

Writer: Justina Ireland
Publisher: Disney Lucasfilm Press
Format: Middle grade novel
Available: Now

The Great Jedi Rescue

Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist: Petur Antonsson
Publisher: Disney Lucasfilm Press
Format: 8x8 storybook
Available: Now

Into the Dark

Writer: Claudia Gray
Publisher: Disney Lucasfilm Press
Format: Young adult novel
Available: Now

The Rising Storm

Writer: Cavan Scott
Publisher: Del Rey
Format: Adult novel
Available: June 29, 2021

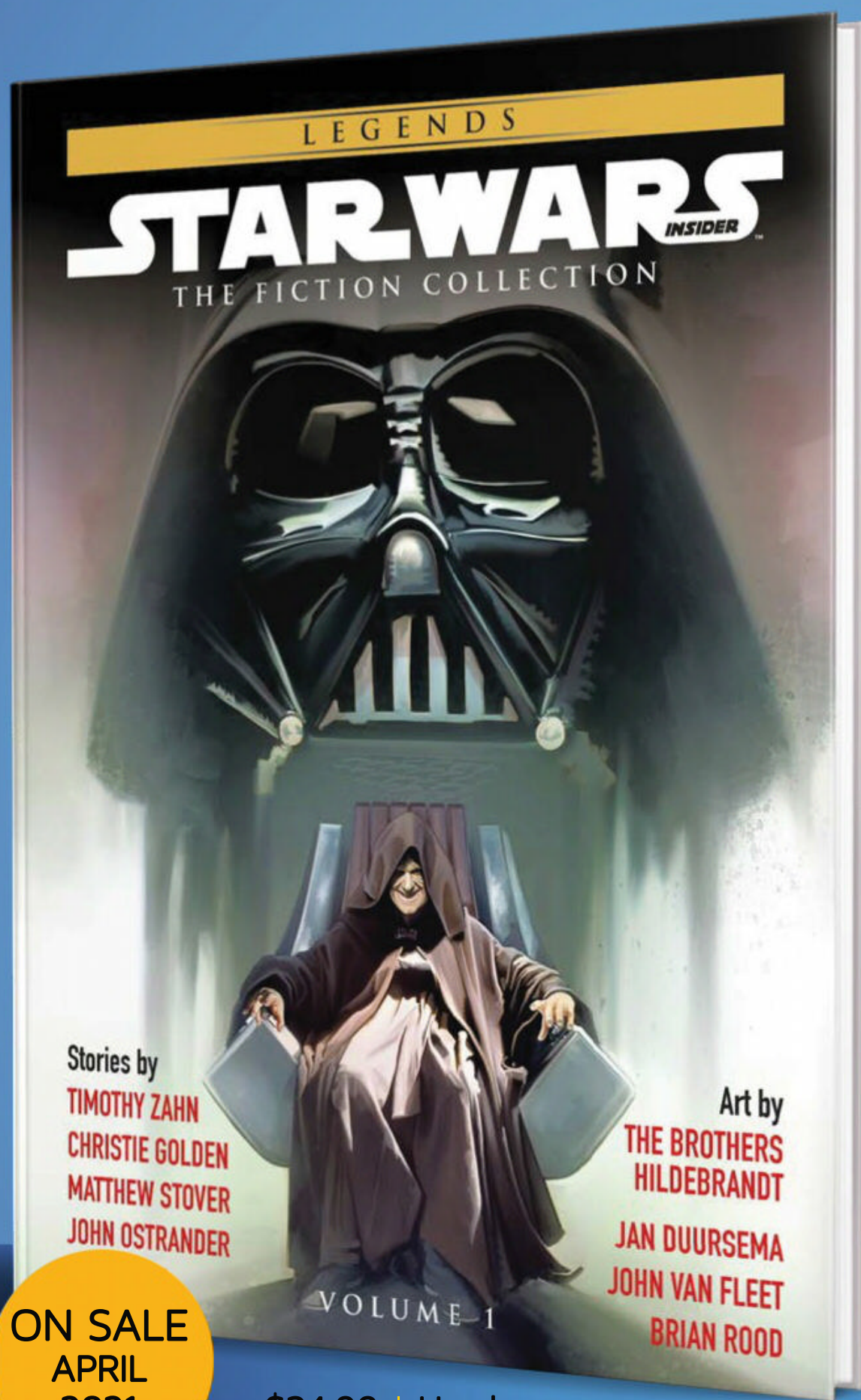
Race to Crashpoint Tower

Writer: Daniel José Older
Publisher: Disney Lucasfilm Press
Format: Middle grade novel
Available: June 29, 2021

Out of the Shadows

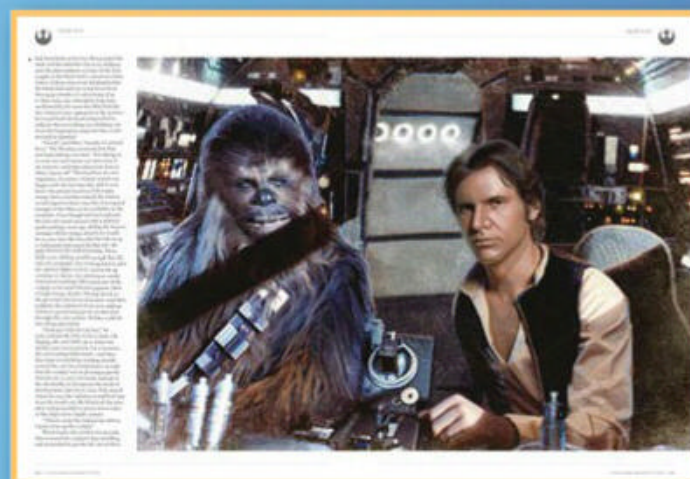
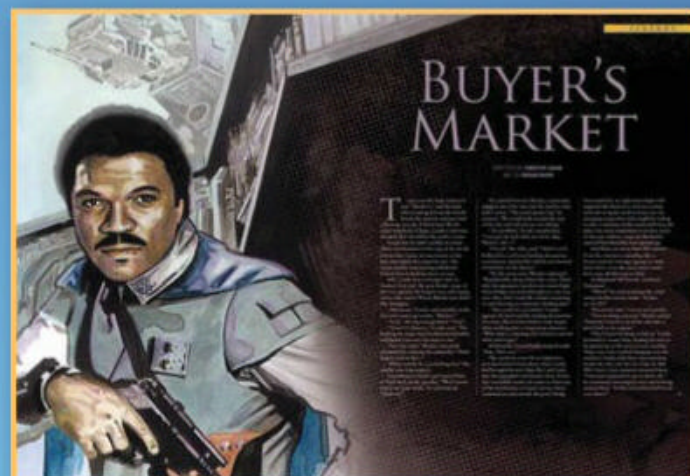
Writer: Justina Ireland
Publisher: Disney Lucasfilm Press
Format: Young adult novel
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STAR WARS™

TALES FROM THE GALAXY'S EDGE

FROM CONCEPT TO HEADSET

Star Wars Insider pulls back the digital curtain on ILMxLAB's virtual reality expansion of the planet Batuu, with director Jose Perez III and cast members Bobby Moynihan and Debra Wilson.

WORDS: AMY RATCLIFFE



Concept art by Eric Tobiason

T

here aren't that many *Star Wars* experiences more tangible than a visit to Black Spire Outpost

on Batuu, the physical world created for Disney Parks' *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*, the themed lands at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, and Walt Disney World near Orlando, Florida. From the imposing TIE echelon that looms over a First Order checkpoint to the marketplace where visitors can chomp on a ronto wrap while they shop for galactic goodies, traveling to Batuu is like stepping into your own *Star Wars* story. But what if there were yet more stories just beyond those towering spires? That's the question that ILMxLAB set out to answer in the VR experience *Star Wars: Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*.

"There's something really magical when you walk through those gates and you're surrounded by a real *Star Wars* world," says Jose Perez III, director of *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*, recalling his feelings upon first visiting the Disney Parks attraction. "It was goosebump-amazing, and in that moment I thought, 'There's a bunch of stories here that are waiting to be told.'"

From that spark of an idea came ILMxLAB's ambitious project that invites adventurers to discover previously unseen areas of Black Spire Outpost, do battle with a Guavian Death Gang cell, kick back in a local cantina, or explore the wilds of Batuu. You can even step inside a short story set during the High Republic era. And all of it accessible in immersive 360-degree virtual reality through an Oculus VR headset.

"Hopefully we've brought some new and interesting environments into the mix."

**STEVE HENRICKS,
VISUAL DIRECTOR**

01



Imagineering Adventure

Lucasfilm works closely with Walt Disney Imagineering to develop Batuu as a new galactic destination for the Disney theme parks, so it was only natural that ILMxLAB should join forces with the same team to craft the virtual version. "They've been nothing but wonderful in helping us," says Steve Henricks, visual director of *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*. "Scott Trowbridge [Walt Disney Imagineering portfolio creative executive and studio lead] and his team gave us access to all the concept art we needed, for the entire land. It made our job a lot easier. And hopefully we've brought some new and interesting environments into the mix."

The ILMxLAB team working on *Tales* were also able to draw upon the experience of developing

their previous VR project, *Vader Immortal: A Star Wars VR Series*, an interactive piece of storytelling that took players into the heart of Darth Vader's domain on Mustafar. The intent behind the virtual environment of Batuu was to offer a much less linear experience, as *Tales* producer Alyssa Finley explains, "We wanted to give users more freedom and additional opportunities for letting them explore—whether that was through something as simple as not forcing you to stand in one place for every cinematic view, or allowing you to choose which mission you would go on instead of being on one mission." Lead animator Jennifer Cha also adds that *Tales* has a much lighter palette than *Vader Immortal*, brighter and with more of an adventurous spirit in its design.



"I thought, 'There's a bunch of stories here that are waiting to be told.'"

**JOSE PEREZ III,
DIRECTOR**

02

There was one key difference between making *Vader Immortal* and this new story: the team completed *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge* remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With everyone working from home, ILMxLAB had to quickly work out how to keep the process running smoothly, from maintaining computer hardware to the sharing of large files, and even remotely directing motion-capture performances—Bobby Moynihan, for example, performed his role of Seezelslak from home. "I thought, 'Thank goodness we're at Industrial Light & Magic!'" says Perez. "If there's

01 Concept art expanding Batuu, by Russell Story (top) and Chris Voy (bottom).

02 Yoda appears in *Temple of Darkness*, voiced by Frank Oz. Concept art by Chris Voy.

03 The view of Black Spire Outpost from Seezelslak's Cantina.

one place where you'd want to be when somebody asks you to do something that is completely impossible, it's ILM."

Telling Tales

Tales from the Galaxy's Edge is far more than a recreation of the real-world locations of the Disney Parks attractions. It is a portal to a larger world of adventure, inspired by the distant peaks and inaccessible areas of the physical Batuu which create the illusion that there is much more to the planet than you can reach. "It is a huge world," says Perez. "And you wonder 'What's on the other side of that mountain?' The idea of being able to explore that was really exciting."

With a world of possibilities before them, Perez and his team realized they had to find a focal point to make sense of what they wanted to achieve. That came in the form of a key location and a well-defined player character. "As we were developing the story, we started out thinking it would be this anthology thing. But we understood really quickly that we needed a through line that would bring people into the cantina so they could start hearing these tales at all," says Perez.

THE YODA EFFECT

The legendary Jedi Master Yoda is one of a handful of established characters who appear in *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*. He appears when Seezelslak weaves a tale that puts players into the High Republic setting. Bringing a character such as Yoda into the story was no small undertaking, but everyone seemed thrilled to have the opportunity to tell more of Yoda's story and to work with Frank Oz.

"As far as childhood dream stuff, that was intimidating," says director Jose Perez III. "How do we direct Frank Oz about a Yoda line? He *is* Yoda. But he's the nicest guy, and he came in, just oozing that wisdom. He was very eager to share his knowledge of the character. We would sit there and talk about a single moment for twenty minutes, sometimes, to make sure that it was really authentic. He cares so much about Yoda and what the character means, and to be able to help support that vision that they started so long ago with Yoda was crazy magical."

"Frank was incredibly informative not only in the voice but in actual creation of the Yoda that you see and experience," Steve Henricks adds. "He had a lot of insight into how Yoda ages over time, how old he should be, how he should walk, his mannerisms. All those things were incredibly valuable to the team. It was just a delight to spend any time with him, even virtually."

"It was intimidating writing lines for Yoda and C-3PO because people know those characters so well," says writer Ross Beeley. "Then we heard we were getting Frank Oz and Anthony Daniels. Handling such big, iconic characters was exciting *and* nerve-racking, but both of them, in some way or another, said, 'Oh, these are good lines for this character.' Well, Frank said, 'I've had to rewrite less of these lines than in other things.' I'll take that!"



03

► Players therefore take on the role of a droid repair technician as they begin their virtual *Star Wars* adventure, an occupation that was chosen in part because Perez loves droids. He wanted a central character with a practical skill, and remote droids that provide the player with support in combat that can be repaired when they break down. Giving the player such an everyday role would also allow them to discover their personal strengths through the series of extraordinary events they would experience.

Being a droid repair technician means players interact with Mubo, the proprietor of the Droid Depot that guests can really visit in the physical *Galaxy's Edge*. However, *Tales* takes players beyond the limits of that retail space. "What we thought about in terms of the environment was, 'This is Mubo's place—what's behind it? What's behind that cast-member door right there?'" Steve Henricks explains. "We literally built Mubo's workshop right to where that real door is. You can see the overhead gantry carrying parts in and out of the Droid Depot. Now, when you go into the park and walk into Droid Depot, you're going to know what's behind that

"What we thought about in terms of the environment was, 'This is Mubo's place—what's behind it? What's behind that cast-member door right there?'"

STEVE HENRICKS, VISUAL DIRECTOR

04

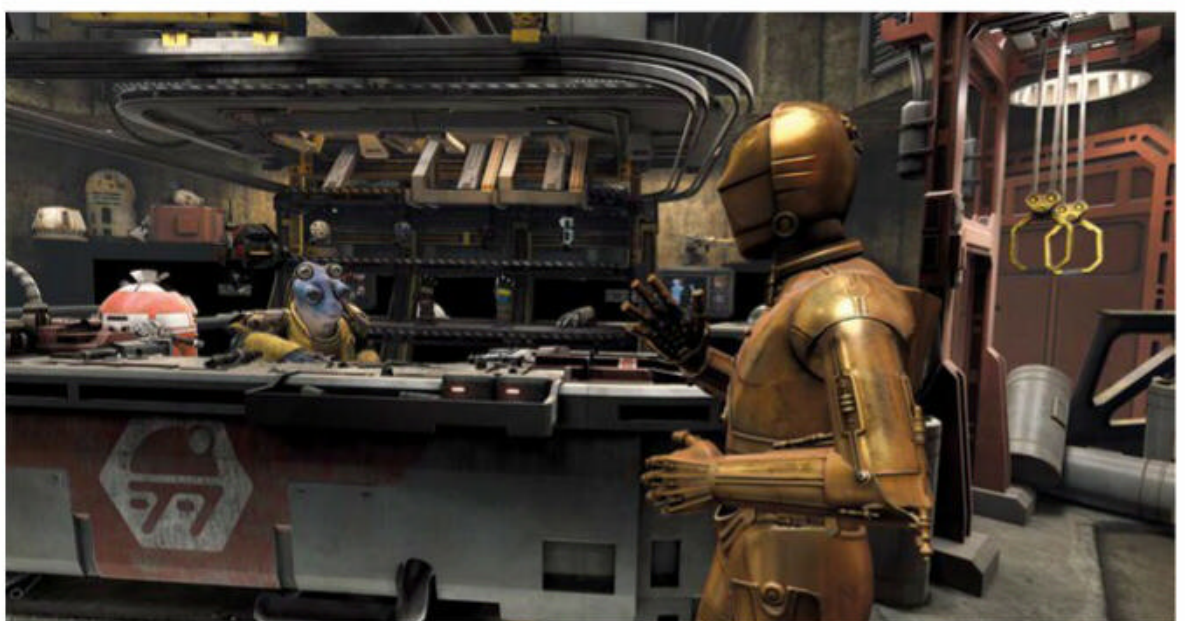


04 The physical Droid Depot found at *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* is right beside...

05 ...Mubo's workshop in *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*.

06 Concept art of Mubo's workshop by Michael Sheffels.

05



door; Mubo's back there and you'll know exactly what he's doing."

As Mubo doesn't have a physical presence in the parks, ILMxLAB worked with Lucasfilm Story Group and Imagineering to flesh out Mubo's personality and his obsession with droids, further breaking down barriers between the real and the virtual versions of the world. That desire to stretch the limits of storytelling extended

to how the team put the tales into *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*.

"We knew we wanted a story structure that would let us jump through different areas," recalls Perez. "When we started digging into Batuu and Black Spire Outpost with Matt Martin [Lucasfilm creative executive] and James Waugh [Lucasfilm vice president of content and strategy], so many things started to click into place and worked with where we were going."

The first idea locked in for *Tales* was Seezelslak's Cantina, a setting where players can hang out before heading beyond the confines of Black Spire Outpost and into the wilds of Batuu on missions for Mubo, or indulge in the barkeep's library of holographic adventure stories. Both offer opportunities for excitement, but Seezelslak's holo's allowed ILMxLAB to bring the entire *Star Wars* galaxy within the purview of *Tales*, including its newest era. ►



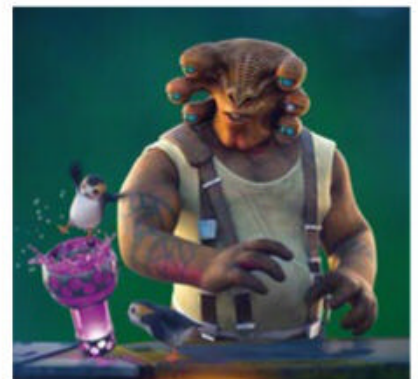
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“The physicality of standing behind a bar and bartending, I love it.”

**BOBBY MOYNIHAN,
SEEZELSLAK**

BOBBY MOYNIHAN

BEHIND THE BAR AT SEEZELSLAK’S CANTINA



CANTINA COOL

When a player visits Seezelslak’s Cantina, they can help with his porg problem, clean up dishes and glasses, play tunes on the jukebox, or throw repulsor darts. It’s a visually dynamic environment, and the look for the cantina came about early on, as Steve Henricks explains. “We obviously had a lot of reference from other cantinas in *Star Wars*. They are the place to be, but we had to differentiate ourselves,” he recalls. “The idea came up that it’s his ship, and he just dismantles it and makes a bar out of it, and then puts it back together whenever he needs to take off. So that’s kind of where it came from. We had incredible work from the concept-art team to really help bolster the look of it, and our environment team did a fantastic job realizing it.”

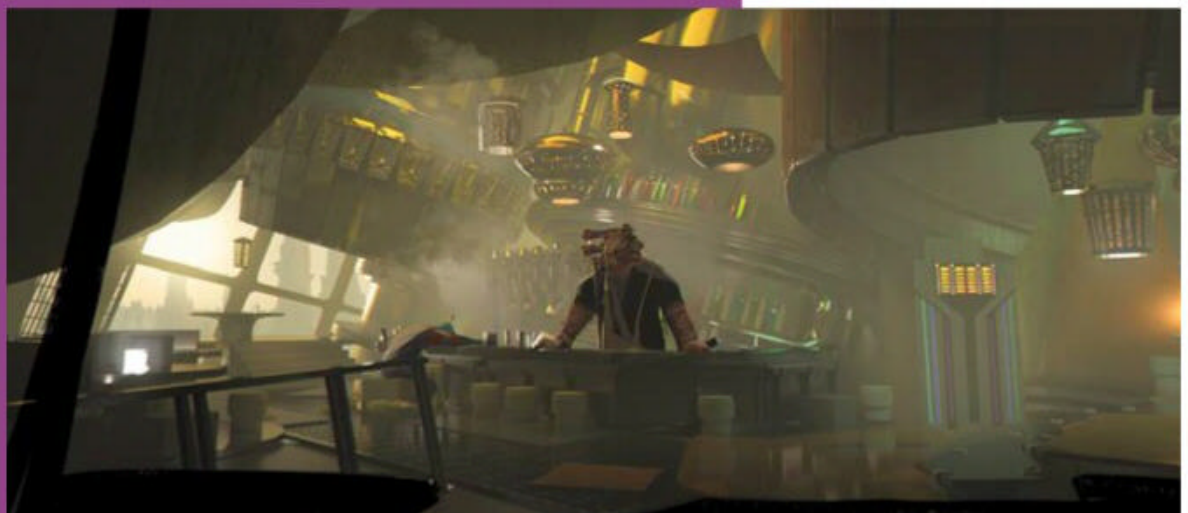
little things I encountered when I was bartending. If you hang around in the bar long enough and you aren’t doing anything, Seezelslak just starts throwing out information. We recorded a whole bunch of weird facts and stuff about the *Star Wars* galaxy, and they let me improvise.

“I hope I get to do Seezelslak in full motion capture one day,” Moynihan adds. “The physicality of standing behind a bar and bartending, I love it. I did it for a very long time. There’s something very romantic about it to me. Playing the game and walking around in my own *Star Wars* cantina, I don’t ever want to leave. It’s the greatest feeling.”

Visitors to Black Spire Outpost likely know about Oga’s Cantina, but it isn’t the only leisure destination in town. Tucked away in a less accessible spot (and only within *Tales from the Galaxy’s Edge*), Seezelslak’s Cantina has definite dive-bar vibes.

Seezelslak himself is a goofy, gregarious Azumel bartender, voiced by actor Bobby Moynihan. No stranger to the galaxy far, far away, Moynihan voiced Orka in *Star Wars Resistance* (2018-2020), and was already a big fan of *Vader Immortal* when he was approached about playing the character by James Waugh. “I was working on The LEGO *Star Wars Holiday Special*, writing some jokes for that,” Moynihan remembers, “and James said, ‘Hey, we’re doing this VR experience. Is that something you would like to do?’” I said, ‘Are you crazy?’”

Thanks to COVID restrictions, Moynihan recorded his voice tracks and facial capture at home, bringing his past experience as a bartender to bear on his performance. “I told Jose, the director, about all the weird



07 Concept art for Seezelslak’s Cantina by Chris Voy.



ENCOUNTERS WITH THE GUAVIAN DEATH GANG

Life in droid repair is relatively calm until the Guavian Death Gang shows up, led by the formidable Quarren pirate Tara Rashin, as played by Debra Wilson. Having appeared as Cere Junda in *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order*, Wilson is exuberant about her latest *Star Wars* role. "I remember booking the audition and I thought, 'Oh, this is going to be fun!'" enthuses Wilson. "Bringing a character like this to life, it really wasn't a matter of just being a badass. All beings are relatable on one level or another, so with Tara it was a matter of seeing the potential of where this being was going to go with her actions and her reactions."

Composer Bear McCreary's theme for Tara Rashin adds to the character's sinister and threatening presence. A lifelong fan of John Williams, McCreary wanted to honor the maestro's orchestral *Star Wars* themes but using slightly different genres and sounds that felt a little more in-universe. "The thing that really clicked for me in 'Tara's Theme' was the voice, and layering in strong female vocals," McCreary says. "Tara's dangerous, and she's confident and ruthless. I thought a deep, alto register would be a cool way of underlining those ideas. So, while I wrote a theme that could very easily be played on French horns and trombones, I thought guttural, female vocalizations, drums, and weird electronics doing the same thing might be a cool and effective way to approach it instead."

remain static. "We have some pretty ambitious ideas for where we want to go, especially with Seezelslak's tales," Finley confides. "We really see those tales as a place to experiment with the stories that can be told, and the perspectives we can play around with. There's some really exciting stuff coming in that realm, as well as more adventure, more you-versus-the-world of Batuu, and all the things that it can throw at you." 🙌

08

► The High Republic

Seezelslak is the kind of guy who has stories, and he's ready to share them. That's how players find themselves in the High Republic era, specifically a story called "Temple of Darkness."

Set some centuries before the events of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999), the interconnected series of books and comics debuted in early 2021, delving into the characters, politics, and happenings of this previously unexplored era. When James Waugh pointed out that, as Lucasfilm were opening up a new era of *Star Wars* storytelling, it seemed perfect that *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge* could be part of it. "It became a triple treat," recalls

"It was really exciting, because it meant we were building the current period of Batuu, building its history, and building a new section of the world."

ALYSSA FINLEY, PRODUCER

08 Debra Wilson voices Quarren pirate Tara Rashin.

09 Players take on the role of Jedi Ady Sun'Zee in *Temple of Darkness*. Concept art by Evan Whitefield.

Alyssa Finley. "It was really exciting, because it meant we were building the current period of Batuu, building its history, and building a new section of the world all at once."

The player takes on a new role in *Temple of Darkness*, that of Ady Sun'Zee, a headstrong Padawan studying at a remote Jedi temple on Batuu. While examining some artifacts, something goes awry and a relic imbued with the dark side floods the temple with evil, killing every Jedi at the site except for Ady. In desperation, she sends a distress signal to the Jedi Council, resulting in an appearance by a familiar figure. In a coup for *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*, Frank Oz reprised his role as the wise Jedi Master Yoda, joining the likes of Anthony Daniels who appears as C-3PO in virtual reality for the first time. Will other *Star Wars* performers return to their famous roles via the experience? Only time will tell. Evolution is key to *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*, and the virtual world will not

09



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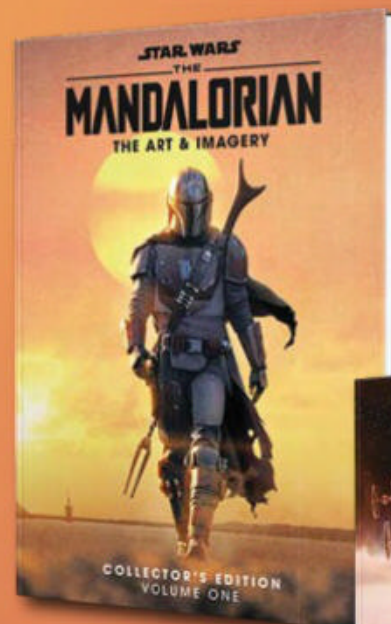
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TIMOTHY ZAHN

HEIR OF AN EMPIRE

To commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire*, the author walks *Star Wars Insider* through its inception and the creation of Grand Admiral Thrawn.

WORDS: BRANDON WAINERDI



01 The original cover art for Timothy Zahn's novel *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire*, by artist Tom Jung.



I

n May of 1991, Timothy Zahn's novel *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire* premiered at the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list. Set five years after *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983), this first book in what would become known as the *Thrawn Trilogy* reintroduced the world to the heroes of the original film trilogy, and to a mysterious new villain that quickly established himself in the pantheon of ultimate *Star Wars* bad guys: the blue-skinned Chiss tactician, Grand Admiral Thrawn.

Shortly before the publication of *Thrawn Ascendancy: Greater Good*, *Star Wars Insider* spoke to Zahn about his latest novel and the creation of its striking villain.

Star Wars Insider: What was your initial *Star Wars* experience?

Timothy Zahn: I fell in love with all of it about one minute into *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), when that Star Destroyer appeared, and then kept going and kept going. It was the first time I'd ever had a real sense of *size* in a movie. I was hooked from that point on.

I saw it another 17 or 18 more times in a theater during that first run, and I've been a *Star Wars* fan ever since. I always have a Star Destroyer in the first scene of my *Star Wars* novels, just like the movies.

Heir to the Empire was the first new *Star Wars* story for some years. How did you first get involved with the project?

It came via a completely out-of-the-blue phone call. I had no idea that new *Star Wars* was in the works. My agent called me one Tuesday afternoon in early November 1989, and simply said, "We've got an *interesting* offer here." Then he went on to tell me that Bantam and Lucasfilm had made a deal to publish a trilogy of *Star Wars* books, picking up after *Return of the Jedi* and, well, I was being offered to write them. So, we

talked about it for an hour and I said that I would give them my answer the next day. Then I went off and panicked!

It was a chance to jumpstart my career in a way that I'd never thought possible, but it was also a chance for me to fall flat on my face in front of millions of *Star Wars* fans (*laughs*). On top of that, I had never written a trilogy before: a single story told in three volumes, in 300,000 words. But by the next morning, I had enough of a germ of an idea that I thought it could be possible. The big question was whether I could

capture the atmosphere of *Star Wars*, but I knew I needed to at least try. I went ahead and said yes, and it seems to be working out so far.

"The big question was whether I could capture the atmosphere of *Star Wars*, but I knew I needed to at least try."

What was your initial pitch for the *Thrawn Trilogy*? Was there anything that changed as it evolved into the books we now know?

There was a fairly extensive outline for the first book, but usually as I write, I don't follow my outline completely, as things and ideas are constantly changing. So, for the second two books I did more of a brief outline, just to show

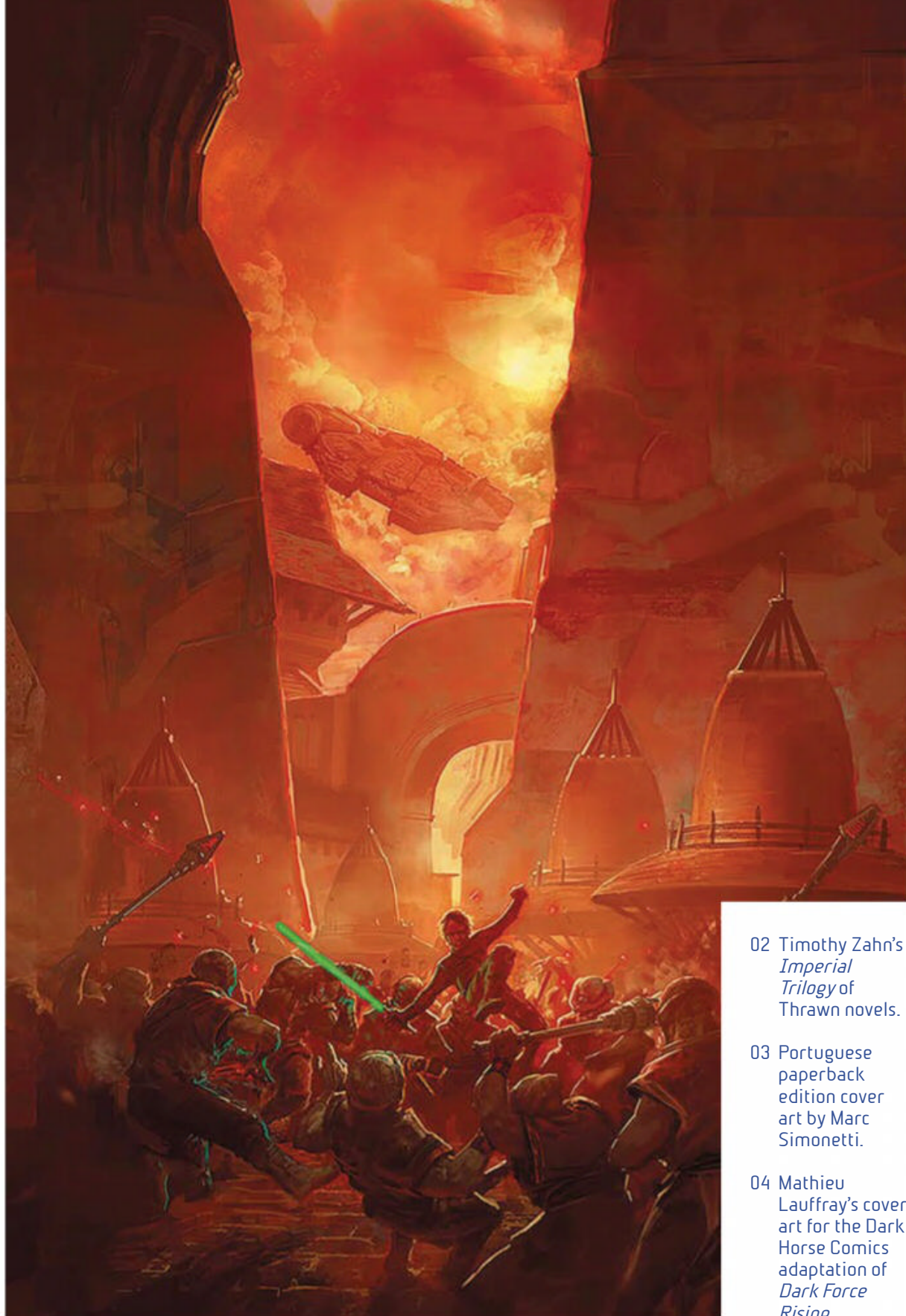
where the major plot threads were going to go. And then, after the first book was finished, I revised those other outlines, because I was better placed to go into a bit more detail, since I knew what was going to be happening in them.

In terms of changes, most of the things that needed to be were caught in that outline stage. For instance, the insane clone of Jorus C'baoth was initially going to be the insane clone of Obi-Wan Kenobi. And the Noghri were going to be called "the Sith," since Darth Vader had been referred to as the "Lord of the Sith." At the time, however, we weren't sure if George Lucas was going to do anything more with the idea of the Sith, so that was off-limits. In retrospect, I'm very glad to have lost those elements, because the books turned out better that way.

What resources did you refer to as you researched and wrote the *Thrawn Trilogy*?

No novelist had been allowed to write anything after *Return of the Jedi* before, so I had the advantage of a completely blank canvas. All of the research I needed to do was to watch the original movies and delve into West End Games





02 Timothy Zahn's *Imperial Trilogy* of Thrawn novels.

03 Portuguese paperback edition cover art by Marc Simonetti.

04 Mathieu Lauffray's cover art for the Dark Horse Comics adaptation of *Dark Force Rising*.



04

03

sourcebooks, since those had done a great job at pulling all the best things from the previous spin-off novels like, say, the Z-95 Headhunter ship.

The West End Games material was extremely valuable to me, because I didn't have to keep reinventing the wheel. If I needed a vehicle, there was already a vehicle that would work, I knew what it looked like, and its statistics were written down. If I needed a species, there were whole write-ups I could draw from. Those were so helpful in establishing the local color of the galaxy, the background that I put my story against. All I had to do was pick and choose.

I also heard from gamers, later on, that they had always felt a little bit like they were at the "kid's table," and by writing about things that they had been doing for years with the role-playing game, I was kind of inviting them over to the adult table. That was really cool. ▶



THE THRAWN IDENTITY

Timothy Zahn has followed the career of the blue-skinned Grand Admiral across 10 novels since 1991, with an 11th due in 2022. The books, however, follow two iterations of Thrawn, with the books published by Del Rey since 2017 being the character's official *Star Wars* story. The original *Thrawn Trilogy*, and its follow-up *The Hand of Thrawn*, fall under the Legends category.

Star Wars: The Imperial Trilogy

Published by Del Rey

- *Thrawn* (2017)
- *Thrawn: Alliances* (2018)
- *Thrawn: Treason* (2019)

Star Wars: The Ascendancy Trilogy

Published by Del Rey

- *Thrawn Ascendancy: Chaos Rising* (2020)
- *Thrawn Ascendancy: Greater Good* (2021)
- *Thrawn: The Ascendancy Book 3*

LEGENDS

Star Wars: The Thrawn Trilogy

Published by Bantam Spectra

- *Heir to the Empire* (1991)
- *Dark Force Rising* (1992)
- *The Last Command* (1993)

Star Wars: The Hand of Thrawn Duology

Published by Bantam Spectra

- *Specter of the Past* (1997)
- *Vision of the Future* (1998)

- How did you approach the crafting of original heroes and villains such as Talon Karrde, Mara Jade, and Pellaeon, and ensuring they would fit within the *Star Wars* mythos?

The goal was to make the book feel like *Star Wars*. Every fictional universe has its own sense, its own style: *Star Trek* does, *Firefly* does, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* does. If you can't capture that feeling, you don't have *Star Wars*—you just have the adventure of space heroes named Han, Luke, and Leia.

When inventing new characters, you have to ensure they fit into that galaxy. You can visualize them interacting with Leia, or appearing in the background of one of the original movies.

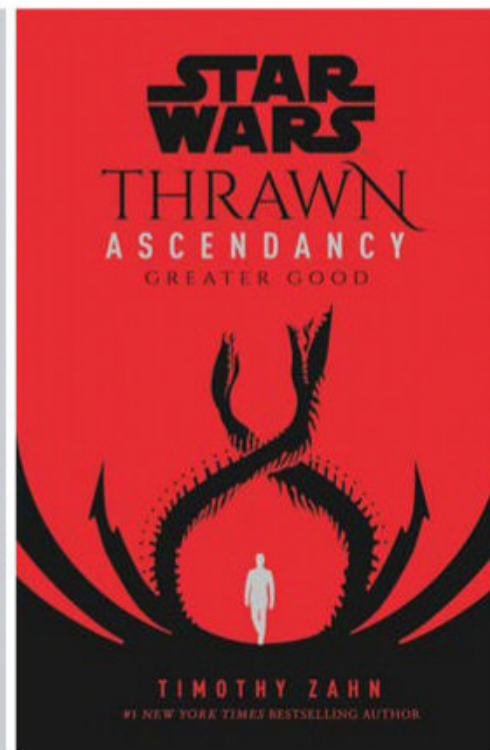
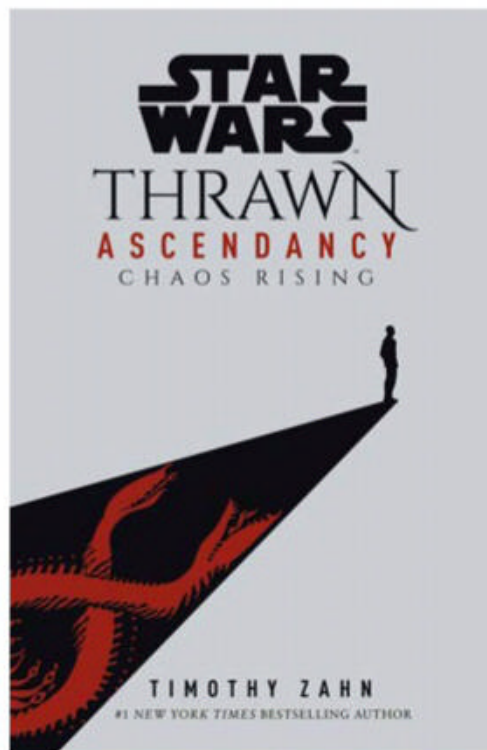
Talon Karrde was part of the same smuggler fraternity that Han used to belong to. Mara Jade was a cast-off from the collapse of the Empire, who had a specialized talent but was kind of adrift. Gilad Pellaeon was a good, although not brilliant Imperial officer,

and he made for a good counterpoint to the genius of Thrawn. I could picture each of these people showing up in the original trilogy, fitting in with the characters and storyline.

That's the way that I sorted it out: If I needed a character to play some particular role in the story, what kind

“I wanted to make [Thrawn] a non-human, on the grounds that, if he got to be a Grand Admiral, he } had to be something very special.”

05



of person would it be? And then, what were the details of that person that would make them fit into the *Star Wars* galaxy?

What was the thought process behind Grand Admiral being the main Imperial antagonist for your trilogy?

I wanted to capture the *Star Wars* feeling, but I did not want to go over the same territory that George Lucas had already gone over, so that meant no superweapon, no Death Star, no Darth Vader-type, no Emperor-type. Which left me thinking, ‘Okay, so what else have we got?’

Vader and the Emperor ruled by manipulation and fear, so, how about somebody who would lead through loyalty? What kind of character could inspire that type of loyalty? He needed to be a strategic and tactical genius, so that they'd know they had a good chance of winning. He cared about his troops. He was willing to accept good suggestions from subordinates. And then, finally, since we did not see a lot of aliens in the Empire, I wanted to make him a non-human, on the grounds that, if he got to be a Grand Admiral, he had to be something very special.

You take that equation, and Thrawn just kind of falls out of it.

As you've fleshed out Thrawn's story, how has the character changed over the past 30 years?

In the original *Thrawn Trilogy*, he was in command: he was running the Empire and got to tell people what to do. In what we're calling the *Imperial Trilogy* (*Thrawn*, *Thrawn: Alliances*, *Thrawn: Treason*) and the new *Ascendancy Trilogy*, he is not the one in overall charge. He has limitations imposed on all sides. And a lot of what I'm able to do in the *Ascendancy*

06



05 Books one and two in Zahn's *Ascendancy Trilogy*.

06 Thrawn has appeared on screen in *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018), voiced by actor Lars Mikkelsen.



07



Trilogy is explore his interactions with other people. It is still Thrawn, but he's thrown into new challenges, because the people around him limit what he can and cannot do, embroiled in situations that he is not in full control over.

Thrawn has been compared to Sherlock Holmes, with Pellaeon and Eli Vanto being his Watson-like foils. But the big difference between Thrawn and Holmes is that Holmes was always impatient with people who weren't as smart as him. With Thrawn, if you are teachable, he will take the time to teach you, especially if he sees the potential in you. He acts as a mentor in a way Holmes never did, and I think that adds a lot to Thrawn's character.

He is still learning about trust and friendship. I don't know if he really thinks of anybody as an ally, but I think he is slowly figuring out that there are people who really will stand by you.

With *Star Wars Rebels* and now thanks to *The Mandalorian*, more people are being introduced to your books, and to Thrawn in particular.

The cool thing about *Star Wars* is that there is an entry point for every generation: mine was the original trilogy, while later generations got the prequels, *The Clone Wars*, the sequels, and these new animated shows. A lot of the people who started with *Rebels* did so maybe before seeing any of the movies, let alone reading any of the books. So, by sprinkling Thrawn

“The cool thing about *Star Wars* is that there is an entry point for every generation.”

08



through *Rebels* and now a mention in *The Mandalorian*, he's staying up to speed with his growing audience.

***Heir to the Empire* premiered #1 on the *New York Times* Bestseller list. How do you feel about that initial reception, and the continued appeal of those characters?**

It has been phenomenal. It's something you always hope for as a writer, but there's no way you can anticipate it. You hope your characters connect with the readers, but all you can do is write the best story you can. And then it's up to the readers.

Thrawn. Mara Jade. Talon Karrde. They captured the imagination of *Star Wars* fans, and that has been gratifying and humbling. I set out to write a good story. What I didn't anticipate was that it would affect people's lives. 🙏

07 Mara Jade, as drawn by Mathieu Lauffray for Dark Horse Comics.

08 Mathieu Lauffray's cover for the *Heir to the Empire* graphic novel.

**“WHEREVER
I GO, HE GOES.”**
THE MANDALORIAN





Season Two Companion

In the second part of *Star Wars Insider*'s companion guide to the hit Disney+ series, we take a look at *The Mandalorian*'s astonishing sophomore season.

WORDS: KRISTIN BAVER



ollowing its triumphant first run, *The Mandalorian* returned to Disney+ on

October 30, 2020, with even greater visual and storytelling ambition than before.

Mando's mission to reunite the Child with his people evolved into a quest that took the pair to

dangerous worlds, where the bounty hunter encountered several familiar figures from the *Star Wars* galaxy. Along the way, their bond became deeper, leading to an emotional season finale.

With a long wait until Season Three of *The Mandalorian* ahead of us, *Star Wars Insider* concludes our companion to the 16 chapters of this epic tale already available on Disney+.



CHAPTER 9

The Marshal

Directed and Written by Jon Favreau
First Airdate: October 30, 2020

Returning to Tatooine, the Mandalorian begins a search for others of his kind in the hopes of finding help to reunite the Child with his people.

The second season premiere began to connect the series more closely to the extended *Star Wars* galaxy, exploring creatures previously only hinted at in the original trilogy, like the krayt dragon, and introducing Timothy Olyphant as Cobb Vanth, an Outer Rim marshal who wore very recognizable Mandalorian armor that once belonged to Boba Fett. Vanth originally appeared in the book *Star Wars: Aftermath*, by Chuck Wendig.

In addition to Pedro Pascal's return as the bounty hunter known as the Mandalorian, the episode's cast list included John Leguizamo as Gor Koresh, Amy Sedaris as Peli Motto, and Temuera Morrison, making his first appearance as the unmasked Boba Fett.

TRIVIA

Numerous creatures in the second season owe their design roots to earlier *Star Wars* storytelling. In *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), the sand-scoured skeleton of a krayt dragon was all we saw of the mighty beast, half buried in the Tatooine desert. Concept designer Doug Chiang and his team were therefore able to reimagine the creature for *The Mandalorian* Chapter 9. The terrifying ice spiders from Chapter 10 were directly inspired by a piece of concept art created by Ralph McQuarrie for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980).



CHAPTER 10

The Passenger

Directed by Peyton Reed

Written by Jon Favreau

First Airdate: November 6, 2020

A mysterious passenger with precious cargo joins the Mandalorian and the Child on their journey.

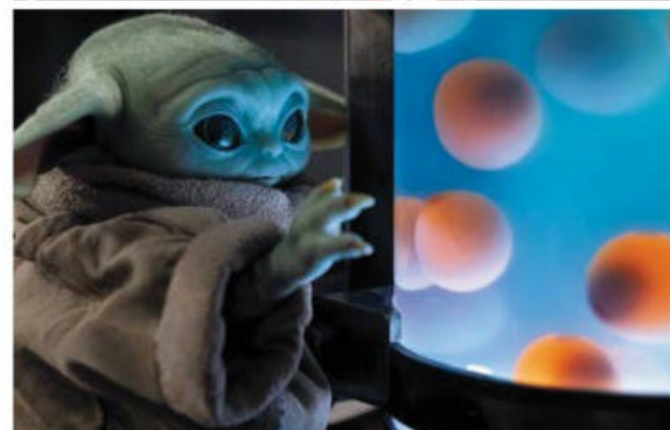
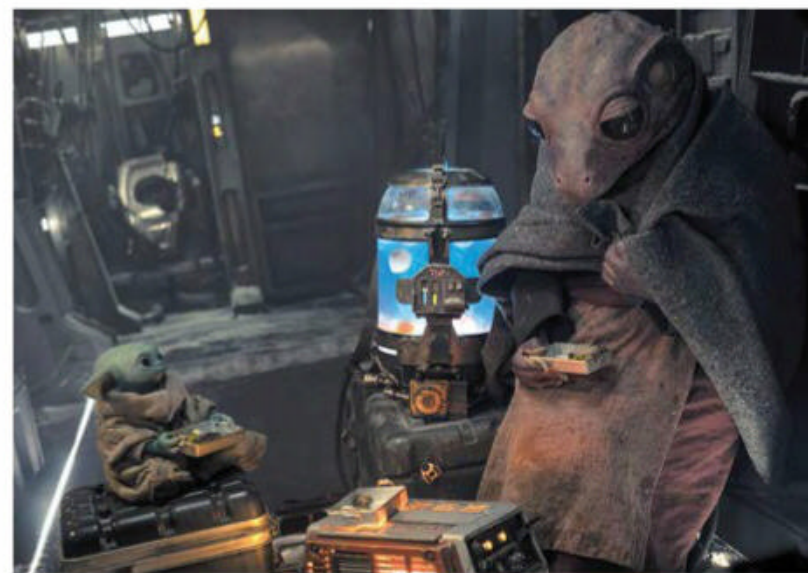
Chapter 10 took its lead from the genre-morphing fun of *Star Wars*, adding an infusion of horror thriller to the space-western, fantasy-saga vibe. After being forced to crash-land on a foreboding ice planet, the hatchling ice spiders that terrorized Mando and his associates had a birth cycle familiar to fans of Ridley Scott's science-fiction horror movie, *Alien* (1979).

TRIVIA

Having created its own library of quotable dialogue, *The Mandalorian* has referenced famous lines from other *Star Wars* stories. Chapter 10's, "This was not part of the deal," was a nod to Lando Calrissian's frustrations in *The Empire Strikes Back*. In Chapter 5, the Mandalorian's gruff, "She's no good to us dead," echoes Boba Fett's concerns from the same film.

In an episode largely devoid of unmasked human actors, Misty Rosas, the performer who embodied the ugnaught Kuiil in the first season, returned for an emotionally resonant turn as the character

known only as "Frog Lady." To provide her voice, the prolific Dee Bradley Baker—known as the voice of every clone trooper in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020)—lent the character his "frog speak" talents, while Richard Ayoade made a cameo as the voice of a now-dismantled droid Zero, last seen in Season One's Chapter 6, "The Prisoner." Comedy actor Paul Sun-Hyung Lee also made his debut as New Republic X-wing pilot Carson Teva.



Chapter 11 director Bryce Dallas Howard (second from left).



CHAPTER 11

The Heiress

Directed by Bryce Dallas Howard

Written by Jon Favreau

First Airdate: November 13, 2020

The Mandalorian delivers his passenger to Trask where he finds trouble on the tumultuous seas and unexpected allies.

The trio of Mandalorians we met on Trask were led by Bo-Katan Kryze, played for the first time in live-action by Katee Sackhoff. Sackhoff, who has spent her career playing tough but vulnerable characters, already knew the role well, having spent nearly a decade playing Kryze—first as the voice actor for the character in *The Clone Wars*, and later in *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018). "She just is Bo-Katan to me," executive producer Dave Filoni has said of Sackhoff. Newcomers Mercedes Varnado (as Koska Reeves) and Simon Kassianides (as Axe Woves) rounded out Kryze's crew of rogue warriors, while Titus Welliver guest-starred as their fearsome Imperial foe. Giancarlo Esposito's Moff Gideon made his presence felt via hologram.

CHAPTER 12

The Siege

Directed by Carl Weathers

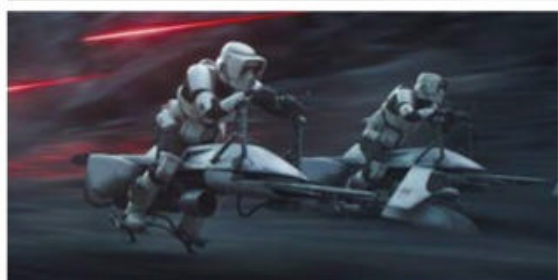
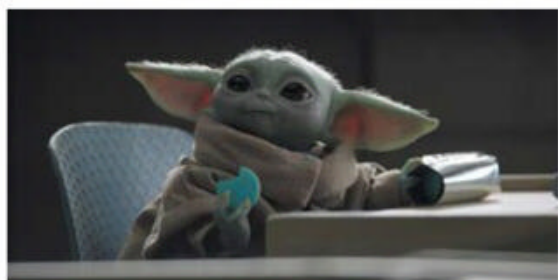
Written by Jon Favreau

First Airdate: November 20, 2020

Back on Nevarro, the Mandalorian reconnects with old friends to help rid the world of the Empire once and for all.

In his directorial debut for the series, Carl Weathers pulled double duty in front of the camera, reprising his role as Greef Karga alongside Gina Carano as Cara Dune. To round out the Season One reunion, Horatio Sanz returned (free of the carbonite slab) as the Mythrol, while Omid Abtahi's Dr. Pershing made a reappearance.

The episode introduced us to a very different Nevarro than the one we left in Season One, turned around thanks to the efforts of Magistrate Karga and Marshal Dune. In place of desolate streets and cronies of the Empire, a bustling, colorful market took center stage, and Karga had even opened a school—where the Child discovered a taste for “blue macarons.”



CHAPTER 13

The Jedi

Directed and Written by Dave Filoni

First Airdate: November 27, 2020

The Mandalorian tracks down former Jedi Ahsoka Tano on Corvus in his quest to return the Child to his kind.

The live-action debut of Ahsoka Tano, played by Rosario Dawson, could only have been helmed by Dave Filoni, who co-created

the character alongside George Lucas for *The Clones Wars* in 2008. The young Togruta was one of the first characters Filoni sketched for the animated series. Introducing Ahsoka, a veteran of the Clone Wars with long experience in the ways of the Force, gave the showrunners an organic way in

which to reveal the true name of the Child—Grogu.

Although Ahsoka's debut had long been rumored, Filoni was reluctant to introduce the beloved character into the series any sooner than Chapter 13. “I intentionally did not do anything with her in Season One, because I didn't want to mess it up,” Filoni has said.


“Rosario's done all the research. She knows the character, but now she has to become it in a way that's never happened before.” Ahsoka's live-action introduction also meant makeup designer Brian Sipe had to find the right balance between the character's animated look and a physical, real-world interpretation.

Exquisitely inspired by the Samurai films of Akira Kurosawa, the episode featured a cameo by Michael Biehn as the mercenary Lang and special guest star Diana Lee Inosanto as the Magistrate of Calodan Morgan Elsbeth. The Magistrate's face-off with Tano was the first live-action *Star Wars* duel to take place between two female combatants.

TRIVIA

In Chapter 13, Ahsoka Tano grilled Magistrate Morgan Elsbeth for information on the whereabouts of Grand Admiral Thrawn. Introduced in author Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire* trilogy of novels in 1991, the cunning, blue-skinned Chiss has enjoyed a long literary history, and became the main antagonist for the crew of the *Ghost* in *Star Wars Rebels*.





**"I LIKE FIRSTS.
GOOD OR BAD,
THEY'RE ALWAYS
MEMORABLE."**

AHSOKA TANO

WHO IS AHSOKA TANO?

Once a promising young student of the Jedi Order, Ahsoka Tano survived the Clone Wars, fought the rise of the Empire, and lived to see the New Republic.

The 14-year-old Togruta served as Padawan to Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker for much of the conflict between the Republic and the Separatists. She ultimately walked away from her master and the Jedi Order after being expelled under false accusations of bombing the sacred Jedi Temple on Coruscant. But Ahsoka continued to fight for what she believed in, exemplifying the best qualities of the Jedi even as she claimed to no longer be a part of their creed, and aided Bo-Katan Kryze and her people to unseat Maul during the Siege of Mandalore.

After Order 66 was given, Ahsoka and her friend Captain Rex were among a few scattered survivors who endured the rise of the Empire's despotic rule. Using the code name Fulcrum, Ahsoka was instrumental in helping fledgling rebel cells form a cohesive Rebel Alliance in the time leading up to the Galactic Civil War.

CHAPTER 14

The Tragedy

Directed by Robert Rodriguez / Written by Jon Favreau
First Airdate: December 4, 2020

The Mandalorian suffers tremendous losses when the Empire interrupts Grogu's pilgrimage to an ancient Jedi site.

Chapter 14 marked the official return of Boba Fett and Fennec Shand, played by Temuera Morrison and Ming-Na Wen respectively, and saw the first true location shoot for the series. For previous exterior scenes, the crew shot on a studio backlot set or within the LED confines of the Volume to place characters on a variety of planets, but to fulfill the scope required by the episode's action-packed fight sequences, the crew traveled to Simi Valley—about 40 miles outside Los Angeles—for a shoot that called for numerous stunts. Director Robert Rodriguez pre-visualized the action sequences (turning three pages of script into a nine-minute sequence on

screen) in a homemade animatic filmed in his own backyard, using his sons in costume and a handful of *Star Wars* action figures as stand-ins.

Stunt coordinators incorporated elements of Morrison's traditional Māori background to give Fett a distinctive fighting style that relied on fluid movements and barbaric brute force. "I've been waiting to see this version of Boba Fett since I was a kid," Rodriguez has stated, approvingly.

TRIVIA

Temuera Morrison was the perfect choice to don Boba Fett's iconic armor. In *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002), Morrison played Jango Fett, the bounty hunter used as the template for the clone army. Fett's payment included one unaltered clone to raise as his son, and the Mandalorian's timeline allowed Morrison to embody both roles nearly 18 years apart.

Chapter 14 director Robert Rodriguez.



CHAPTER 15

The Believer

Directed and Written by Rick Famuyiwa
First Airdate: December 11, 2020

The Mandalorian enlists the help of an old enemy to get behind Imperial lines.

"The Believer" was a pivotal episode that challenged Mando's beliefs and showed just how far he was prepared to go in order to protect the Child. The crucial scene in which the Mandalorian removed his helmet to access an Imperial databank was only the second time

audiences saw Pascal's face in the series, and the first time in the story that another living being had seen it since Mando first put the helmet on. "It's very economical and subtle storytelling," Pascal has said of the scene, "About risking it all—the value system, the Creed, and everything—to save the Child."

The return of Bill Burr as Migs Mayfeld, recruited unwillingly into Mando's ragtag crew for the daring mission, saw an impressive performance from the comedian, who imbued the character with a sense of profound loss.

"HE IS STRONG WITH THE FORCE, BUT TALENT WITHOUT TRAINING IS NOTHING."
LUKE SKYWALKER

CHAPTER 16

The Rescue

The Mandalorian and his allies attempt to rescue the Child but find they need more than just blasters to finish the job.

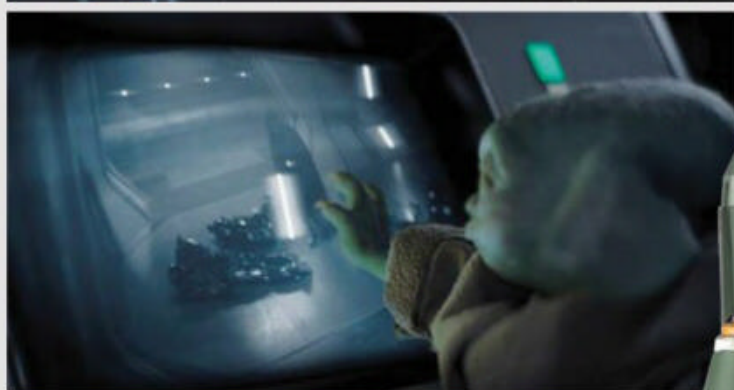
Directed by Peyton Reed

Written by Jon Favreau

First Airdate: December 18, 2020

In the unforgettable season finale, Mark Hamill made a triumphant return to the *Star Wars* galaxy as Luke Skywalker, with R2-D2 at his side. The episode also benefitted from its all-star line-up of characters from previous episodes, with Katee Sackhoff, Ming-Na Wen, Mercedes Varnado, and Gina Carano leading an all-female takeover of the Imperial ship helmed by Moff Gideon, played once again by Giancarlo Esposito.

The episode and entire season culminated in one perfect moment where no words were necessary. Throughout both seasons, Pascal's physicality and gruff vocals had lent the Mandalorian an air of distance, of unapproachability, and his helmet was the physical embodiment of that persona. Its removal, allowing Grogu to see his true face for the first time and touch his cheek tenderly, was arguably among the most powerful moments of the entire *Star Wars* saga. 🌌



TRIVIA

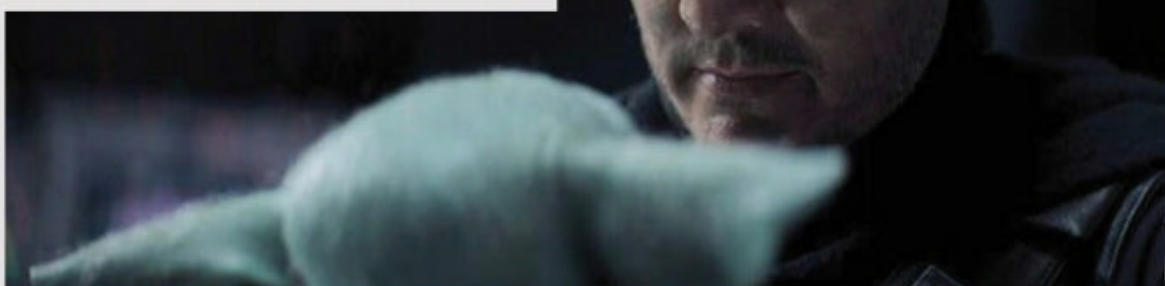
Chapter 16 included a special post-credits scene teasing a new Disney+ series, *The Book of Boba Fett*. Set in Jabba the Hutt's old throne room, Jon Favreau described the set as a, "Crack for crack recreation of Jabba's palace."

TRIVIA

In the post-credits scene, Matthew Wood reprised the role of Bib Fortuna that he'd first played in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999). The gluttonous older Fortuna of *The Mandalorian* had obviously enjoyed the fruits of power since taking Jabba's throne, barely recognizable as the slender Twi'lek originally played by Michael Carter in *Star Wars: Return of Jedi* (1983). The character's staff was a deliberate callback to an accessory packaged with the original Kenner action figure of Fortuna, never before seen on screen.

TRIVIA

Bib Fortuna's grunted Huttese phrase "maclunkey," was a reference to Greedo's additional line of dialogue in the 4K restoration of *A New Hope*, which quickly became a cult favorite quote that spawned its own hashtag.



ASTROMECH



Droid builder Lee Towersey and R2-D2 performer Hassan Taj take us beneath the dome of the galaxy's most resourceful astromech.

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD



R

2-D2 is arguably the most famous droid in movie history (though his counterpart, C-3PO, might

disagree). The droid has been brought to mechanical life as a remote-controlled prop, as a CGI character, and often as a costume with a performer inside. Originally played by Kenny Baker in both the original and prequel trilogies, and Jimmy Vee in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017), both Hassan Taj and Lee Towersey received a co-credit for the role in 2019's *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.

Star Wars Insider: What is the process of realizing a droid for a *Star Wars* movie? Where do you start, and does each droid have a specific performer?

Lee Towersey: We're usually given concept artwork by the art department. Once the producers and directors decide which droids they like, we then look at how we might go about building them, the scale of each build, and how it is going to be performed.

On *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), for example, I made three mini-GONK droid costumes. I knew there would be enough space inside to have a small person operate them, so I got people in who would fit, knowing that we could model or adapt each droid to suit a specific performer. Hassan was one of them, but he could just about see through the hidden slit I'd built for the performers eyeline.

Hassan, you played more than one droid in the film, didn't you?

Hassan Taj: I played a couple of droids in the control room. I was the little blue droid that looks a bit like a TV set, the one who jumps up and down on the control desk, and I also played the yellow droid that walks into the control room. You also see me following L3-37 ▶

01 (Left to right) Lee Towersey, Hassan Taj, and Anthony Daniels on the set of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019)

- when she gets blasted, and he gets scared and quickly runs away.

What were your first impressions walking onto a *Star Wars* set?

HT: *Solo* was my very first acting role, and my first scene was on the Mimban set on Pinewood Studios' 007 Stage. It wowed me straight away. That set was amazing. It really did look like a war zone. The job wasn't as easy as I thought it would be, though. I thought maybe we'd do the scene a couple of times and that would be it, but I was in there for four hours, and we did fifteen takes.

How tricky was it to navigate your way around the Mimban set inside the droid costume? Was there a pre-determined path, or did you have to wing it through the mud?

HT: It was a bit of both really. Some parts of the set were quite clearly defined, but there were times when there were lots of props and stuntmen and stormtroopers walking around, so it could get a bit tricky. I remember the first couple of times I was inside the droid that Lee made for Mimban, everybody was laughing because I kept walking into props. I'd hit something that I wasn't expecting, and I was like, 'damn, I did it again'. Mimban had quite a rough surface as well. There were bumps and lumps all over the ground, so you'd have to adjust constantly to keep the GONK moving like a droid.

LT: Sometimes Hassan wore earphones so we could talk to him, because often he couldn't see out of his costume. If stunts were going to be happening around

"Having seen Hassan's character and strength, I felt he would be a good option to take on R2-D2."
Lee Towersey



02



03



02 Hassan Taj as R2-D2.

03 Taj tries out the blue droid costume that sent sparks flying in *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018).

him, we would speak to all the other performers in the scene and let them know where Hassan was going, and hope his route didn't change. We always try to make the performers in the vicinity aware of other performers who lack visibility.

HT: You've got to put your trust in a lot of other people. It is hard, but everybody tries to help and do their best.

Lee, with Hassan having proven himself on *Solo*, how keen were you to bring him back for *The Rise of Skywalker*?

LT: I remember the first day he came to Pinewood Studios for a fitting. A lot of people don't make it into a film because their shape is not suitable, or it might be an upper body strength thing, or they just don't work for the droid or the creature, but Hassan just fell into the role without any problem at all. He once turned up in a three-piece suit, really smart, and there was the rest of us in jeans and T-shirts. It was as though he was there for a job interview at an office. He certainly set a good first impression, and he fit in seamlessly. Anything

THE DROID BUILDER

Lee Towersey's fascination with astromechs began long before he took up making them professionally. A member of the R2-D2 Builders Club, he was already adept at building and controlling fully functional replicas of the famous droid before he and fellow builder Oliver Steeples were hired by Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy to build the astromechs for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015).

He subsequently operated various droids on each of the recent *Star Wars* movies, with specific responsibility for R2-D2 in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019).



04

“Solo was my very first acting role, and my first scene was on the Mimban set on Pinewood Studios’ 007 Stage. It wowed me straight away.”
Hassan Taj



05

he was asked to do, it was never a problem. After everything had gone so well on *Solo* it was a no-brainer. Hassan was definitely going to come back.

HT: I actually went in to play creatures for *The Rise of Skywalker*, because that was something that I hadn’t done before and I wanted to experience it.



06

04 Lee Towersey (center) controlling R2-D2 on the set of *The Last Jedi*.

05 Hassan Taj performed several droids in *Solo*, including this mini-GONK.

06 *Solo* droid concept art by Jake Lunt Davies.

Are there big differences between playing a droid and playing a creature?

HT: As a creature performer it gets a lot hotter than it does as a droid. I remember being on the Resistance Base set on Ajan Kloss, and I was really sweaty. It was absolutely boiling in there.

But as a creature, I could see a lot more. I could see where I was

walking, and I got to wear some nice comfortable boots, which helped because I could walk on everything. Also, there was a lot more acting involved. We could come up with ideas to make things better, make people laugh, and joke around.

The characters that Warwick Davis, Arti Shah, and I played were all quite dopey, so when we were ▶

► on set together all we had to do was throw things and argue with each other.

How did Hassan come to be the performer inside R2-D2?

LT: On *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) we didn't have anybody inside R2-D2. We used a pneumatic system in the feet to rock him from side to side, but Neal Scanlan was never happy with it, and J.J. Abrams wanted someone inside when he came back to direct *The Rise of Skywalker*.

Having seen Hassan's character and strength, I felt he would be a good option to take on R2-D2, and he was already around for his creature character. I tried him in R2, and it worked. We weren't entirely sure that we were going to use the two-legged R2 in the film or not, but it was good knowing that Hassan

wasn't too far away if R2-D2 was required.

HT: I'd been called in to play a creature on the outdoor set, and that's when Lee tried me in the R2-D2 costume to see how it fit.

He picked me up and threw me in, really, that's what happened (laughs), and the whole of the creature-effects team were behind us in a tent and they started to cheer. It's a great memory for me.

"It's a big step from playing a normal droid character to playing R2-D2."
Hassan Taj

How did you feel about stepping into Kenny Baker's shoes?

HT: Everybody on set would talk about Kenny Baker, how well he got on with the fans and about how great he was as R2. There was a bit of pressure, but Lee and everybody else helped me through it. It's a big step from playing a normal droid character to playing R2-D2.

07 Kenny Baker reprised his role for *The Phantom Menace* (1999).

08 Hassan Taj as R2-D2 in *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019).

09 Filming Leia's final scenes was emotional for the cast and crew.



08



09



07

Lee, as someone who is always looking for ways to improve the technical aspects of R2-D2, Lee, how important was it to have an actor inside R2?

LT: We found when we had the pneumatic system in the feet, R2-D2's movements were a bit mechanised and repetitive rocking from left to right, but with a performer in there, it was easier to have pauses in the rocking, or to increase the speed. I talked to Hassan through his earpiece all the time when he was inside R2, so I could relate J.J.'s instructions if he wanted R2 to keep still or move faster. There was one moment when Hassan really went for it, rocking really fast—the radio-controlled gear wouldn't have been able to cope with that.

There was also something really nice that Hassan did that we wouldn't have been able to achieve with the pneumatic system, which was to learn forward. When Leia passed away with R2-D2 at the foot of the bed, that was Hassan going on his tiptoes to get that subtle lean from R2, moving his body forward. That reaction just nailed the scene, and it was all down to

BENEATH THE DOME

Although a fully-robotic R2-D2 was featured in *The Force Awakens*, usually when you saw R2-D2 on screen in his two-legged orientation there was a performer inside, moving the astromech's dome and shifting their bodyweight to give R2-D2 his distinctive waddling gait.

R2-D2's feet are essentially boots into which the performer places their feet, while handles on the inside of the droid enable the performer to manipulate the heavy costume.

10

the performer and what Hassan could do.

You must have known that there would be a lot of eyes on that scene?

HT: I didn't know. Lee just said, 'Get ready, it's a big scene today,' and I thought I would just be doing R2-D2's normal movements. I could hear some of the other people from creature effects talking about the scene, and I thought, 'Am I hearing this right?' I was asking people from the team, 'Did you know about this?' Everybody knew but me! When I got on set Lee told me what was going to happen, but in a way it was good that I didn't know ahead of time.

Usually when Lee and I were on set, and I was in a scene as R2, we would have a quick chat beforehand and talk about the things that we were going to do to make R2 feel more alive. What I could do physically, and what Lee could do to help me. Essentially, what we could offer as R2-D2. When it came to the Leia scene it was quite scary. Even inside R2,

I could sense what an emotional scene it was for everybody. There were some tears when it happened.

LT: I never wanted to overload Hassan with too much information beforehand. I read the script and looked for the R2 sections, so I knew the scene was coming. What you see in the movie, we shot fairly quickly.

We didn't have as many people on set as we would normally have, out of respect, and it was such a poignant scene. As Carrie was sadly no longer with us, it was a sensitive issue that was treated with the respect it deserved. It was quite upsetting at the time, but you just had to get through it.

Do you think what the pair of you achieved will stand as a good template for future R2-D2 performers?

LT: Without a doubt. Hassan and I get on really well, he's such a good lad. I made a point of complimenting his dad on the way he's brought up his son, because Hassan is such

11

10 Taj waiting for R2-D2's metal dome to be put in place.

11 Anthony Daniels (C-3PO) and Hassan Taj (R2-D2).

a nice character. We had a good laugh on set, which is important when the work gets a bit stressful. But Hassan knows when to tone it down and be respectful. He's just good to be around. Hassan has a good future ahead of him, whatever he chooses to do, and I'm sure I speak for everybody in the creature department when I say I hope he carries on performing. 🙌

R2-D2'S TOP TEN TOOLS

Everyone knows that R2-D2 is the real hero of the *Star Wars* saga. Like a rolling Swiss Army knife, our favorite astromech droid has a tool for every eventuality, finding creative applications that even his makers probably didn't intend. Here's a look at the top ten tools of the hero with a thousand devices.

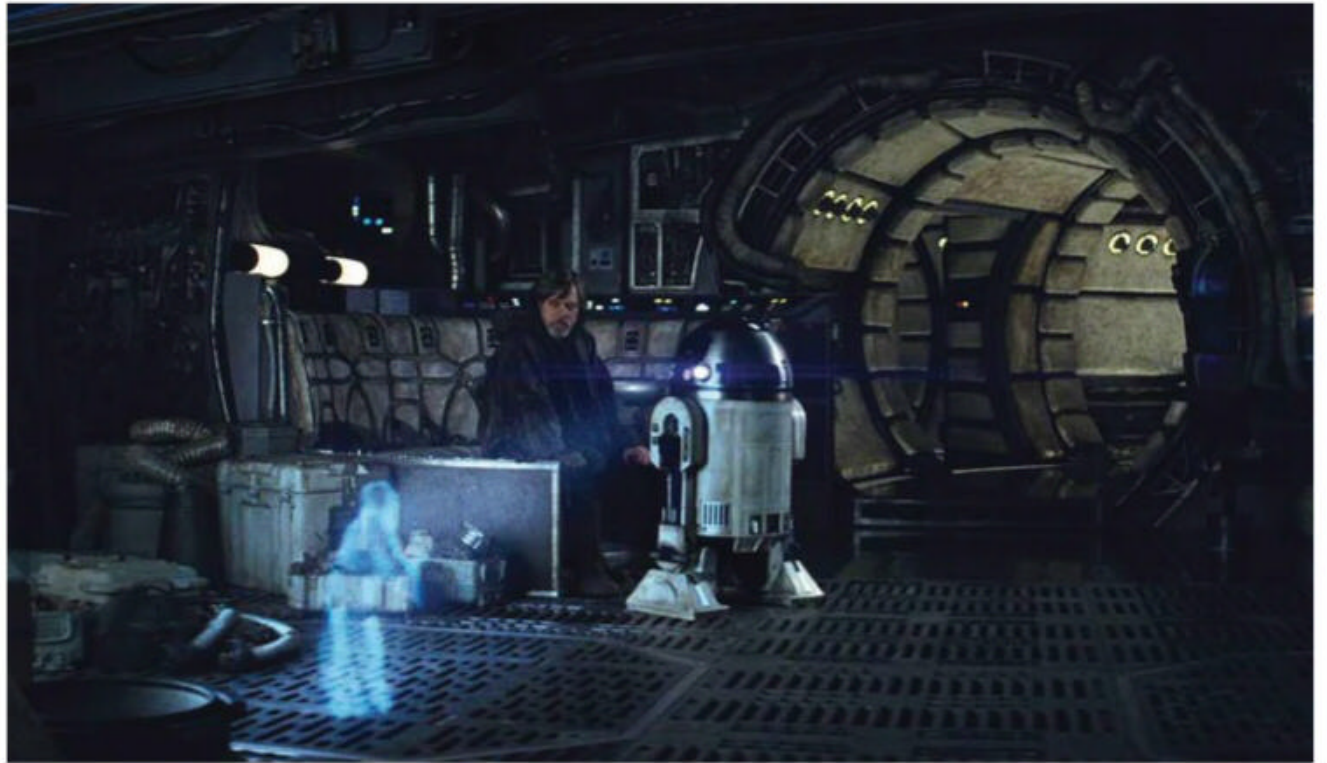
WORDS: JAMES FLOYD



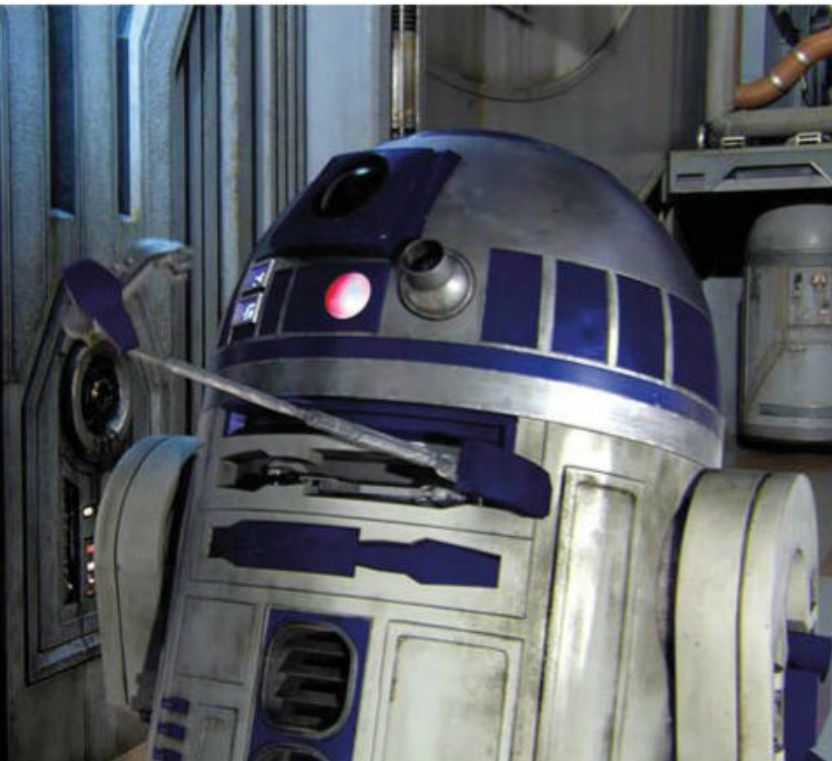
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Holoprojector

Displaying ship schematics, hopeful princesses, missing Jedi, and star charts revealing where to find them, R2-D2's holographic home theater system meant the Skywalker family never needed a pricey cable subscription.



Like a rolling
Swiss Army
knife, our
favorite
astromech
droid has a
tool for every
eventuality



09

Utility and Manipulator Arms

Look, Master: no hands! R2-D2's array of arms fitted with claws and grippers meant he could manipulate any object with enviable dexterity—from serving drinks, to snatching glow rods from mischievous Jedi, or inserting into power couplings by accident.

08

Lightsaber Launcher

Why R2-D2 had a storage slot in the top of his dome that was the perfect fit for a lightsaber, let alone one that had the capacity to launch said Jedi weapon high into the air, only his designers can say. We're sure Luke Skywalker approved of R2's pop-top tool anyway.





07

Rocket Boosters

The ingenious droid fought his way out of a tricky situation with some super battle droids by igniting an ejection of lubricant with a blast from his rocket boosters. They could also come in handy if ever R2-D2 encountered his greatest nemesis—a staircase!



06

Buzz Saw

Twin circular blades allowed R2-D2 to slice through the netting of an Ewok trap. As for the resultant sudden drop in altitude, none of his friends “saw” it coming.

05

Scanner Antenna

R2-D2 deployed this life-form sensing device to search for Luke Skywalker and Han Solo, lost in a snowstorm on Hoth. Why he never made use of it to avoid being ambushed by Ewoks or surprised by Yoda, we’ll never know.



A periscope
is the perfect
tool for an
astromech with
ideas above
his station

04

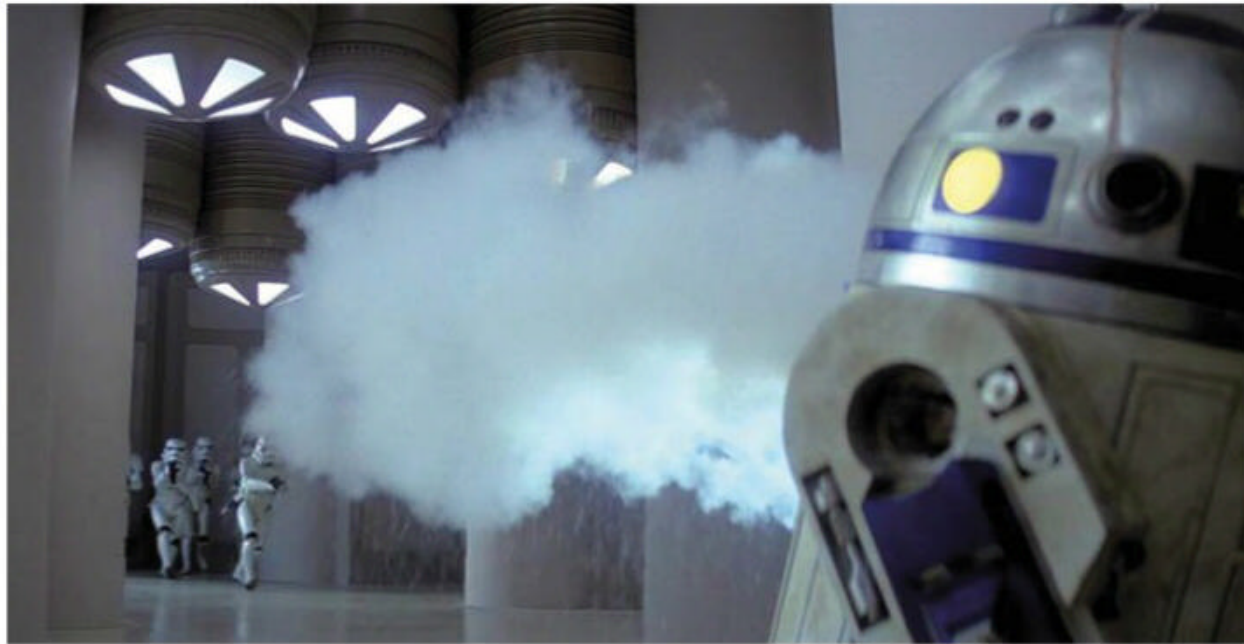
Periscope

Short help is better than no help, but being short has its limitations! R2-D2’s extendable auxiliary visual imaging system gave the little droid a better view, especially when submerged in a swamp or buried in desert sand.

03

Universal Computer Interface Arm

Our astromech friend extended his “scomp link” to access computers for information, open doors, operate elevators, and shut down a giant molten metal dispenser. We guess it had built-in firewall protection for the latter!



02

Fire Extinguisher

The cunning astromech’s integrated fire extinguisher was great for tackling unexpected conflagrations, but who would have thought a humble droid would use it as a smokescreen to cover an escape route for his friends? Not your average Imperial stormtrooper, that’s for sure!

01

“The Zapper”

Designed for recharging dead machinery, minor welding jobs, and testing circuits, R2 found an innovative new use for his “zapper” (otherwise known as a power charge arm): pest control! Salacious B. Crumb and Ewoks alike were “shocked” when R2 trained his improvised weapon on them.





Finding a Family

This Week in Star Wars host Kristin Baver reveals how she wrote the ultimate *Star Wars* biography, *Skywalker: A Family at War*.

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER COOPER

E

ach week,
cat-lover and
StarWars.com
associate editor
Kristin Baver
brings a little

Star Wars joy into our homes with online show *This Week in Star Wars*. Now the trained journalist has turned galactic biographer, with a book that gets right to the heart of the Skywalker saga.

Star Wars Insider: As a life-long *Star Wars* fan, who moved from one side of the U.S.A. to the other to work at Lucasfilm, what are your feelings on being tasked with writing *Skywalker: A Family at War*?

Kristin Baver: I was humbled and surprised. I figured if I ever got to write a book it would be something small, or something more in line with my work as a journalist. But the unique approach we took with this biography really spoke to my skill set in a way that I didn't expect.

This is the first time the Skywalker saga has been explored as a family history. Was that a daunting prospect?

It was incredibly daunting, but exhilarating. Beyond condensing the major cinematic moments, I knew the story would have to follow the threads of all the television series, books, and comics that have helped flesh out some of the backstory. It was like piecing together a genealogical history from all the available records and documents. I think the most difficult part, for me, was deciding what we would omit and how to shift the focus to the next generation in each subsequent era. There's so

01 Young Anakin Skywalker (Jake Lloyd) and Padmé Amidala (Natalie Portman) in *The Phantom Menace* (1999).

01



much good stuff—you could write an entire book on every single member of the family. So my job was to focus on the essential relationships and events, and distill three generations of the Skywalker clan into a single volume, keeping the focus on Anakin, and then his children, and then finally his grandson and Rey.

How did you hone in on those key elements?

Before I put down a single word, I read some Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. The classic mythological archetypes they wrote about really tie the Skywalker story together nicely. At the outset, I knew I

wanted to treat the Skywalkers as if they were real people. I tried to find one word that described each family member, and hold that in my mind while I was delving into their story, to keep myself focused on what made each of them so unique. Just like in a real family, there are questions of nature and nurture, and themes and character traits that keep resurfacing in each individual. And, ultimately, I also included Rey. It's an incredibly important theme in all of *Star Wars* storytelling, but family is so much more than biology and bloodline, and I really wanted to make sure the story reflected that at several points. ►

“There’s so much good stuff, you could write an entire book on every single member of the family.”

► Does the book explore the saga chronologically, or did you work within broader themes?

The story follows a standard biographical format, and is divided into three parts: The Father, The Twins, and The Dyad. That allowed us to work through the story chronologically and really infuse it with some of those elements that, when you're experiencing the films in release order or reading a book or comic as a one-off, might get lost. I wanted the story to begin at the beginning, with what we knew of Shmi Skywalker and Anakin before we met them in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999), then build upon that story to gain a better understanding of how this sweet boy with so much potential was manipulated and ultimately became a weapon of evil. How that impacted not only on the galaxy but the next generation as well, even in the years before Luke and Leia realized who their birth parents really were. In the final section, I wanted to explore the series of events that set Ben Solo on the path to the First Order, while distilling the major plot points of the sequel trilogy to focus in on his relationship with his family and also towards Rey.

What resources did you call upon while researching and writing the book?

I rewatched all the movies, but tried to do so with fresh eyes. I wasn't just watching *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) just because I love the movie—this time, I was watching it to capture some of the

“I think the tragedy of the Skywalker family, and we discuss this a little in the prologue, is that the mask of Darth Vader looms over everything.”

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nuance of Luke and Leia, to try to understand how they felt and what they experienced as people in those situations. I also read all the available canonical material that touched upon the characters' lives and, of course, rewatched *The Clone Wars* (2014-2018, 2020) animated series. I also looked to real-world biographies to help guide me, especially when I became overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of information.

A really important lesson that I took away from real-life biographers is that everything you can possibly learn from your source material doesn't belong in your book. If you try to include it, and you have great records to pull from, you end up with a slog describing what your subject ate for breakfast every day for years. So in some cases, I was revisiting something like the *Princess Leia* Marvel Comics' run and then giving a nod to the series with a

02 Anakin (Hayden Christensen) and Padmé in *Attack of the Clones* (2002).

03 A family found each other in *A New Hope* (1977).

04 Fate had pushed Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and General Organa (Carrie Fisher) apart by *The Force Awakens* (2015)

05 Luke revealed a bleak truth to Leia in *Return of the Jedi* (1983)

single line. For the major events in the films, I broke up character journeys by several chapters in order to examine more closely what each individual went through, and also to view those events through the lens of a biographer.

Of the Skywalker clan's 'bad boys,' which out of Anakin and Ben Solo do you think was the most misguided, made the worst decisions, or was most corrupted by events around them?

Oh man, that's so tough! I have to say Ben Solo, because he had a lot more privilege than Anakin did. When I got to the point in Anakin's journey where he was so wrung out and overwhelmed that he was willing to sacrifice himself to the dark side to save Padmé, I understood it. But Ben had parents who were imperfect but loved him, and an uncle who understood his power in the Force and could not only train him to hone it, but really empathized with some of his fears and darker impulses. They were



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both manipulated, for sure, but it felt to me like Ben had so many more reasons to turn back to the light, and he was being stubborn and obstinate in his refusal. For Anakin, I think he worked himself into a corner where he honestly couldn't see any other way out of his situation.

Ben carried a lot of emotional baggage. The poor kid had steamer

trunks full of father issues, and insecurities that he'd never measure up to these larger-than-life heroes of the Rebellion who made up his family. And then he learned that he was related to Darth Vader *in the news*, and that really sent him off the deep end. I think the tragedy of the Skywalker family, and we discuss this a little in the prologue, is that the mask of Darth Vader looms over everything. It defined Anakin's legacy and became the emblem of the Empire, as much as a symbol of the twins fighting the external forces of evil. And it's sad, because Luke and Leia didn't learn from their experience with the Vader revelation. If they had found a way to explain it to Ben sooner, in an age-appropriate manner, it's arguable that he wouldn't have been so easily seduced by Snoke.

At the opposite end of the scale, who is your favorite Skywalker?

Leia, hands down. I've always been enamored with her because she's such a force of nature. She never ►

► let people see her break down and cry, even when she was literally being pushed into Darth Vader and forced to watch her whole planet be obliterated. She's the embodiment of hope, but she wasn't perfect. She made mistakes, and she understood that you have to acknowledge them and own up to what you've done if you want to continue to be trusted as a leader. And that's such a great life lesson!

Did you finish the book with a fresh understanding of each Skywalker?

I ended it with so much more compassion for Anakin and Ben Solo, to be sure. And I think just seeing everything pulled together chronologically gave me such a deeper understanding of the storytelling, so that I was seeing connections I had never noticed before. For example, when I was breaking down the events that led to Luke and Leia meeting for the first time, they had both endured this tremendous loss of the people who had raised them, at almost the exact same time. I had never thought about it in those terms before. And I finished the book liking those characters even more than when I started this project.

What do you hope readers will get from the book?

I wrote it for the kid that *I* was when I first discovered *Star Wars*. When I first fell in love with these characters, I would have read the hell out of a book like this! So, I hope there are a lot of younger readers who like the Skywalkers and want to learn more about them that

07 Rey (Daisy Ridley) was a girl from "nowhere" who chose to become a Skywalker.

08 Ben Solo (Adam Driver) rediscovered himself in *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019).

"Their struggles resonate with all of us because they allow us to gain a better understanding of ourselves and the human condition."



07

will pick up this book. And I also wrote it for adults who were that kid, too. Whether you've read every piece of *Star Wars* literature that has been put out in the last six years or not, I hope the insights in this book tie the Skywalker family story together in a way that puts a fresh perspective on their struggles and their accomplishments.

And how do you feel about what you've learned?

After spending so much time with them, I think I have a keener understanding of the humanity of these characters. When I worked in hard news, when you were writing a memorial about a real person but they had done some terrible things, I always tried to weigh, "How am I going to explain why I wrote what I wrote to the angry family member tomorrow?" And that was a great barometer for me in writing something truthful even when it came to a fictional family. I loved spending so much time with the Skywalkers over the last year, especially during the pandemic when it was a really

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difficult time for everyone. There's something comforting about it, like spending time with old friends. But on the flip side, their struggles resonate with all of us because they allow us to gain a better understanding of ourselves and the human condition. 🧡



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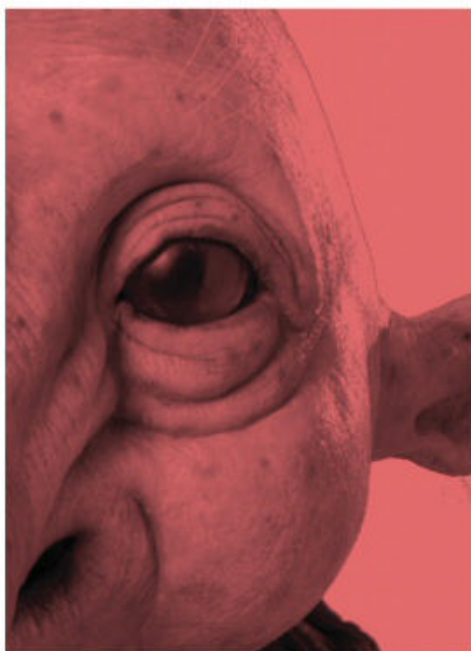
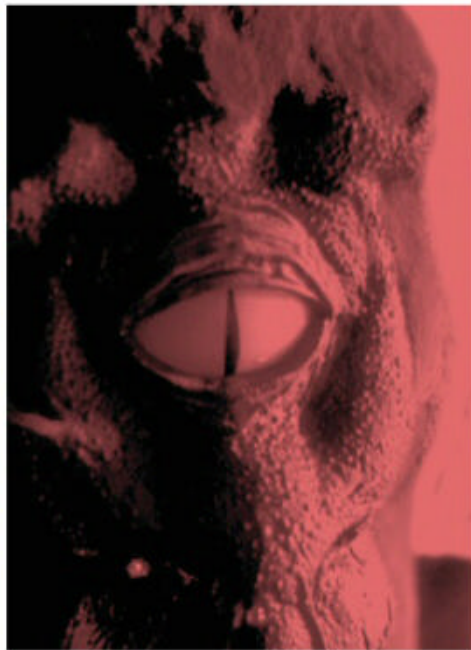
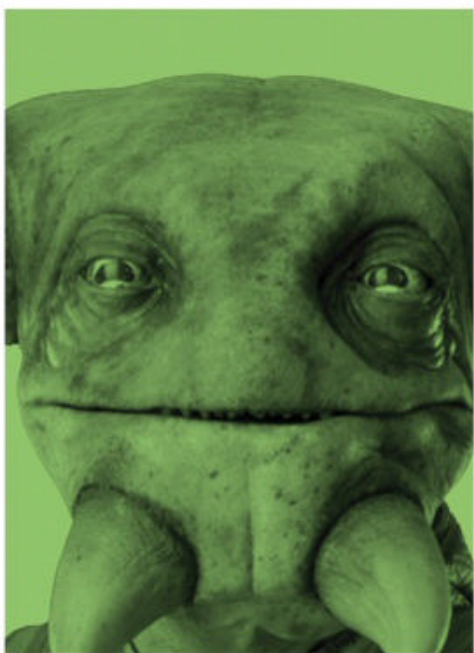
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The Eyes Have It

With the help of eminent ophthalmologists, biologists, and concept artist and creature designer Jake Lunt Davies, naturalist Melissa T. Miller looks at the *Star Wars* galaxy from a new perspective—through the diverse eye types of its characters and creatures.

WORDS BY MELISSA T. MILLER

Thanks to hyperspace travel, a myriad of *Star Wars* species left their original worlds over many millennia, settling on a multitude of new worlds and making their homes in varied environments. Audiences were first introduced to this broad spectrum of species thanks to the Mos Eisley Cantina in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), where an assortment of creatures with unique features spent their leisure time. Other locations teeming with exotic lifeforms have included Maz Kanata's castle on Takodana, and the Lodge at Fort Ypso on Vandor, with each location providing us with ample opportunity for “people” watching. And watching back were a truly diverse set of eyes. ▶



► According to Dr. Derek Welsbie, an associate professor of ophthalmology at the Shiley Eye Institute at the University of California, San Diego, human sight evolved remarkable abilities over hundreds of thousands of years. Animals on Earth also have a remarkable variety of eye adaptations based on the survival needs of each species, many of which are beyond our comprehension. For example, many birds have two focal points in each eye, allowing them to map the

“There’s a lot of sci-fi on our own planet.”

Dr. Derek Welsbie

environment above, below, and to all sides around them during flight. “There’s a lot of sci-fi on our own planet,” says Welsbie.

Which poses the question, if the sight of Earthlings in all our forms evolved in so many ways, how different might the vision of the fictional creatures of the *Star Wars* galaxy be, how might their eyes actually function, and do they give any hints as to how their ancestors might have lived?

Predator or Prey?

A main driving factor of evolution is whether you are the hunter or the hunted. “Animals that have their eyes set on the side have more expansive peripheral vision than humans that have their eyes up front,” says Welsbie. “Predators tend to have more forward-facing eyes, whereas prey are going to have eyes at the sides.” Vertically slit pupils also assist predators with the depth perception needed to calculate their attacks, while horizontal pupils increase a prey’s ability to scan the horizon for threats.

Jar Jar Binks may not seem like an intimidating predator, but consider the coordination involved in grabbing food with his long tongue. Forward-facing eyes with vertical pupils allow Gungans to line up their target. Neimoidians, such as Nute Gunray, have long horizontal pupils, indicating superior peripheral vision. It seems likely that they evolved as a prey species, which could explain their tendency towards cowardly behavior.

Frank Santana, a herpetologist at the San Diego Natural History Museum, studies reptiles and amphibians. He points out that frog eyes adapt for every stage of their life cycle. “They go



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01 Nephran eyes suggest an aquatic evolutionary heritage.

02 Cyclorrians have eyes with multiple lenses, like Earth insects.

02 Trodatome eyes can rotate in various axes.

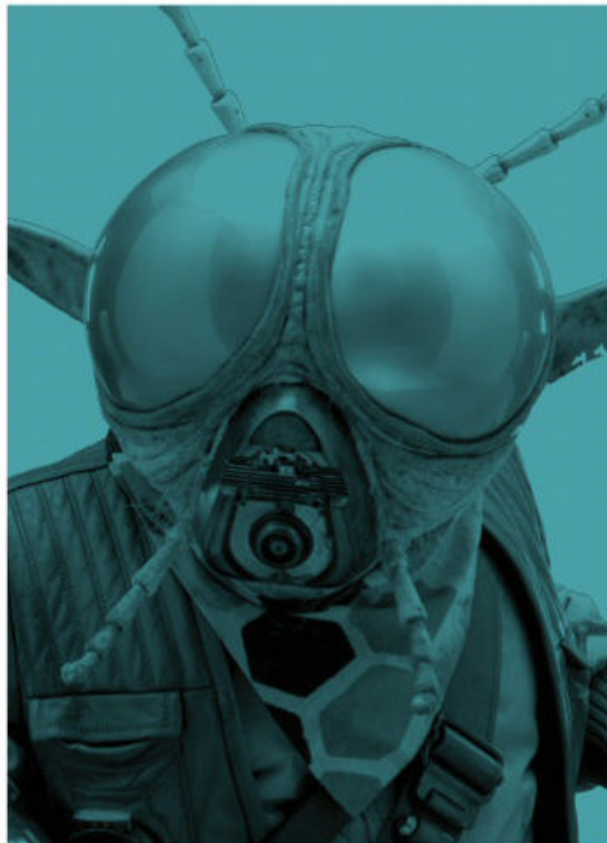
through this awesome transition where they totally change their eye structure and location,” he explains. “When they’re tadpoles, they have eyes on the side because they’re watching for predators. Following metamorphosis, their eye position shifts to the front and more on the top, because they’re more of a predator when they’re on land.” Such a change was seen during Season Two of *The Mandalorian*, when the Frog Lady’s eggs hatched into tadpole-like young.

Low Light

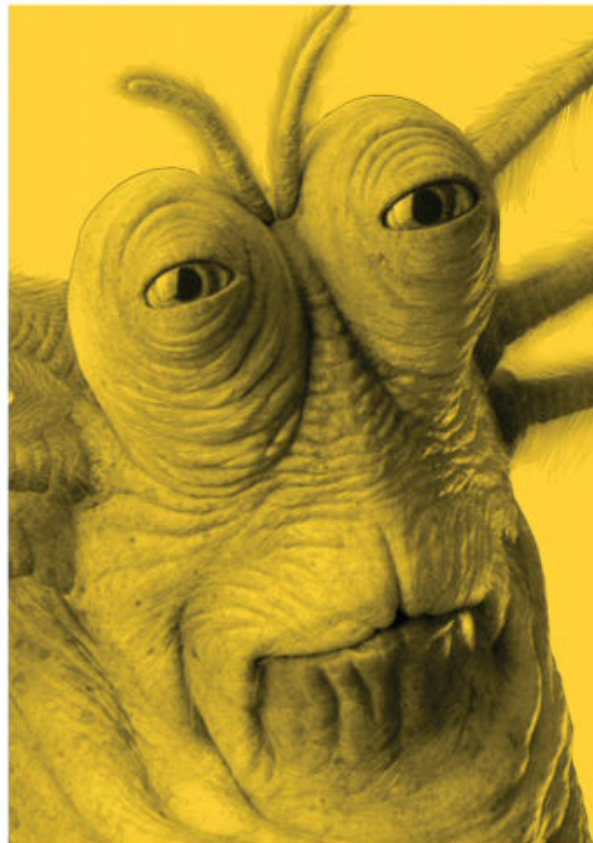
Large eyes and large pupils are adaptations for seeing in the dark. “The bigger the pupil, the more light it lets in,” says Welsbie. “If you’re an animal that lives in dim light, you often have bigger eyes and bigger pupils. I don’t know what Ackbar’s planet looks like, but I’m imagining it’s dark.” Dr. Amit K. Patel, a postdoctoral scholar and colleague of Welsbie, notes that Mon Cala is mostly underwater so is likely to be a dim environment.

Another adaptation to see in low light is the *tapetum lucidum*—the area at the back of the eye that in humans flashes red in photographs, and glows in cats and other animals that see well in the dark. “Reindeer have this cool feature because they live in the Arctic,” explains Patel. “During the summer there’s more light and they have golden *tapetum lucidum*. But in the winter, they can physically change the color of

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it to blue in order to capture more light.” Welsbie adds, “If there’s color or a glow in the pupils of *Star Wars* characters, that could be indicative of a *tapetum* and a need to see in low light.”

Pupil shape is also a factor. Slits have a wider range than round pupils and indicate that a species transitions between bright and dark environments. Jabba’s slit pupils indicate that the Hutts can see under a range of conditions, though likely prefer the dim lighting of

locations like his palace, perhaps explaining the coverings on his sail barge in the bright desert sun.

Some animals that live in the deep sea or underground are effectively blind, relying on other senses as their eyes shrink. “You don’t need to have good vision,” says Santana, who has studied snakes with similar adaptations. “If the krayt dragon spends most of its time underground, it makes sense that it has tiny eyes. In that respect it was biologically accurate.”

04 His six eyes made Argus Panox a formidable sabaac player.



Reaching New Sights

Humans can only see a narrow band of light, called visible light, which includes colors from red to purple, and excludes ultraviolet (UV) and infrared wavelengths. Mos Eisley miscreant Greedo and other Rodians have pupil-less eyes, with colorful areas that look like galaxies visible in their appearances in *The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020). Their ability to see in the infrared spectrum means their vision is similar to the heat maps the Mandalorian sees through his helmet viewfinder. “Species like pit vipers can pick up infrared light,” says Santana. “They’ll find a good spot where there’s a scent trail of mice running by and sit there for weeks at a time waiting for prey. When they pick up the heat trail, they’ll strike.”

Salmon, which move between the open ocean and murky rivers, can see both visible light and

“If the krayt dragon is underground most of the time, it makes sense that it has tiny eyes.”

Frank Santana

infrared wavelengths. Some animals can even tune their ability to see infrared, optimizing their sight for different conditions. Bullfrogs, which sit at the water’s surface, are adapted so that the part of their eye that looks down into murky water uses infrared vision to see through the gloom while the part that looks up into the air sees the visual spectrum.

“It was only five years ago that we discovered that some frogs can see infrared light,” explains Santana. “There could be applications there for human use, but if they go extinct we might never be able to figure them out.”

While the “frog people” in *The Mandalorian* (2019-present) faced ▶

- their own threats, amphibians on Earth are sensitive to many factors. “They tend to be the first ones to show any negative impacts from environmental pollutants,” Santana reflects, ruefully. “Most of the time, they have an aquatic life stage and a terrestrial life stage; that makes them really sensitive to pollution both on both land and in water.”

The Cone Wars

Mantis shrimp, which live in shallow water throughout the world’s oceans, can see nearly the entire spectrum of light and have eye stalks that move independently. They also have sixteen cones compared to a human being’s three, which relates to the number of colors they see. “They’re true

aliens. The fact that they can see UV blows my mind,” says Kaelie Spencer, an aquarist at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps in La Jolla, California. Scientists are studying mantis shrimp eye adaptations for technological advancements in everything from optical media to cancer detection.

Some marine species can see polarized light, allowing them to thrive in shallow, sunlit water. “I don’t know if it’s as acute, but octopus do have the ability to see in and out of water, which is pretty crazy,” says Spencer, who is also an animal enrichment coordinator. She says that the Giant Pacific octopus she cares for watches her as she prepares its food and puzzles.

“Our brains can’t even imagine what it means to see polarization or magnetic fields, but other organisms can do this.”

Dr. Derek Welsbie

Research suggests that octopus vision is highly dependent on oxygen levels, meaning it likely shifts as they travel from the surface to deeper water and move between tidepools. It also means that they are sensitive to low oxygen zones, called dead zones, that are increasing due to climate change.

“Our brains can’t even imagine what it means to see polarization or magnetic fields, but other organisms can do this,” says Welsbie. This potential takes on new meaning in *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), during the sabacc game in Fort Ypso. As Han and Lando banter, the rest of the table may be gaining an advantage. Is there a vision adaptation that could allow someone to cheat? If so, are sabacc cards printed on something



05 Glaucus, the monocular Octeroid patron of the Lodge on Vandor.

that would prevent that? “I don’t know if you could see the opposite face of the card, but you could see through it,” says Patel. “You could see the shadows of the numbers or shapes unless the paint on the card was made of some material that wouldn’t allow light to go through.”

More Eyes

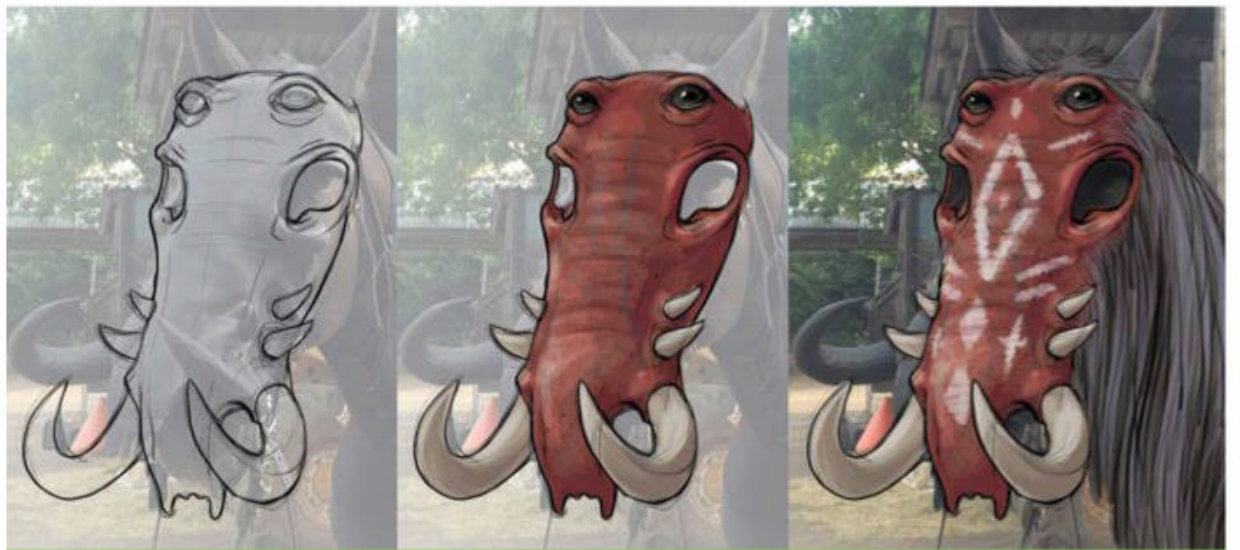
Many species in *Star Wars* have more than two eyes. “I don’t know how it works out on a biological level, but it’s a device I’ve used many times,” says concept artist Jake Lunt Davies. His design options for the fish Luke caught on Ahch-To in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) look similar to species here on Earth, just with more eyes. “A lot of it is thinking ‘Wouldn’t it be cool if...’ and asking myself, ‘How can I make this feel a bit more alien by adding more eyes,’” he says, admitting that he has trouble drawing fish because they already seem so alien.

As for the six-eyed vexis serpent in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019), each set could specialize in a different type of sight—some perceiving visual light, others infrared, even a set with larger pupils to see in the dark—with all that information processed together. The 20-eyed Boosodian on Kijimi is an extreme case, shown in the movie for only a few seconds in a blink-and-you-miss-it moment.

There are species on Earth with more than two eyes, usually specialized so that some eyes perceive light and others movement. Starfish similar to the stowaway on the *Razor Crest* in Season Two’s episode “The Heiress” have eyes on each of their legs, though scientists are still learning about their vision. There are also fish called anableps that have four pupils, two per eye. “They sit up at the top of the water and they have two pupils above the water and two pupils below the water,” says Spencer.

Making a Spectacle

Presumably due to technological advancements, no one in the *Star Wars* galaxy ever had to wear glasses, but there are many reasons

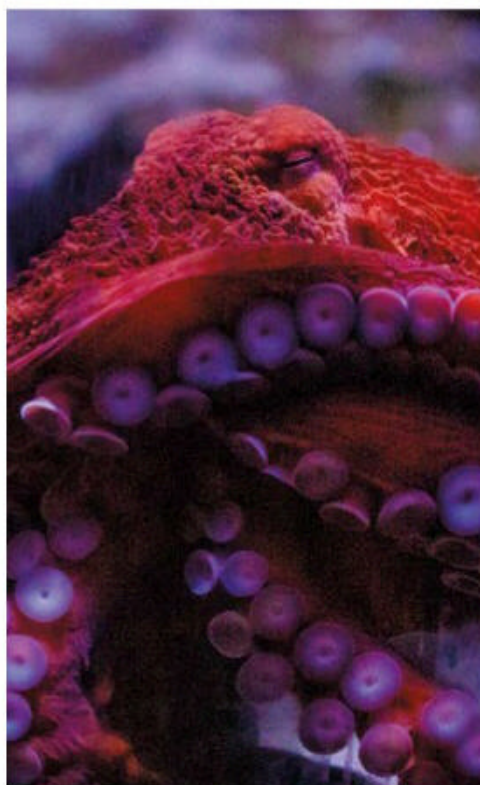


ANIMAL ACTORS

Star Wars creature concept artist Jake Lunt Davies is encouraged to indulge his creativity, but also has to consider functionality when his designs will be turned into costumes for animal actors. The orbaks that Jannah and the other stormtrooper defectors rode in *The Rise of Skywalker* were really horses in disguise. Horses have panoramic vision, with large pupils in large eyes on the sides of their heads. Blinders help them focus but there’s a limit to how much of their vision they will tolerate being blocked. “There’s a minimum size aperture for a horse to look through and be happy and at ease,” says Lunt Davies. “So, we were left with this big hole to fill without resorting to CG.” In the case of the orbaks, that meant positioning their eyes upwards on their head and adding large nostrils through which the horses could see out of.

Horse actors also portrayed the kod’yoks in *Solo: A Star Wars Story*, although they only made an appearance on the movie’s poster. In order to leave their eyes relatively clear, Lunt Davies filled in the space with a compound eye similar to those found in insects.

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corrective or protective eyewear could be needed. “The overall light intensity, UV exposure, or even keeping irritants out of your eye could be very important,” says Welsbie.

Rey wore goggles during her scavenging days, for example. Made from the lenses of a stormtrooper helmet, which would have provided protection from the dry heat and sand of Jakku, and may also have had working tech that gave her an advantage.

Other factors include the atmospheric pressure on foreign worlds, and gasses or other substances that could be toxic to some species. Jedi Master Plo Koon wears both goggles and a respirator, indicating that these are necessary accommodations a specialized species might have to make to live in any number of different environments. It’s surprising that more *Star Wars* species don’t need such technology to travel freely about the galaxy. Maz wears goggles, but perhaps this is due to her age. ▶

06 Octopus vision is affected by the level of oxygen in the water it inhabits.

07 Infrared light is visible to some species of Earthbound frog.

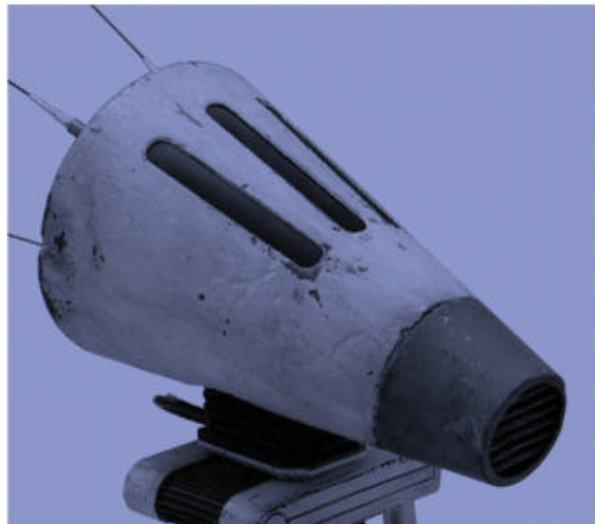
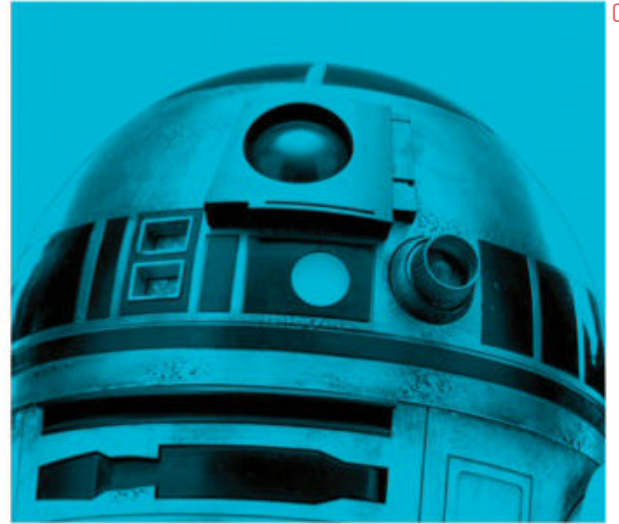
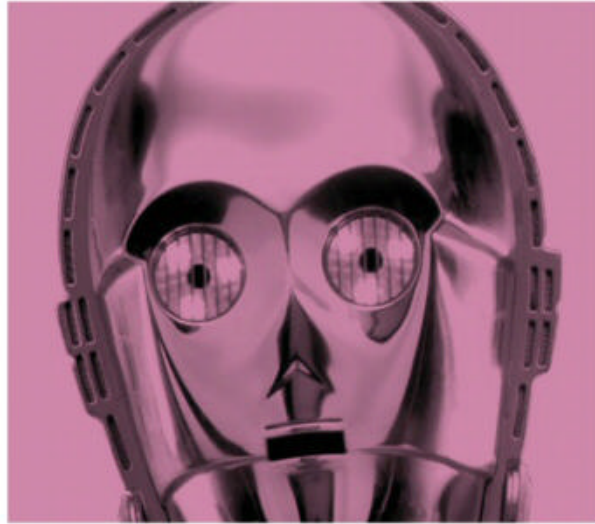
- Han Solo's imprisonment in carbonite lead to his own vision impairment. Welsbie's diagnosis: "Lenses become cloudy at cold temperature, so he could have had an opaque lens, and as he warmed back up, that could clear."

Mechanical Means

There is a wide array of synthetic photoreceptors found in droids. But are eyes on droids even necessary? Most likely not, though many robots both fictional and real have similar proportions and features to their makers. The bounty hunter 4-LOM has compound eyes similar to flies and, more importantly, to the Gand species who use the LOM-series droids. Indeed, when Jake Lunt Davies designs protocol droids for non-human species, he reveals that he gives them the characteristics of those they serve.

"Usually you see the two-eyed droids, like C-3PO, interacting with people," says Patel. "Although a droid doesn't need two eyes," adds Welsbie. "The only reason that you would do that is because you want the droid in question to look friendly."

Lunt Davies also designed D-O, whose odd number of photoreceptors were part of his original vision. "I loved the idea of him having this asymmetric amount of eyes," he



08 The design and arrangement of synthetic droid "eyes" can be arranged to suit the aesthetic or practical needs of their makers.

says. "It would have been too easy to give him two eyes, it would have been too anthropomorphic."

Glowing Eyes

There are also instances of electric eyes in seemingly organic life forms. Although it's a mystery what Jawas look like under their robes, they are known for the lights shining out from beneath their hoods. Interestingly, their eyes are yellow on Tatooine but red on Arvala-7. Lunt Davies assumes the difference was an editorial choice, putting a new spin on a legacy species. Patel, however, has a potential explanation. "They are different planets, so maybe their different atmospheres change how the Jawa's eyes appear," he says. "It's the reindeer thing!" adds Welsbie, referencing how they change the color of their *tapetum lucidum* according to environmental factors.

While it doesn't exactly glow, the Northern stargazer fish has organs in its eyes that produce an electric shock. "I remember learning that in school, and I was like, 'Life just

"Usually you see the two-eyed droids, like C-3PO, interacting with people."

Dr. Amit K. Patel

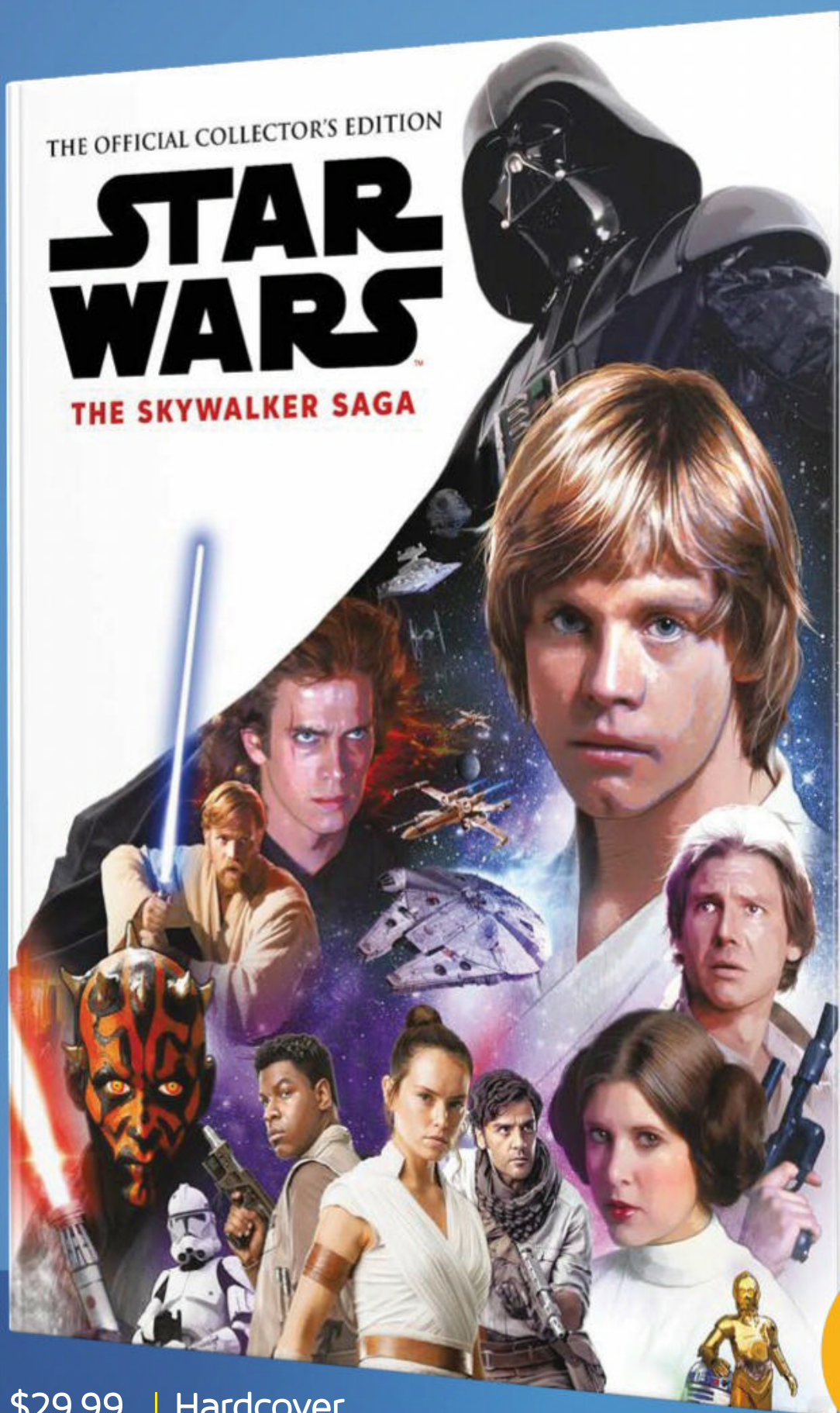
keeps getting crazier,'" says Spencer. Another entry for Lunt Davies' assertion that fish seem like aliens.

There are many discoveries left to be made, and a rich diversity of life to be explored on Earth. The *Star Wars* galaxy is made up of species that evolved on their own worlds and now travel among the stars. Their advancement, like much of ours, is due to harnessing those adaptations into technology. After all, hyperspace travel was inspired by the natural ability of purrgil. An understanding of the natural world has the potential to advance civilizations. "There's so much more to learn," confirms Santana. 🐙



09 It is possible that different atmospheres on different worlds affect the color a Jawa's eyes.

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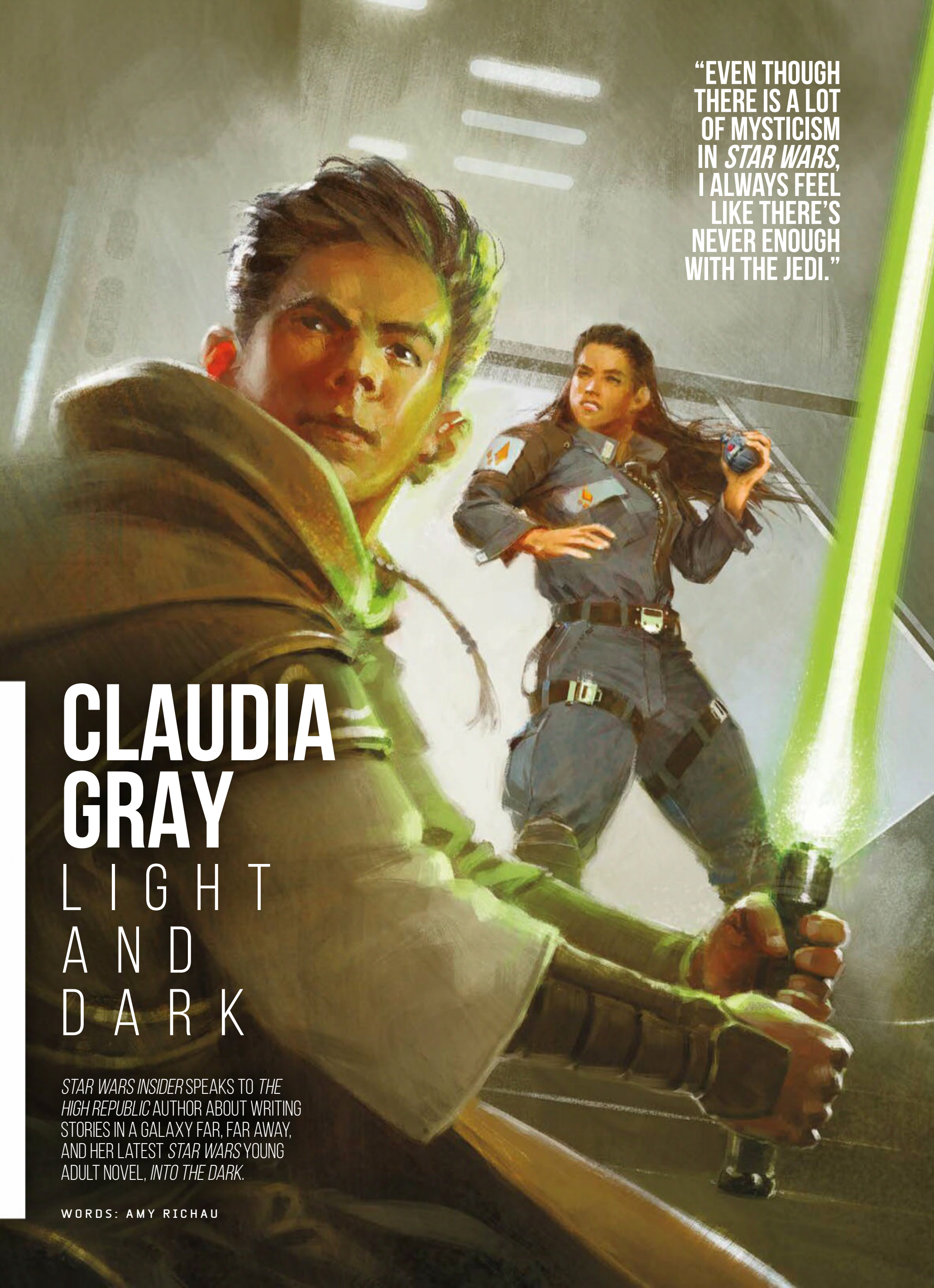
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“EVEN THOUGH
THERE IS A LOT
OF MYSTICISM
IN *STAR WARS*,
I ALWAYS FEEL
LIKE THERE’S
NEVER ENOUGH
WITH THE JEDI.”

CLAUDIA GRAY

LIGHT AND DARK

STAR WARS INSIDER SPEAKS TO THE
HIGH REPUBLIC AUTHOR ABOUT WRITING
STORIES IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY,
AND HER LATEST *STAR WARS* YOUNG
ADULT NOVEL, *INTO THE DARK*.

WORDS: AMY RICHAU

Over the past six years, Claudia Gray has been one of *Star Wars* publishing's busiest and most popular authors. She has penned six novels and one short story, each of which has explored the inner lives of some of the saga's most iconic characters, including Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn's combative relationship with his young Padawan Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Leia Organa during two different personal crises. Part of the creative team behind Lucasfilm's sprawling publishing event, *The High Republic*, Gray was charged with crafting equally iconic characters for the new *Star Wars* era, although the author was no stranger to populating the galaxy with compelling new stars.

Delighted when first approached to write a young adult *Star Wars* novel, Gray immediately made a suggestion—a small yet important change to the initial outline from the publisher. “The basic idea was just two lines long,” explains Gray. “‘An idealistic young woman and an angry, troubled young man, who had shared a bond in childhood that endured even into the war. But he goes to the Empire and she goes to the Rebellion.’ I changed that. I suggested, ‘I would like the idealistic girl to go to the Empire and the angry guy to join the Rebellion.’ The publisher said, ‘Good. Great!’”

That outline became the 2015 novel *Lost Stars*, which told the tale of star-crossed lovers Ciena Ree and Thane Kyrell. While the troubled pair were unfamiliar to *Star Wars* fans, many of the locations and battles that played a part in the story—which took in the Battles of Hoth and Endor—certainly weren't. For Gray, deciding which events and locations from the original trilogy Ree and Kyrell might have been involved in was a mix of curiosity and logic. It made sense for Ree, a graduate of the Imperial Academy, to end up on Darth Vader's ship, but Gray had questions she wanted answers to. “There were a few things

I'd always wondered about,” she says. “TIE fighters of the original era didn't have a hyperdrive, so I realized that somebody had to go pick up Darth Vader at the end of *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977). Otherwise he'd have just been stuck out there. He had to literally call an Imperial Uber. So I sent Ciena Ree to do that, because that's a missing piece of the puzzle.”

In The Blood

Two of Gray's novels expanded on the history of Leia Organa. *Bloodline* (2016), set six years before 2015's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, detailed the leader's

01 *Leia: Princess of Alderaan*, by Claudia Gray.

02 “I thought it was important that Leia should face the cost of those decisions very early on,” says Gray of her novel's lead character.

struggles to hold alliances together in the post-Imperial era, while *Leia, Princess of Alderaan* (2017) took us back to the period three years prior to the events of *A New Hope*. Both books detailed a number of defining moments that built on the story of the enduring character.

“The plot of *Alderaan* is about Princess Leia realizing that her father is part of the Rebellion against the Empire, and how that leads to her decision to take part in it,” Gray says. “I thought it was important that Leia should face the cost of those decisions very early on, because even by the time of *A New Hope*, she is a respected leader. She's had to think about the morality of starting a war, even against a vile tyrant, in the knowledge that millions of people were likely going to be killed. That's a difficult choice to grapple with.”

In *Bloodline*, General Leia recognized the flaws in the New Republic as well as the looming threat of the First Order. She also faced a very personal challenge. While *Star Wars* fans knew Darth Vader was Leia's father, that fact wasn't publicly known by Leia's



► peers until the events of Gray's novel. "The reveal changed Leia's public perception and shaped her legacy," states Gray. "Did that stop her from doing what she thought was the right thing to do? Not one bit. But it required her to renegotiate some of her closest relationships in light of that revelation."

Gray's fascination with Leia, and her need to answer important questions about her life, extends to the period between *A New Hope* and *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). "What was going on with the Rebellion during that time?" she wonders. "What were the origins of Leia's romance with Han Solo? Clearly something had very much changed and evolved there, since *A New Hope*. Also, what was happening with Luke Skywalker? Because he and Leia didn't know they were related at that point. You know, avoiding that potential disaster," Gray laughs.

Another character Gray has written about more than once is Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn. She first wrote a short story around him, "Master and Apprentice," for the *A New Hope* anthology *From A Certain Point of View* (2017). Two years later, her full-length novel *Master & Apprentice* (2019) followed Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan Kenobi on an adventure that took place eight years before *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999). Gray appreciates how Jinn set himself apart from other Jedi Masters.

"Even though there is a lot of mysticism in *Star Wars*, I always feel

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like there's never enough with the Jedi," notes Gray. "The idea that there is a spiritual element to them, and that it's important. I think Liam Neeson brought so much of that to his performance of Qui-Gon Jinn. In the prequel era, the Jedi, even Yoda, seemed to have moved further away from that. They'd lost their way a little bit. It was fascinating to me to really deal with somebody who was a mystic, and wasn't in lockstep with the Jedi as they were operating during that period."

An additional opportunity to explore the spiritual aspects of being a Jedi was destined for Gray's future, and she wouldn't be alone.

Team Luminous

It's easy to imagine an author spending months devoted to a project with only a word processor for company, but when working in

03 Gray wonders what the spark was that lit Leia Organa and Han Solo's relationship?

04 Claudia Gray has explored the three main *Star Wars* movie eras in her previous novels.



the *Star Wars* galaxy, things can be a little different. For example, when writing his audio book, *Jedi: Dooku Lost* (2019), author Cavan Scott spoke to Gray about her *Master & Apprentice* character Rael Averross, who subsequently appeared in his drama. The writers got to know each other thanks to their time developing a top-secret Lucasfilm Publishing initiative that was built around collaboration.

Creatives working together towards a common goal is embedded in the DNA of *Star Wars*, and perhaps that has never been more evident than in the gestation of *The High Republic*, which involved both Gray, Scott, and writers Daniel José Older, Charles Soule, and Justina Ireland.

"I've done graphic novels where different people are doing very different parts of the book," says Gray. "I'm doing the story, and somebody else is doing the visuals, and somebody else does the lettering. The end result is very much defined by who did what, and when. *The High Republic* is a completely different beast. We are all in it together, at all points, on all projects. It's on a totally different scale than anything I've done before."

Collaborating with a group of writers on one expansive, ongoing project, across books for all ages and two comic-book series, required flexibility about their work and their ideas. "You can't get too hung up on

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any one idea from the beginning,” says Gray. “If you stick with one concrete notion, saying, ‘This is the only way it must go,’ you’re not keeping yourself open enough to the ideas of your fellow writers, what they are thinking and doing that may require you to modify your plan. It is a big balancing act between tying everything together in a satisfying way and really listening to each other.”

By way of explanation, Gray points to her first *The High Republic* project to be published, *Into the Dark*. “There was an event that was originally supposed to occur in *Into the Dark* that did not. And losing that plot moment at first left me thinking, ‘Whoa, What? Where are we going? Where’s the story?’ admits Gray. “But, looking at the bigger picture, it made sense for that event to happen a little later on, and in a different place. You have to look at those concerns first. And I found other things for the characters to do, so they were fine.”

Gray notes that one of the biggest rewards from working so closely with the other authors was

the relationships that have grown from it. “It sounds trite, but it’s true. I’ve really gotten to be friends with the other writers,” she says. “The biggest, professional surprise was how closely we would be linked. I had not understood just how connected all the stories would be. I thought, ‘Oh, we will each have slightly different things in it,’ but no, it is all interrelated. And I appreciate that.”

Into The Unknown

Inevitably, thanks to the fertile creative atmosphere that was hard-baked into *The High Republic* project from the outset, this sharing of ideas has already seen characters and creatures cross over from one project to another, helping to build a *Star Wars* era that is pleasingly interlinked. One example is the plant-like Drengir, conceived by Cavan Scott, who play an important role in *Into the Dark*. However, this approach did not limit Gray’s imagination, and she was able to introduce characters of her own devising, and indulge her fascination with all things Jedi.

Gray’s Jedi are complex, with unexpected interests, personalities, and motivations, such as the main protagonist of *Into the Dark*, archivist Reath Silas. According to Gray, not every Jedi is going to be thrilled about running into battle. “There have to be at least a few people that wound up in the Jedi Order who could really kind of give

or take this lightsaber stuff,” she says. “The Jedi Order isn’t all about going out with a lightsaber. You have the archives, you have different sorts of cultural or mystical missions, or other kinds of purposes that you might need to fulfill. I wanted to write about a young Jedi Knight who is basically getting the adventure of a lifetime. Silas rises to the challenge, but he’d still much rather be in the archives.”

Joining Silas are a trio who make up the crew of the starship *Vessel*—Affie, her co-pilot Leox, and navigator Geode. “Leox and Geode, came to me first, and I love them, but it’s a young adult novel, so we needed somebody else alongside these adult characters. Affie is someone who has gone from being an orphan to being the heir apparent to this huge shipping fortune, but she prefers being on this little ship running tiny cargo missions all over the place. As a trio, the crew are far more meaningful than Leox and Geode ever would have been as a duo.”

While it’s too soon for Gray to talk about her next contribution to *The High Republic*, she’s looking forward to being an audience member for upcoming *Star Wars* stories, including the Disney+ limited series *Obi-Wan Kenobi*, which revolves around the Jedi whose journey as a Padawan she explored in *Master & Apprentice*. “I love Obi-Wan,” says Gray. “I think sometimes he gets a little bit short changed, because he winds up holding the bag for a whole lot of failures. He’s a really interesting character.” 🧡



CLAUDIA GRAY

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February 2, 2021

“IT SOUNDS TRITE, BUT IT’S TRUE. I’VE REALLY GOTTEN TO BE FRIENDS WITH THE OTHER WRITERS.”



05

05 *The High Republic* authors (left to right): Justina Ireland, Claudia Gray, Daniel José Older, Charles Soule, and Cavan Scott at Skywalker Ranch.

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A SCAVENGE

R E A S S E M B L I N G

Insider explores how the scavengers of *Star Wars* embody the drama that drives the saga.

WORDS: ANDY HAGEMAN



R'S SAGA

T H E P A S T



cavenging is a complex concept that lies at the heart of *Star Wars*.

Trash hoarders the Jawas played an essential, if unwitting, role in delivering Leia's message to Obi-Wan Kenobi. Young Anakin's skill for salvaging scrap parts for Watto connected him with Qui-Gon Jinn and the Jedi. The process of repurposing underpins the entire saga, and it's in Rey, whose journey was central to the sequel trilogy, that we saw this most clearly.

The apotheosis of the scavenger

The three-film cycle that closed the Skywalker saga was bookended by scenes of Rey scaling perilous heights to scavenge pieces from the past, and over the course of the trilogy, Rey would come to embrace her identity as a scavenger in order to realize her full potential and resist the call of the dark side.

In *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019), she clambered ▶

► through the ruins of the second Death Star in search of a Sith wayfinder, hoping to repurpose it in service to the Resistance cause. The scene was a callback to a similar one in *The Force Awakens*, where Rey salvaged scraps from the wreckage of a Star Destroyer to scrounge a living from the exploitative Unkar Plutt. After exiting the ruined Imperial ship (on a sled made from scrap metal), Rey paused to drink a few drops of water from her battered canteen. Her low-tech tools contrasted with the high-tech waste she'd reclaimed. The water itself was likely gathered from the atmosphere of Jakku using moisture vaporators—an implicit link to Luke Skywalker's early life on Tatooine, and a reminder of water's importance here on Earth.

As Rey raced to Niima Outpost to sell her artifacts, audiences would have spotted a steelpecker in the desert wilderness. The avian creature was an echo of Rey's perilous livelihood as a scavenger, both being adaptive, integral members of the environmental and industrial ecosystem of Jakku. Their very survival was based on an intimate connection with the discarded past. Even Rey's lightsabers—her own, seen in the closing moments of *The Rise of Skywalker*, and the hilt she had carried with her since her encounter with Kylo Ren on Starkiller Base—were essentially used parts. Elements of Rey's staff can be seen in the components of her self-built lightsaber hilt, while



she inherited and later repaired the lightsaber that had once been the property of both Anakin and Luke Skywalker.

A piece of junk?

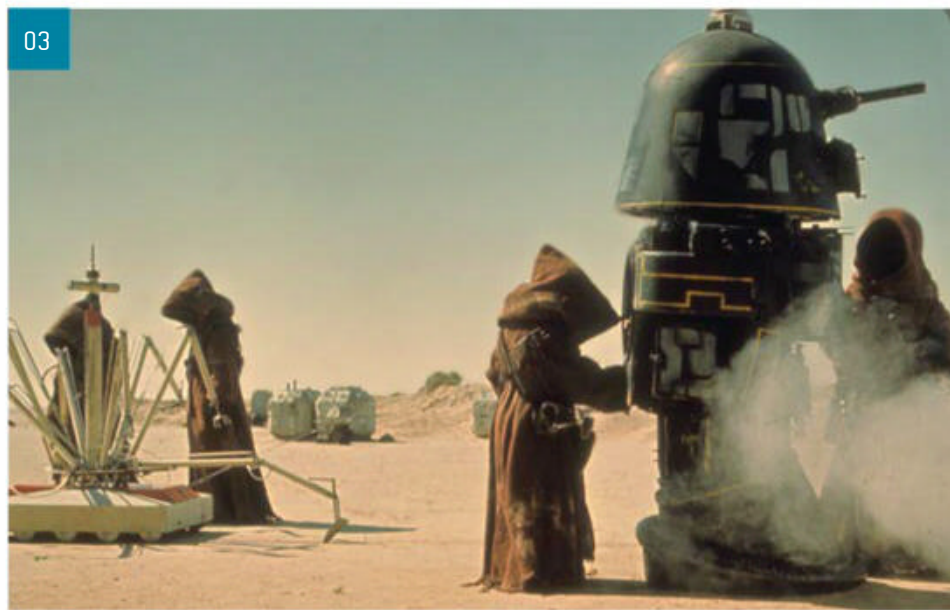
Throughout the original and sequel trilogies, one piece of hardware remained a constant, despite carrying more than a few bumps and scrapes, and a history of careless owners.

The ultimate find for one lucky scavenger, the *Millennium Falcon* was appropriated by Rey in *The Force Awakens* as she and Finn frantically attempted to flee First Order forces on Jakku. Having already dismissed the ship as garbage, the moment her preferred quadjumper was destroyed Rey had to concede, “The garbage will do.” The *Falcon* was indeed “a piece of junk”—a hodgepodge of scavenged parts, jerry-rigged components, and failing systems—but in a powerful and endearing way. Yes, its flaws made the freighter appear vulnerable, but that made it capable of pulling surprises. From Lando Calrissian to Han Solo and Chewie, then Rey, anyone fortunate enough to possess the *Falcon* loved it for its wonkiness, flaws and all. It's what set the ship (and the rebellious crews that called it home) apart from the Empire, with its fixation on order and immaculately manufactured



Rey would come to embrace her identity as a scavenger in order to realize her full potential.

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01 Rey and Finn opt to take the garbage out in *The Force Awakens* (2015).

02 Han Solo hides the *Millennium Falcon* in Imperial trash. *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980).

03 Jawas ply their trade on Tatooine in *A New Hope* (1977).

What separates the Jawas from Rey is the way they embraced a niche within an unjust and unsustainable economy.

warships that only ended up as scrap metal, loved by no one.

In the sequel trilogy, it's the *Falcon* Rey used to find Luke on Ahch-To, that played a part in helping the lost Jedi rediscover himself, that became a temporary repository for the sacred Jedi texts, and that Lando and Chewbacca used to rally the oppressed people of the galaxy to rise up against Palpatine. Simply put, the *Millennium Falcon* embodies the idea of reuse, renewal, and rebirth as a central foundation of the Skywalker saga.

The disgusting downside of upcycling

Not all scavengers in *Star Wars* scale the dramatic heights of Rey, or travel as far and fast as the *Falcon*. In *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) we met the Jawas, an industrious bunch of scrap collectors described by C-3PO as, "disgusting creatures." What separates the Jawas from Rey is the way they embraced a niche within an unjust and unsustainable economy. Wealth went hand in hand with waste in the *Star Wars* galaxy, and the Jawas were masters in second-hand economic activities, if not incredibly ethical about it.

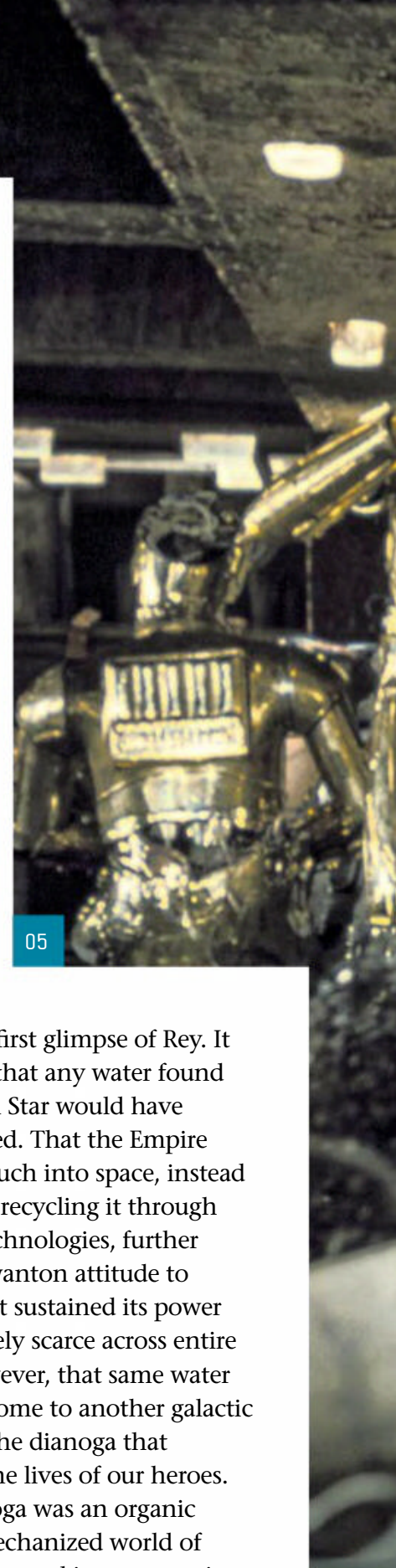
The Jawas' sandcrawler was more a mobile scrapheap than a travelling warehouse, in addition to being their home. Droid parts littered its interior, the remains of ruthlessly stripped down mechanical beings, with those

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► that still functioned clearly suffering some distress. The Jawas' approach was shocking, with no apparent empathy for the droids they had scavenged, exploiting fragments of the past without regard to what they might build for the future. For them, R2-D2 was merely an assembly of cogs and circuits, entirely interchangeable with R5-D4. Conversely, it was the unfeeling, exploitative actions of the Jawas that helped encourage movie audiences to truly care for R2-D2 and C-3PO, whose encounter with the diminutive scavengers was an existential threat we could all identify with.



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Compacting the trash

On the surface, the garbage masher sequence in *A New Hope* served to show how Luke, Leia, Han, Chewbacca, and even C-3PO react in moments of intense peril, but some significant scavenging insights swam in the depths of their unforgettable dilemma.

The detritus in the garbage masher subtly cast the Empire as extremely wasteful. Behind the polished floors, strict military

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hierarchies, and stormtrooper uniformity that created a strong impression of order and efficiency, the garbage masher exposed a spendthrift approach to the resources that supported it. Many of the scrapped metal objects appeared to be precision engineered. If those same pieces had been found in the sand by Rey or the Jawas, they would have been an economic boon. Yet the Empire neither recycled nor repurposed them on the Death Star. Instead, these labor and supply-chain intensive products were presumably compacted and ejected into open space as per Imperial protocol, as evidenced in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), when the *Millennium Falcon* played the part of garbage to evade Darth Vader's clutches.

Far worse was the volume of water in the trash compactor. Water is the fundamental element of life that runs through *Star Wars*, from the Lars moisture

farm to that first glimpse of Rey. It seems likely that any water found on the Death Star would have been imported. That the Empire flushed so much into space, instead of efficiently recycling it through treatment technologies, further exposed its wanton attitude to resources that sustained its power and were direly scarce across entire planets. However, that same water provided a home to another galactic scavenger—the dianoga that threatened the lives of our heroes.

The dianoga was an organic foil to the mechanized world of the Death Star, and its presence in the garbage masher highlights the power of scavengers. Here was a living being that was not explicitly a component of the superweapon, scrounging for life-giving sustenance from its scrapheap. Akin to the Jawas, the dianoga was further proof that scavengers will always find ways inside the cracks, literal and ideological. The Empire's ignorance or negligence toward the dianoga

The detritus in the garbage masher subtly cast the Empire as extremely wasteful.



came from the same hubris that led them to underestimate the rebel fighters that would destroy their precious Death Star, and in the Emperor's attitude toward a young scavenger he would describe as "nothing," many years later.

The past is the future

"A scavenger girl is no match for the power in me," were among the final words Palpatine spat at Rey during their fateful confrontation on Exegol in *The Rise of Skywalker*. At the core of his fury and hubris was the scavenger element of her identity.

Palpatine, who had connived, plotted, and murdered a path to the birth of his granddaughter, claimed that the skills and identity Rey had cultivated

04 To survive on Jakku, Rey scavenged for scraps in return for ration packs.

05 The hold of the Jawa sandcrawler was a mess of damaged droids.

06 The dianoga made a life for itself in the Death Star trash.

to survive on Jakku undermined her tremendous potential. Yet Rey's striking ability to uncover still-functional components from the ruins of previous causes and repurpose them was precisely how she sidestepped the dark destiny Palpatine hoped he had instilled in her blood.

Rey's approach to the past was always focused on how to make a better future—for her and her friends. As far as Palpatine was concerned, that made her vulnerable, but it was also what kept her grounded. Rey's acceptance of her own identity, and her faith in

a brighter horizon sustained her throughout her solitary life on Jakku, and gave her the strength to deny this relic of the Sith.

The scavengers of *Star Wars* exemplify a patchwork approach to retrieving the hopeful remains from what had gone before, to build again and anew. The future of this long-ago galaxy was built by a multitude of scavengers: by Rey, the Jawas, the droids, the *Millennium Falcon*, and by all who return to *Star Wars* time and time again to uncover new meanings and new joy in the space fantasy we think we know so well. 🕹️



SCAVENGER STORIES

Film production schedules and tight budgets create a fertile environment for scavenging. Since the first *Star Wars* film, behind-the-scenes stories have detailed how real-world objects were repurposed to give the galaxy its iconic texture, from antique camera flashguns utilized as lightsabers, to a stadium of cotton-bud podrace spectators.

One example is a piece of decor from behind the bar of the Mos Eisley Cantina, which has been identified as a component from a Rolls Royce jet engine. The same object was reused in *The Empire Strikes Back* as the head of bounty hunter IG-88 (and was replicated for IG-11 in *The Mandalorian*—a series that delights in salvaging elements from *Star Wars'* past). Whether hanging over a bar or as part of a droid assassin, removed from the context of its original function this scavenged piece of scrap could easily have been shipped in from a galaxy far, far away.

Roger Christian's memoir, *Cinema Alchemist*, is a stellar source of stories and photos from his time as set decorator on *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), and highlights the problem-solving acumen of the movie series' prop makers and modelers.

**Through
scavenging,
the saga
transcends
the limits
of the
individual
hero story.**

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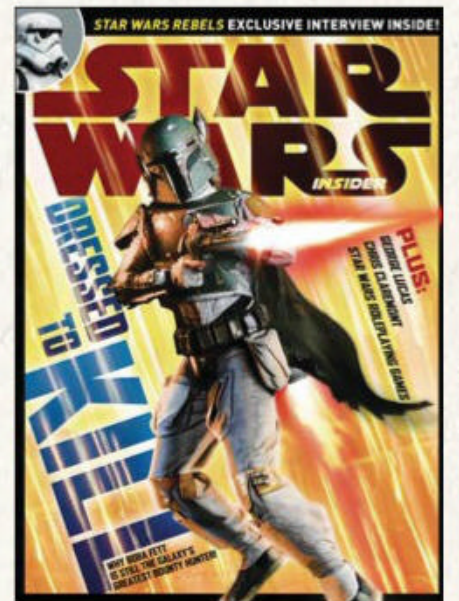
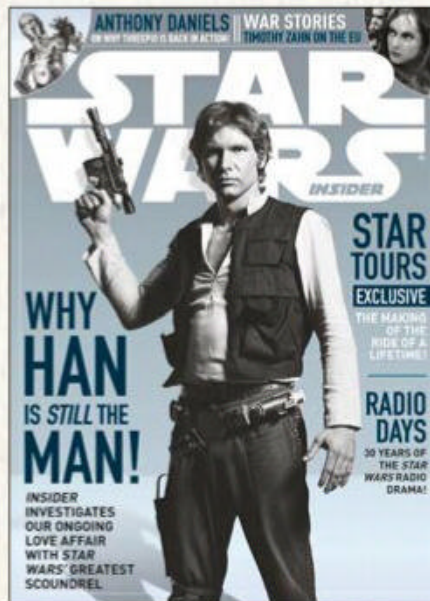
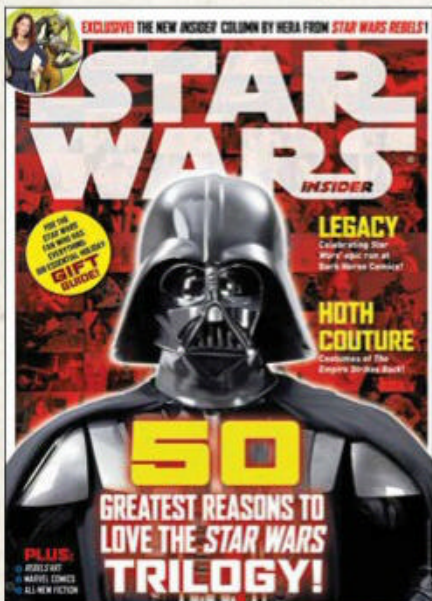
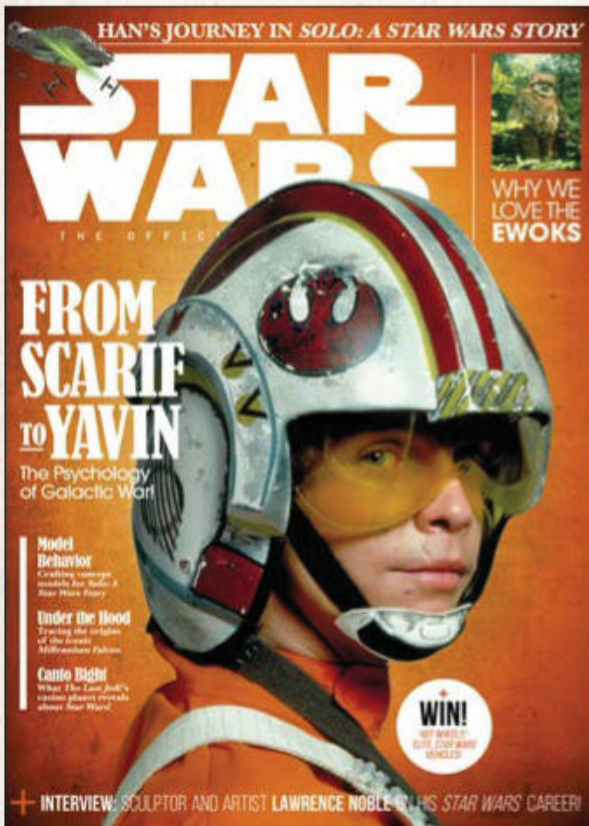
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VOLO7 CUVINADAN KANOV7V7

A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

Our resident *Star Wars* expert, Michael Kogge, consults his library of holocrons and ancient Jedi texts to answer your questions about the events, people, and places of the galaxy far, far away....

"How many times has the Darksaber changed hands, and what makes it so important to the Mandalorians?"

Rebecca Lynch, Reading, UK

For the people who call themselves Mandalorians, the Darksaber was not only a weapon, it was a potent symbol—of Mandalorian strength, pride, and independence. The Mandalorian who possessed it was often judged by the clans to be the Mand'alor, the one true ruler of the Mandalorian people. Yet it would be fair to say that its existence instigated division as much as it inspired unity.

The Darksaber was a lightsaber, albeit with a unique black blade that absorbed all other colors of the spectrum. Instead of forming a shaft like other lightsabers, the projecting plasma beam was wider and flatter, with a flare-clipped tip reminiscent of a steel falchion. White energy crackled along and through the black blade like a sinister, shimmering halo. Its hilt was rectangular and squared-off, and could be held with either a single or double-handed grip.

According to legend related by Fenn Rau, leader of the Protectors of Concord Dawn, the Darksaber

was constructed by the Mandalorian Jedi Tarre Vizsla, and its singular design attracted admirers. After Vizsla's passing, the Order kept the weapon in the Temple on Coruscant until a group of Mandalorians broke in and "liberated" it. These Mandalorians were tied to the aristocratic House Vizsla on Mandalore. Returning to their homeworld, they used the Darksaber to dispatch their enemies and bring the Mandalorian clans together under House Vizsla rule. But years of civil war desolated Mandalore and turned it into a wasteland.

Prior to the outbreak of the Clone Wars, Mandalorian society had enjoyed a period of relative peace, and the influence of the Darksaber faded. However, among Mandalorian traditionalists, whomsoever possessed the weapon earned their undying respect, since it meant the wielder had defeated its previous owner in combat.

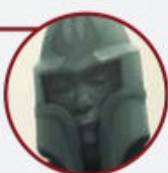
At the time of the Clone Wars, Pre Vizsla called the Darksaber his own. He led a group of terrorist-zealots known as the Death Watch



One Blade, Many Hands

Tarre Vizsla

A millennia ago, the induction of the first Mandalorian into the Jedi Order marked a major shift in the relations between the Jedi and the Mandalorians, who had been mortal enemies. Vizsla created the Darksaber as his personal lightsaber, and when he later governed Mandalore, it symbolized his rule.



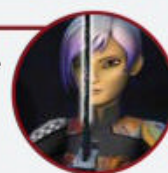
Pre Vizsla

Claiming descent from Tarre Vizsla, the members of House Vizsla held onto the Darksaber through the generations. The last to wield the storied weapon was Pre Vizsla, who used the blade to rally the Death Watch to his cause: a quest to restore the glory of Mandalore's warrior past.



Sabine Wren

A rebel in more ways than one, the Mandalorian refugee Sabine Wren at first did not want to wield the Darksaber when it was discovered. After facing the pain of her past, she took up the blade and decided to use it to right wrongs against the enemies of Mandalore.





to return Mandalorian society back to its warrior ways. When they succeeded in overthrowing the pacifist New Mandalorian government, Pre Vizsla relied on the legend of the Darksaber to secure his power. So too did Palpatine's former Sith apprentice, Maul, who—by killing Vizsla and taking the blade—won the command of the Death Watch. He used them to install a prime minister who would be his puppet.

Not all submitted to Maul's will. A squad of Mandalorian commandos called the Nite Owls resisted Maul's Shadow Collective. Their commander was none other than Bo-Katan Kryze, sister to the Duchess Satine. When the Republic's siege of Mandalore ousted Maul's forces, Kryze became the regent, though her reign was shortlived because she refused to follow the new Galactic Empire.

Despite losing power, Bo-Katan Kryze gained possession of the Darksaber for a time, receiving it from the rebel Sabine Wren. Like Pre Vizsla, Kryze viewed the Darksaber as the key to unifying her world, but the Empire's "Great Purge" of Mandalore ended that dream. The survivors, including Kryze, went into hiding. It is not yet known how Moff Gideon acquired the Darksaber.

Legend of the Darksaber

Circa 1000 years BSW4

- Mandalorian Jedi Tarre Vizsla forged the Darksaber.
- Mandalorians from House Vizsla stole the Darksaber from the Jedi Temple on Coruscant.

21 BSW4

- During a failed plot to overthrow Duchess Satine of Mandalore, Pre Vizsla brandished the Darksaber against Obi-Wan Kenobi in a duel.

19 BSW4

- Pre Vizsla joined forces with Darth Maul's Shadow Collective and used the Darksaber to establish his leadership over the Mandalorians.
- Betraying and slaying Pre Vizsla, Darth Maul took the Darksaber.

2 BSW4

- Sabine Wren found the Darksaber in Maul's lair on Dathomir and trained how to wield it under Kanan Jarrus.
- Lady Bo-Katan Kryze accepted the Darksaber from Sabine Wren in acknowledgment of her claim to leadership of the surviving Mandalorians.

9 ASW4

- Moff Gideon possessed the Darksaber and wielded it on Nevarro.
- The Mandalorian seized the Darksaber from Gideon in battle.

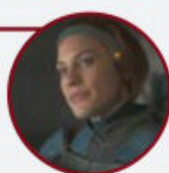
Maul And The Darksaber

Before being halved by Obi-Wan Kenobi, Darth Maul was so skilled with his double-bladed saberstaff that the two were almost synonymous with each other. Those who confronted Maul in his later incarnation, however, discovered he wielded the Darksaber with similar expertise. Maul obtained the weapon after killing the Mandalorian ruler Pre Vizsla, thereby winning leadership of the Death Watch, despite not being Mandalorian himself. During the Clone Wars, Maul wielded the weapon with fury against his enemies, including General Grievous and Darth Sidious. Years later, Maul brought Ezra Bridger to a Nightsister lair on Dathomir where he had secreted the Darksaber—and where it would switch owners again.



Bo-Katan Kryze

Bo-Katan was the renegade in House Kryze, longing for Mandalore to reject pacifism and embrace its warrior roots. When Sabine Wren offered her the Darksaber outside of combat, she wouldn't take it, but eventually agreed to in order to try to unite her people during a time of darkness.



Din Djarin

Raised as a foundling in the old ways, the bounty hunter known as the Mandalorian lived by its code, over and above that of his profession. When he disarmed Moff Gideon of the Darksaber, he offered it to Bo-Katan Kryze as its rightful owner. She refused, leaving Djarin carrying the symbol of Mandalore's ruler.



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STAR WARS INSIDER WORLDWIDE

CELEBRATING THE SAGA



CLONING THE CAPTAIN

A fan's journey to cosplay as a Republic hero

As a child, Matthew Bruhn's interests in sci-fi, fantasy, and medieval knights proved to be the perfect preparation for *Star Wars*. Drawn in by the Jedi Knights, Bruhn's fandom soon grew as he watched the original trilogy, built LEGO sets, and ultimately saw the prequel films in theaters.

Years later, *The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020) television series really grabbed his attention. "It was awesome to watch characters like Ahsoka and Rex develop and grow

into who they were going to be," says the fan, whose fondness for cosplay soon combined with his enthusiasm for Captain Rex's strong moral code.

Setting out to build Rex's armor was not an easy initiative, but Bruhn took any obstacles he encountered in his stride. "I find there's a lot of joy in creating and problem solving," says Bruhn. "Finding the right paint color, sourcing the right materials, trying to make those LED's light up when you literally have no room for electronics; it's my favorite hobby."

In Bruhn's mind, cosplaying is as much about bringing joy to others as it is about expressing one's own interest in *Star Wars* and passion for a particular character. "It's a really humbling experience," he points out. "I remember walking into an event with other clone troopers, and a teenage boy went crazy seeing Cody, Wolffe, and Rex walk by. It was one of those very pure, very heartwarming moments.

"*Star Wars* has brought amazing things to my life, mainly in the form of the people I've met," explains Bruhn. "From invitations to events, to meeting some of the voices behind these beloved characters, it's really been a massive part of my life."

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We want to hear from you! Tell us about your *Star Wars* experience. What made you want to become a fan? What have you done in the name of *Star Wars*? Tell us your *Star Wars* story by sending your photos, art, and letters here:

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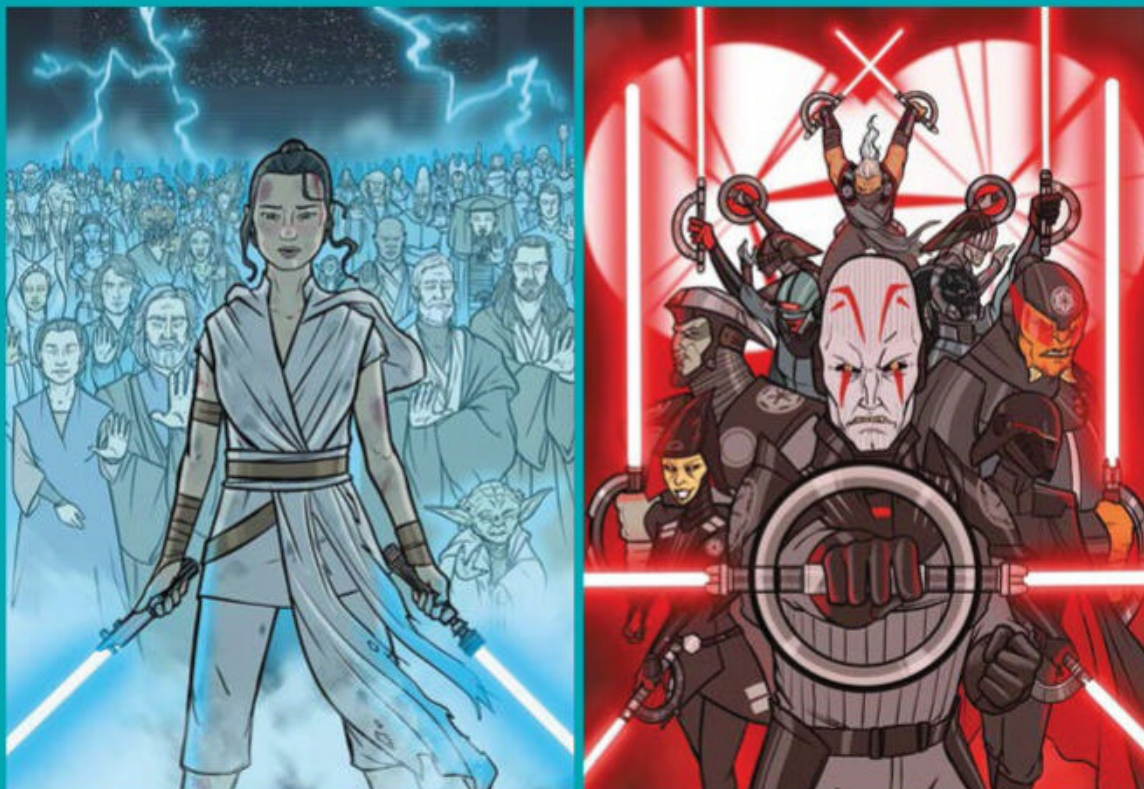
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ARTISTS' ALLEY

Talented *Star Wars* fans share their amazing drawings inspired by the galaxy far, far away....



01 “BE WITH ME” AND “THE IMPERIAL INQUISITORIOUS” BY NICK DUCOTE

Inspired by *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019), fan artist Nick Ducote decided to draw all the Jedi who expressed support for Rey as she battled against Emperor Palpatine. As there is no light without the dark, Ducote also created a piece based on the Imperial Inquisitors. “From their spinning lightsabers to their mysterious origins as former Jedi, I have always been excited to see them,” Ducote says.



02 “THE VADER” AND “THE CHILD” BY JEFF POWELL

Fan artist Jeff Powell also focused on dualities, in his sketches of the villainous Darth Vader and the innocent Child. The Vader sketch offers a ghost-like appearance that represents the character’s complexity, while Powell was inspired to draw the Child because of his adorable scenes in *The Mandalorian* (2019-present).

BOUNTY HUNTERS

Scouring the galaxy for the stars of *Star Wars*...

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REMEMBERING OUR LOST LEGENDS

Jeremy Bulloch & Peter Mayhew

Jared Peppard and his younger brother Theo have always shared a special connection through their mutual love of *Star Wars*, so it was a dream come true when they met two of their galactic heroes at Celebration Europe in 2016: Jeremy Bulloch and Peter Mayhew.

The brothers' *Star Wars* history has its own unique plot twist, thanks to author Corinna Bechko, who honored the duo by combining their names into that of a new character—Thared—in her Legends-branded comic-book series, *Star Wars: Legacy*. Displaying their reputation for warmth and generosity, Bulloch and Mayhew were delighted to autograph Jared and Theo's copy of issue #18 of the series, the very installment featuring Thared.

A lifelong *Star Wars* fan—with a son named Ezra and a Belgian Hare named Chopper—the experience is one that Jared will never forget.

01



02



01 Jared and Theo meeting Jeremy Bulloch, the actor known for his role as Boba Fett.

02 Jared and Theo's copy of *Star Wars: Legacy* Volume II, issue #18, signed by Jeremy Bulloch and Peter Mayhew.

WORLDWIDE



THREE DROIDS AND A DIANOGA

Crafting classic *Star Wars* creatures

Yannyck Audet's venture into creating full-scale models of *Star Wars* characters began with the purchase of a 12-inch Hasbro action figure of IG-88 in 2001. The bounty-hunting droid sparked Audet's imagination, and he began to wonder what challenges he might need to overcome to build a full-scale replica.

Beginning with IG-88, and subsequently drawn to the saga's many droids and other unique creatures, Audet embarked on a quest to recreate these fictional figures in the real world, at life size.

The crafty fan starts each project by planning his build and selecting the materials best suited to each particular component. Audet then employs wood, foam, and other recyclable products in his creations, fashioning every part by hand.

To date, Audet has produced 30 builds ranging from K-2SO and a probe droid to General Grievous and a dianoga. The time he invests in each project differs depending on the character's size and complexity, with construction taking anywhere from a single day to several hundred hours. Without his own workshop, Canadian Audet's builds come together in his yard—and when the colder weather of the winter months sets in, his projects go on hold until things warm up again between May and October.

Always happy to invite friends over to check out his collection (such as William Couture, who took the photos of Audet with his creations seen here), Audet's early interest in IG units was reinvigorated by the appearance of IG-11 in *The Mandalorian's* first season, and the assassin-droid-turned-nurse is set to be his next major project.



SCULPTING A SAGA

Dioramas and busts bring *Star Wars* to life

Growing up in Sweden as the child of a Japanese expatriate, Ats Yamanaka was entranced by the incredible visual effects of *Star Wars: A New Hope* in 1977. Inspired by Luke Skywalker's journey under Obi-Wan Kenobi's mentorship, Yamanaka was delighted when he later learned that Japanese director Akira Kurosawa had been a significant influence on *Star Wars* creator George Lucas.

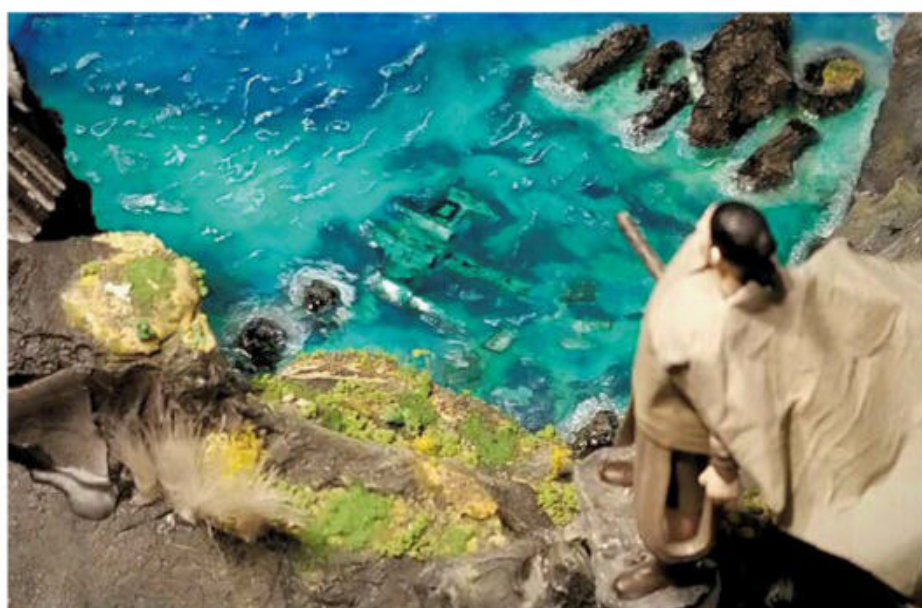
An avid collector of *Star Wars* action figures, Yamanaka later experienced his own reawakening when *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) was released, and decided to turn his fandom into something tangible: dioramas! The amateur sculptor's first creation reflected the film's final moments, when Rey arrived on Ahch-To in search of Luke Skywalker. Yamanaka sought to capture the aesthetics of J.J. Abrams' cinematography using paper clay, Styrofoam, sponge powder, plaster, and acrylic paints. "A majority of my work is built from scratch, using paper or resin clay, plastic sheets, and other odd bits and pieces," Yamanaka reveals.

Yamanaka employed forced and aerial perspective techniques to depict the scene from *The Last Jedi*



where Rey discovered Luke's submerged X-wing. For a prequel build based on Theed Palace, he constructed the buildings using recycled plastic bottles equipped with internal LED lighting. Quinoa branches and sponge powder were used to add foliage to the structure.

Encouraged by the results, Yamanaka opted to try his hand at sculpting and modeling characters, including Unkar Plutt, Maz Kanata, and Babu Frik. 🍷



TK-101

HINTS, TIPS, AND IDEAS FOR CRAFTING
YOUR OWN *STAR WARS* GALAXY



MAY THE PLEATS BE WITH YOU

Whether you're looking to fit in or stand out with your *Star Wars* cosplay, you'll need a costume that looks the part. In this TK-101, we set out to take an existing garment and adapt it for use in the galaxy far, far away.

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER COOPER

For Lando Calrissian it's a brocade cape lining, for Boba Fett it's *his* armor (in just the right shade of green), and as for Jabba? Well, the Hutts generally prefer to go *au naturel*. For a huge number of characters in the *Star Wars* galaxy, however, pleated accents are the high-fashion trim they simply can't be seen without.

Take Greedo's green outfit in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), with those creamy pleated stripes on its arms and legs. And then there's Luke Skywalker's cool costume from the medal ceremony at the end of the movie—not only did he get Han Solo-style pants and a black vest, but his jacket had similar pleats along each arm, running from collar to cuffs. The snug-looking overcoat Cassian Andor wore on Jedha had them too. It's this ubiquitous element of *Star Wars* costume detailing that inspired this issue's TK-101 project: an authentic-looking smuggler's jacket that's got it where it counts in the pleat department.

SEW WHAT?

Before worrying about how to achieve those pleats, however, our first task was to find a suitable jacket that already had something of a *Star Wars* vibe about it. We needed interesting stitching, robust

pockets, and a Corellian cut. In normal circumstances a trip to a downtown thrift outlet or second-hand store would have been our first port of call, but with COVID lockdown still in place it was time to raid our own wardrobe. Two coats quickly rose to the top of the pile: a Swiss army surplus coat in khaki green (more in keeping with an undercover rebel agent), and a dark grey/brown padded jacket that all-but screamed renegade scoundrel. Perfect!

At this point, the pleat problem became unavoidable. With no sewing skills to speak of, and a magazine deadline to hit, we went online to shop around for something

ready-made. If you can't make what you need from scratch, sourcing it from the internet is fine by us. It's even possible to find pre-prepared elements made by fans for specific *Star Wars* costumes. Our goal, however, was to stick to our DIY ethic as much as possible, and a three meter strip of pre-pleated ribbon was soon on order. Except there was a problem. When the ribbon arrived, it wasn't nearly wide enough and only had a seam along one edge—perfect for making prize rosettes, but not ideal for our jacket. Another online search later and 16 feet of two-inch-wide cross-grain ribbon was in the mail, along with some fabric glue.

PRÊT À PORTER

YouTube has plenty of "how-to" videos on making knife pleats, and with some careful folding, sewing with superglue, and a wing and a prayer, two strips of pleated ribbon were prepared and set aside. It was time to remove a few real-world elements from our base jacket.

Zipper does not exist in the galaxy far, far away. Actually, fastenings of any kind are pretty hard to spot in the on-screen *Star Wars* galaxy—they're generally

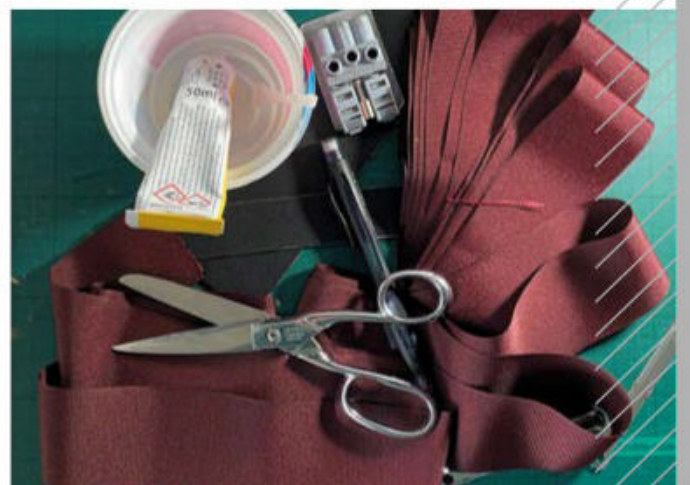




disguised within costumes so as not to detract from the saga's intergalactic look. So, with great care and a sharp craft knife, detailing that just wasn't *Star Wars* enough, including pocket flaps and a buckle fastener on the collar, got the chop. A row of pop-fasteners was hidden with a length of spare ribbon left over from the pleats, secured in position with fabric

adhesive, and the pleats themselves were finally glued to each sleeve.

The finishing touch was to add detailing to the chest, namely the greebled accessory we made in last issue's TK-101. At last, our smuggler's jacket was ready to make the jump from wardrobe space to hyperspace. So long as all that glue holds together! 🙌



The *Star Wars* Archive

The behind-the-scenes
story of a galaxy far,
far away....

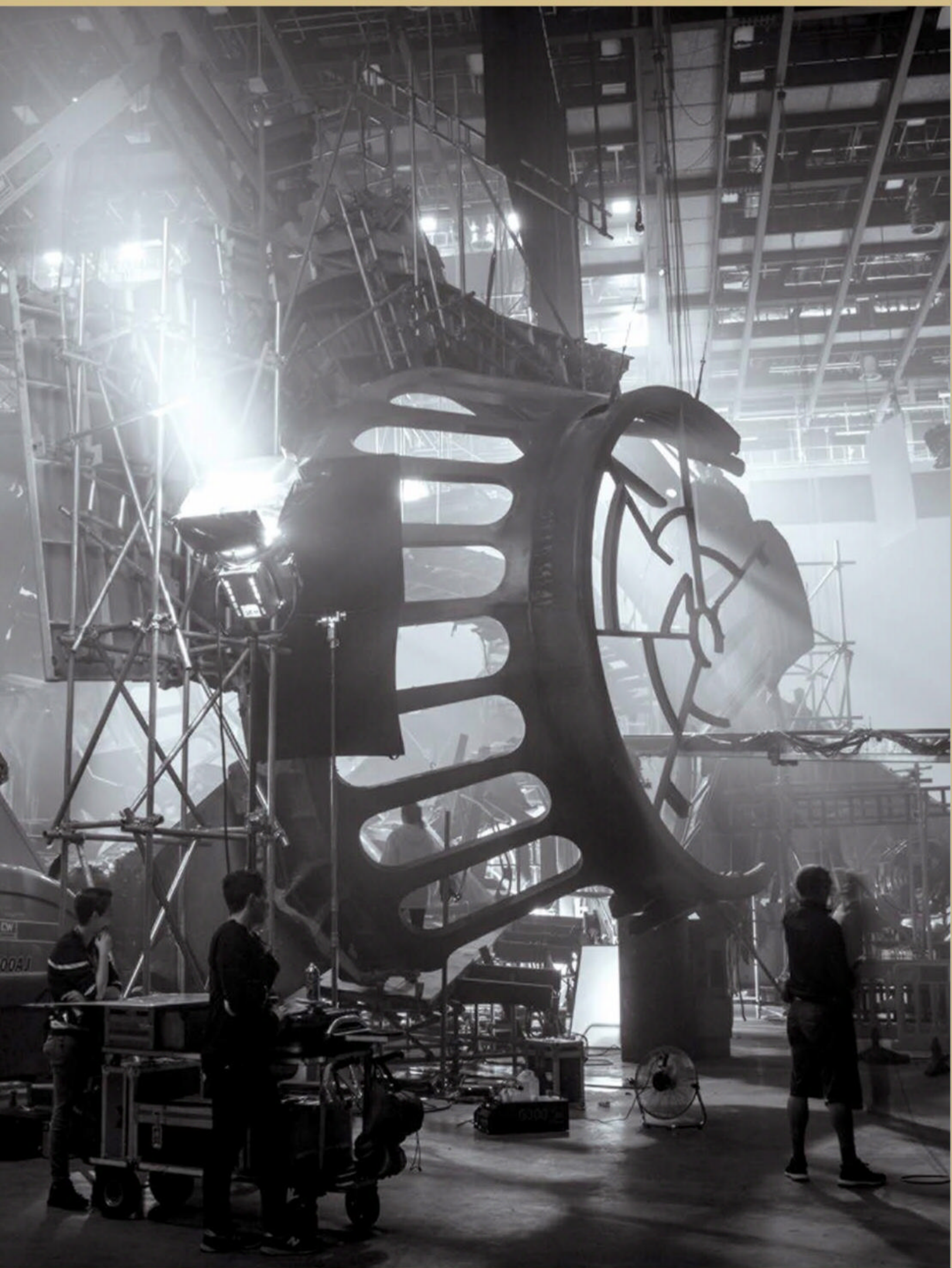
THE UNDEAD DEATH STAR

Among the most visually striking call-backs to the original trilogy in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019) were the scenes set inside the wreckage of the second Death Star, ravaged by the ocean waves of Kef Bir.

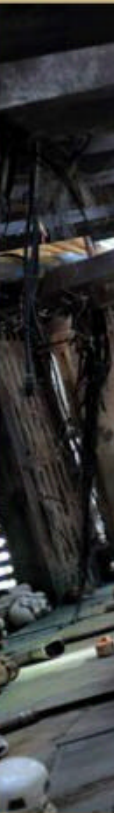
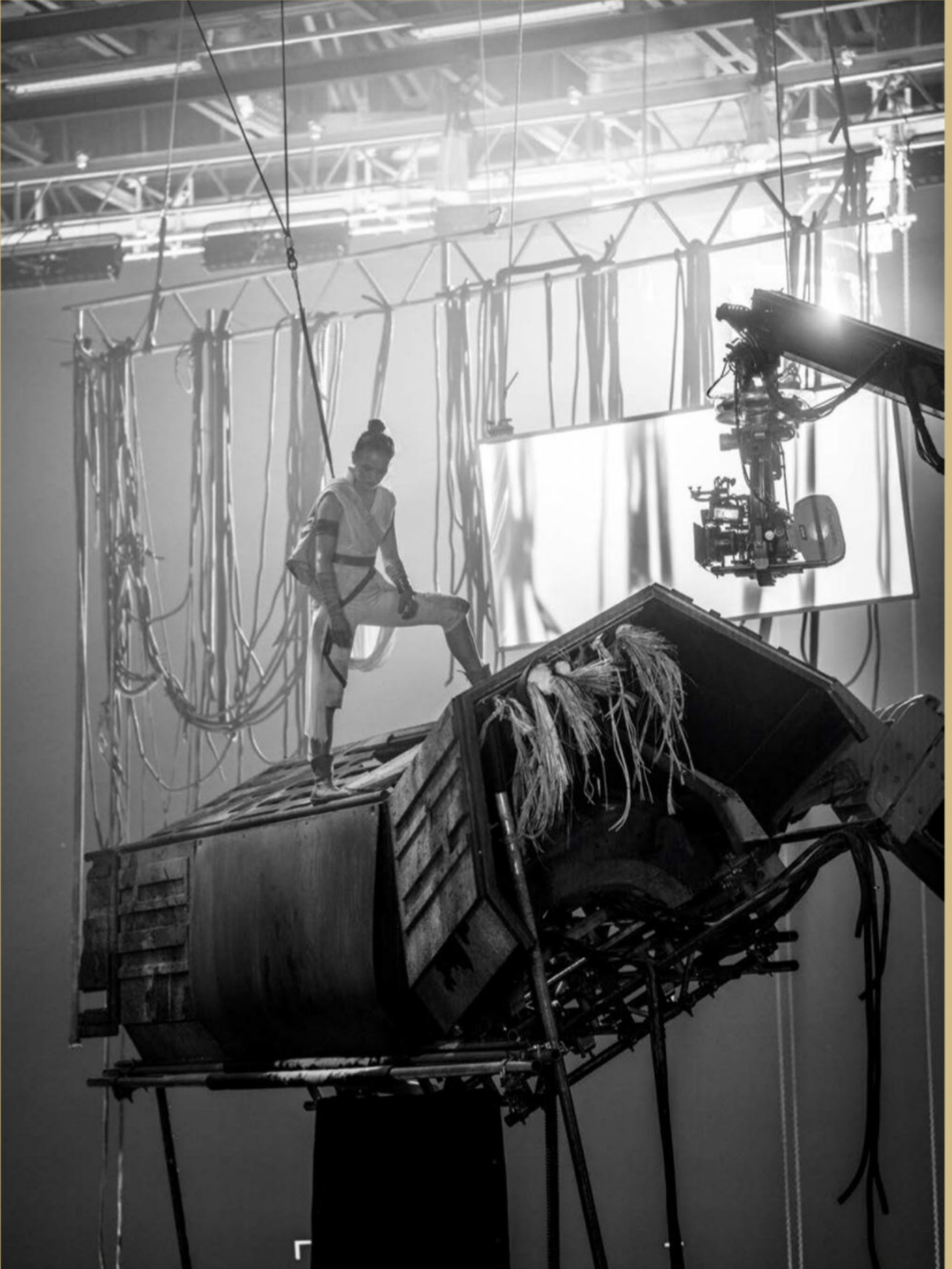
In place of the clean lines and surfaces with which audiences were familiar, the interior of the former Imperial battle station was instead a mess of jagged edges and destruction. The effect was a chilling subversion of our expectations.

The broken Death Star was comprised of several sets, each constructed at evocatively skewed angles, including an exacting but twisted recreation of the Emperor's throne room (right). ▶





01



01 Daisy Ridley, secured to a safety tether, preparing to film Rey's exploration of the Death Star ruins.

02 Ridley on the Death Star set with director J.J. Abrams.

03 Abrams surveying the wrecked corridors of the Death Star set.

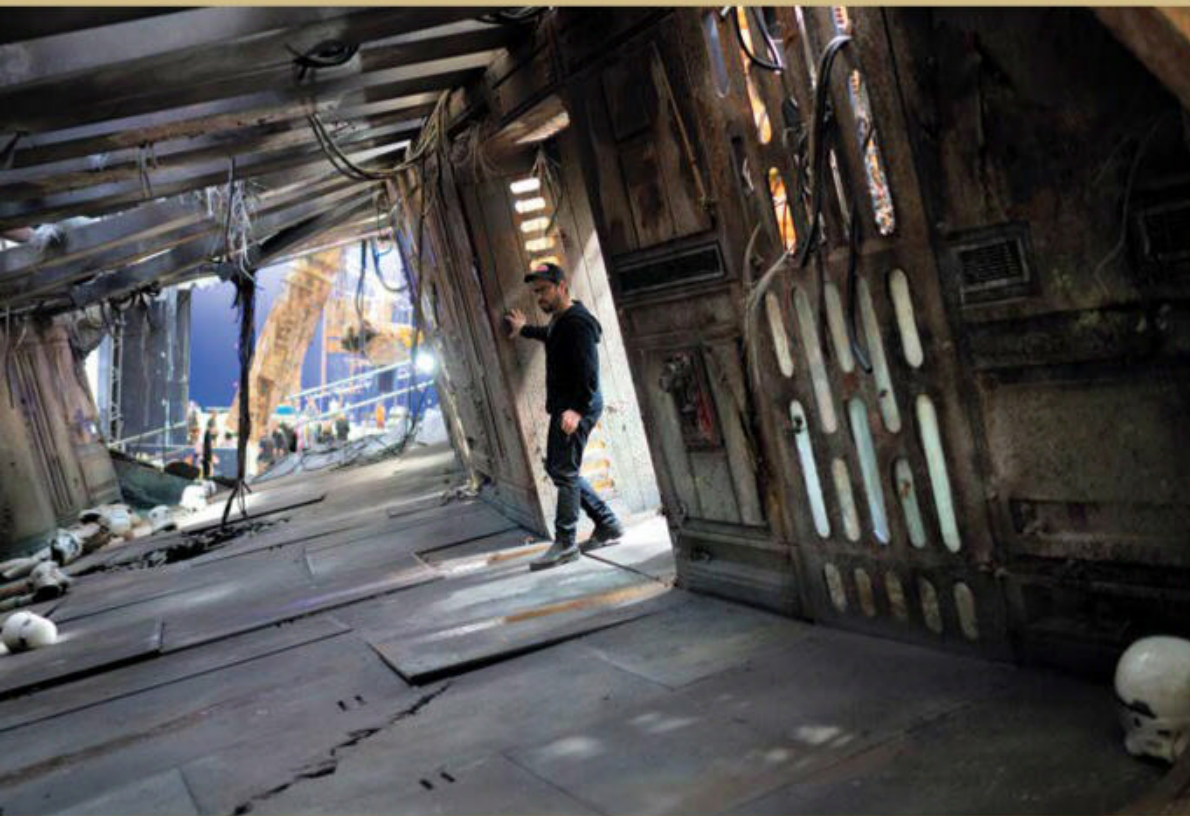
04 An exterior view of the pitched corridor set, constructed at Pinewood Studios.



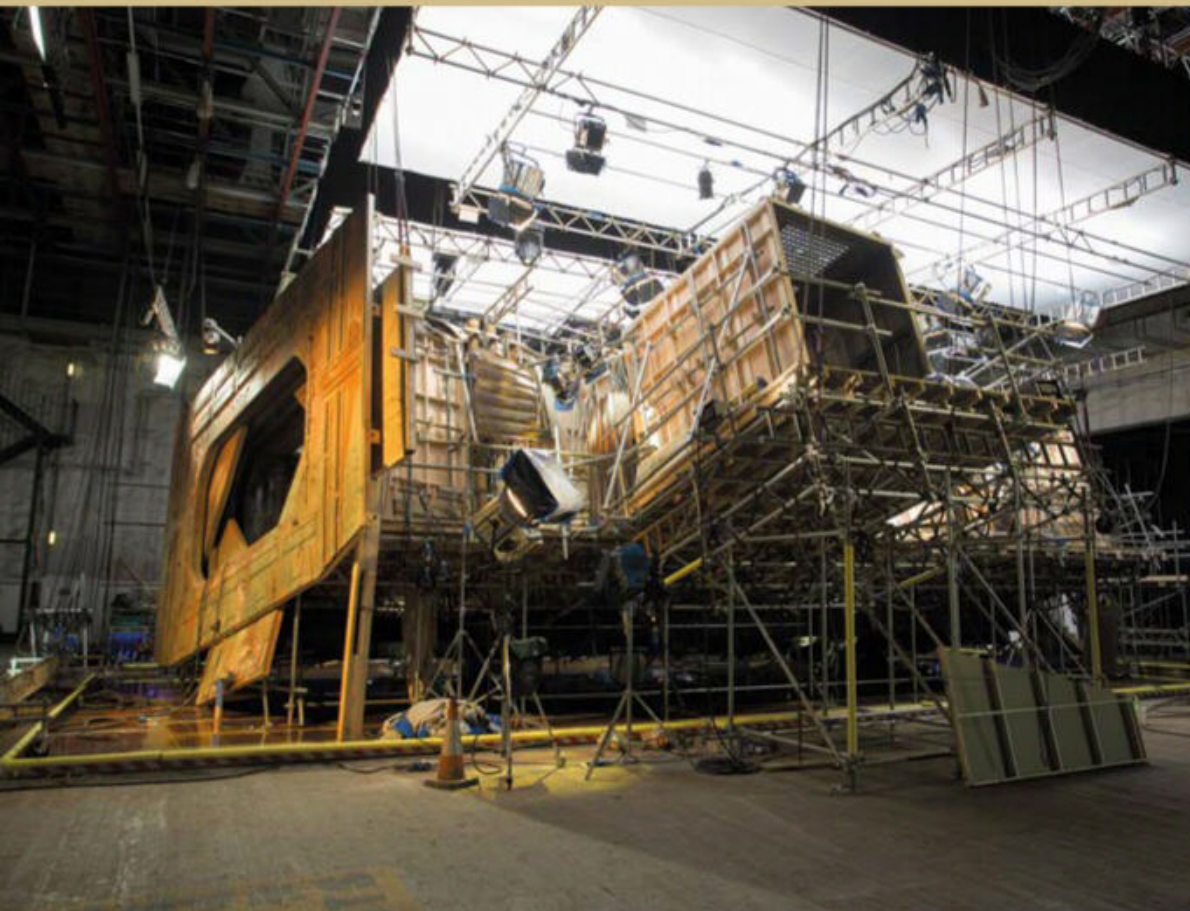
02



03



04



The Dark Arts

A return to the site of Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader's epic duel in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983) was originally explored by artists including Doug Chiang, Iain McCaig, and Ryan Church, in concept artwork for J.J. Abrams' *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015).

Under co-production designer Rick Carter, the early phase of concept work on the movie saw the art department mining their imaginations to generate "what-if" scenarios to develop visual ideas free from the restrictions of story.

Working from the notion, "What happened to the second Death Star?" the artists envisaged an underwater excursion for the *Millennium Falcon*, and a swim through the Emperor's submerged throne room, where a map to Luke Skywalker's location was hidden. Some of those ideas were revisited for *The Rise of Skywalker*, in which the throne room (as seen above, in concept art by Adam Baines) would become the location where Rey and Kylo Ren began their fateful final clash. 🙌



STAR WARS
THE HIGH REPUBLIC

S T A R L I G H T

First Duty

PART TWO

By Cavan Scott



Previously:

Sedating a raging Medoslean in the medcenter of Starlight Beacon was not how Velko Jahan had expected her first day as station administrator to begin. The sudden murder of a Skembo ambassador who'd demanded her protection only made matters worse....



Everyone was talking at once, everyone except for Velko Jahan. The hours since the assassination attempt had been a blur.

Velko could still see Ambassador Ceeril's body slumped back on the bed whenever she closed her eyes and was convinced that the smell of charred flesh still hung in the air, even here in Starlight Beacon's vast operation's hub. She had seen blaster wounds before, too many to remember, and they smelled much worse on the

Jedi Master Avar Kriss, Marshal of Starlight Beacon and the Hero of Hetzal, was as impressive as you would expect from the person who had masterminded the Jedi response to the Great Disaster, saving billions of lives in the Hetzal system and beyond. Everything about her radiated confidence, from her flowing robes to the piercing blue eyes that were now set on Rodor Keen with the intensity of a targeting computer. Even the fact that she was flanked by a female Jedi at least three decades older than her, not to mention the towering Wookiee wearing Padawan robes, did nothing to diminish her presence in the room. Velko had the impression that Avar Kriss could be surrounded by every Jedi near and far, and all eyes would still rest on her.

This was not going to go well.

Beside them, Estala Maru took a step forward to greet the new arrivals in turn. "Marshal. Master Assek. Padawan Burryaga. Welcome back to Starlight. I trust your mission to the Malaga Cluster was a success?"

with Kriss' party crammed around the now-empty bed.

"And this is where you found the Ambassador, Administrator Jahan?"

Velko nodded, her mouth dry. "Yes, Marshal. He was laid out on his back..."

"Having been shot in the chest."

"That's right."

"And what of his bodyguard?"

"Destroyed, its head blasted clean from its shoulders," said Ghal Tarpfen, Starlight's Mon Calamari head of security, who had been waiting for them in the ward. She stepped forward, pointing out tiny shards of metal embedded high in the far wall. "You can see shrapnel from its processors, here and here."

Standing by the door, Burryaga rumbled a question which Maru was quick to answer.

"The security footage is a mystery."

The Kessurian nodded at his astromech who dutifully projected an image of the scene from earlier that morning. Velko frowned to see herself standing talking

VELKO COULD STILL SEE AMBASSADOR CEERIL'S BODY SLUMPED BACK ON THE BED WHENEVER SHE CLOSED HER EYES.

battlefields of Soika. Why had this attack, mounted not in the grime of a hastily dug trench but in the sterile medcenter of the Republic's newest and greatest space station, overwhelmed her?

"Administrator?"

It took Velko a minute to realize that Rodor Keen was talking to her. How many times had she forced Starlight's head of operations to repeat her rank before she responded. The look on his face provided the answer: too many!

"Sorry, sir," she stammered, annoyed at how flustered she sounded. "I was running through what happened one last time."

"An excellent idea," rang out a voice behind them. Velko and Keen turned to see one of the most striking figures she had ever seen striding towards them. Velko's heart sank. She had been waiting for this moment ever since she had received her posting, longing to meet this woman, but had never imagined it would be like this.

"The trade agreement between the Ayelina and Ludmere was signed without incident," Kriss confirmed. "And yet, we avoided one diplomatic crisis to find another raging back here on Starlight."

"Things have become a little heated in your absence."

"Which is something of an understatement," Keen interjected, a nerve throbbing in the temple above his cybernetic eye.

"What happened?" Kriss asked, turning her attention to the head of operations. "We could feel the disquiet the moment we arrived."

"Maybe you should see for yourself," Maru cut in before addressing the astromech that was never far from his side. "Kaysee, inform the medcenter that the Marshal is on her way."

Ceeril's room was exactly how Velko had last seen it, albeit more crowded

to Ceeril, the bodyguard droid still on its broad feet. Then came the commotion from outside, Velko diving from the door seconds before the image was lost with static. "The signal was scrambled minutes before the attack."

"The assassin covering their tracks," Nib Assek suggested as the astromech fast-forwarded until the image returned, the Skembo now prone on the bed and the droid toppling back with a crash.

"I still can't believe that nobody heard anything," Keen complained. "A blaster is hardly quiet."

"We were distracted," Velko admitted.

"With the incident with the... what was it again?" Assek asked.

"A Medoslean," Tarpfen told her. "The patient had a violent seizure and started attacking members of the staff, myself included. If it wasn't for Administrator Jahan here, the situation could have been much worse."

"Worse?" Keen snapped. "An ambassador has been shot on Starlight

Beacon. Do you have any idea how many survivors we are caring for since the hyperspace disaster?"

"Eighteen thousand four hundred and seventy-four," Maru stated, drawing a furious glare from the coordinator. "Sorry. That was rhetorical, wasn't it?"

"Whatever the number," Keen continued, "Starlight is supposed to be a haven, a sanctuary, and yet this happened right under our noses."

"The real question is, what are you going to do about it?"

Jedi and Republic officials turned to see Ambassador Ceeril on the other side of the door. The rocky-faced Skembo was hunched in a repulsor chair, a bacta-vest covering his chest. Burryaga stepped aside to let Kriss pass, the marshal bowing in greeting to the injured official.

"Your Excellency, I am glad that you have survived your ordeal."

"No thanks to any of you," Ceeril wheezed, clutching his chest.

"That isn't entirely true," Maru pointed out, glancing up at nurse Okana

intensified, his body wracked with agony. Doctor Gino'le scuttled over on mechanical legs, instructing Okana to push Ceeril to the room that had been prepared on the other side of the ward. The marshal's party watched him go, Rodor Keen's face as dark as the Skembo's had been pale.

Kriss turned to the coordinator as soon as Ceeril was out of earshot. "Do we have any Hassarians on the station?"

Velko spoke up before Keen could answer. "A couple, yes."

A scathing look from the coordinator shut her down again.

"And what do they have to say for themselves?" Kriss asked.

"Both were severely injured in the Wazta emergence," Keen said. "One has been in a bacta tank for three days and the other is barely conscious."

"Can we be certain about that?" Tarpfen asked.

"It would be the ideal cover,"

Assek agreed.

Kriss sighed. "Can I see them?"

write it if you want."

A wistful sigh escaped his thin lips. "Alas the station will not run itself. But I can imagine it, can't you Kaysee?" He glanced down at the little droid. "Evidence to collate from every witness. From the victim himself."

The astromech whistled shrilly.

"I stand corrected. Victims, plural. That unfortunate bodyguard."

"That destroyed bodyguard," Velko reminded him.

Maru regarded her with those curious scarlet eyes. "Of course. Now where did they take the poor thing?" He pulled a datapad from his sleeve and swiped the screen, the device rewarding him with a satisfying beep. "Ah, yes. In the security tower. Evidence room three."

Velko straightened where she stood, immediately picking up on the none-too-subtle hint Maru had just dangled in front of her. Perhaps there was more to this Kessurian after all.

"Do I have access to evidence room three?" she asked.

SO THIS WAS IT. VELKO WAS BEING SIDELINED, REDUCED TO FILING REPORTS WHILE GHAL TARPFFEN LED THE WAY. SO MUCH FOR HER GLITTERING CAREER.

who had pushed the ambassador back onto the ward. "If Doctor Gino'le and his staff hadn't responded so quickly..."

"The Hassarians would have got their way, yes I know."

"The Hassarians?" Kriss asked, drawing a glare from the pained ambassador.

"Those brutes won't rest until the Skembo are driven from the sector. Time and time again we've asked the Republic for help, and time and time again we've been refused."

"And you saw your assailant?"

"As clearly as I see you now."

"Unlike the cameras," Assek added.

"You found the hairs didn't you?"

Ceeril asked, coughing harshly, "On my droid?" This was true. Velko had found them herself, hairs grasped between the droid's now-dormant pincers, the same color as those found in the manes of the Hassarians elsewhere in the infirmary. "How much evidence do you need?"

The ambassador's coughing

"Of course," Tarpfen said, leading the group towards the next ward. "This way."

Velko went to follow, but was stopped by Keen. "Not you, Administrator."

Her brow furrowed. "Sir?"

"We need a full report for the Senate. Leave nothing out. Nothing at all."

So this was it. Velko was being sidelined, reduced to filing reports while Ghal Tarpfen led the way. So much for her glittering career on the Republic's first mega-beacon. She'd be shuffled into a corner of the ops hub before you could say "Dank Farrik."

It was only when she heard KC-78 burble that she realized that not all the party had left with Tarpfen. The astromech was still in the ward as was its master.

"I envy you," Maru told her, with the hint of a smile.

"You do?"

"A full report? All those juicy details? My kind of heaven."

She cocked an eyebrow. "You can

"No," the Jedi responded mischievously as he turned and swept from the room, "but Kaysee does..."

The security tower was as stark as the rest of the station was opulent, the walls a brushed gunmetal, the furniture sturdy but functional. The remains of the bodyguard droid were laid out on a raised slab, illuminated by lights that gave out a harsh blue light.

"Ready to record, Kaysee?" Velko asked the droid.

The astromech bleeped that it was.

"Okay. The bodyguard unit is intact except for the damage to its head." She glanced down at its mechanical hands. "The pincers have now been scanned to reveal traces of Hassarian DNA, confirming that the hair was from a Hassarian." She tried to imagine one of the tall creatures she had seen on the wards coming through the door, the

► bodyguard rushing forward to protect its master; a struggle, the droid ripping out a clump of hair. Something about it just wasn't right.

"Kaysee, can you replay the recording for me?"

KC-78's holo-projector whirled and Velko watched herself once again disappear through the door only to be replaced by static, the picture flicking back on to catch the bodyguard clattering to the floor.

"But where did the shot come from?" Velko wondered aloud.

KC bleeped a question, but she ignored him, leaning over to peer at the damage to the bodyguard's cylindrical head. Carefully, Velko ran a finger across the jagged edge where its single receptor unit had been, pulling free a scorched shard of metal.

"Can you scan this?" she asked her companion, holding the fragment in front of KC's microanalyzer. Blue light washed over the metal as processors buzzed and clicked inside

I demand action!"

"The threat has passed," Velko said, as calmly as she could, ignoring the puzzled glance the security chief gave her as she entered the room. "You are in no danger."

The Skembo's eyes widened. "You've deported the Hassarians from Starlight?"

Velko shook her head. "There is no need. Your 'assassin' is dead and gone."

What was left of the bodyguard's head clattered as she threw it onto his lap.

"What is the meaning of this?" Ceeril spluttered, pushing the decapitated unit away from him.

"I was wondering the same thing," Tarpfen said, pointing at the twisted hunk of metal. "That is evidence."

"It is," Velko agreed. "Evidence of a head blasted apart at pointblank range. We saw your poor bodyguard topple back and hit the floor the moment the cameras came back online. It did strike me as odd, however, that this same footage didn't show us the assassin."

"They must have fired from near

grip held firm, the pair engaging in a bizarre tug-of-war.

"What is the meaning of this?" a voice bellowed as Rodor Keen appeared in the doorway, staring incredulously at the scene, Avar Kriss and an amused Estala Maru standing behind him.

"The Ambassador attempted to disarm me," Ghal Tarpfen told the controller, releasing her grip on the tongue, which snapped back into Ceeril's mouth with a sharp sluuck, the blaster clattering to the floor.

"Probably because he faked his own assassination," Velko said, nodding towards KC-78. The droid burbled in response and projected a holo of the bodyguard's remains spread out in the evidence room, with one slight difference.

"Is that a hidden compartment?" Keen asked, peering at a tiny hatch that lay open on the droid's chest.

"It is," Velko replied. "It took some finding, but when I did, Kaysee was able to detect Hassarian DNA within

CAREFULLY, SHE RAN A FINGER ACROSS THE JAGGED EDGE WHERE ITS SINGLE RECEPTOR UNIT HAD BEEN, PULLING FREE A SCORCHED SHARD OF METAL.

|the astromech's stubby frame.

"Well?"

The droid burbled excitedly as it delivered the verdict, and in an instant Velko knew who had shot the ambassador.

She could hear Ceeril complaining loudly as she approached his new room. Nib Assek and Burryaga had been posted at the door, an attempt to persuade the ambassador that the peril was being taken seriously. Assek nodded in greeting as Velko slipped into the room, KC-78 at her side, to find the Skembo berating Ghal Tarpfen as Okana attempted to change his dressings.

"I don't care what they're doing or who they've left to guard my room, I will not feel safe until Marshal Kriss or Coordinator Keen personally informs me what they are doing about the vile Hassarian threat. I demand justice.

the door," Ceeril stammered.

"Before running?"

"I wouldn't know. I was too busy clinging to life!"

"And yet, our mysterious assassin didn't fire when the droid was close enough to rip a clump of hair from their head. Instead, they waited until they'd almost escaped, shooting a bodyguard whose own weapons were deactivated." She pointed at the charred cranial unit lying in front of the horrified ambassador. "Weirdly, the head shows no evidence of blaster residue, although we did find traces of detonite inside the casing."

"Inside?" Tarpfen's question went unanswered as Ceeril flicked out an impossibly long and surprisingly sticky tongue that snatched the Mon Cal's blaster from her hip and pulled it back towards him.

"I don't think so!" the Mon Calamari snapped, grabbing the retreating tongue and holding it tight. The ambassador gagged and pulled back, but Tarpfen's

its chamber."

"The kind left when you stash false evidence in your own chest?" Tarpfen asked, glowering at the ambassador who was pressing the back of a cool hand against his throbbing tongue.

"As well as this," Velko said, producing a blaster gas canister from her pocket, "containing just enough eleton to charge a weapon. Enough to maim..."

"But not kill outright." Tarpfen looked as though she wanted to finish the job herself.

"It was daring," Velko admitted. "Programming your droid to fake the shooting, then detonate an explosive lodged within its cranial unit"

"Thus destroying any trace of the deception," Keen concluded, crossing his arms decisively.

"It's nonsense," the ambassador protested, shuffling back on his mattress, "that's what it is."

"Is that so?" Ceeril paled as Avar Kriss stepped into the center of the room,

stopping at the foot of his bed. “Do you know how difficult it is to lie in front of a Jedi, Ambassador?”

“Especially as Administrator Jahen has supplied evidence in droves,” Maru said, tapping his ever-present datapad. “All of which I have now sent to the Republic security service on Coruscant.”

“Isn’t that my job?” Ghal Tarpfen asked, sounding more amused than annoyed, her weapon back in her hand.

“That’s the wonderful thing about Starlight Beacon,” Avar Kriss said, turning back to Ceeril. “The Republic and Jedi working together for the good of all. I think we make quite a team, don’t you, Ambassador? Perhaps it would be best if you spent the rest of your convalescence in the detention center.”

“Do you want to do the honors?” Tarpfen asked Velko, but she shook her head. “You’re the Head of Security.”

“And you are owed a tour of Starlight,” Rodor Keen told her as Burryaga maneuvered the Skembo’s medibed out of the room, under Tarpfen’s watchful gaze. “Tell me, where would you like to begin?”

The decision was taken out of her hands when a call came over the comm-system, a gruff, sibilant voice informing the Jedi marshal that they’d received a distress call from the Kazlin System.

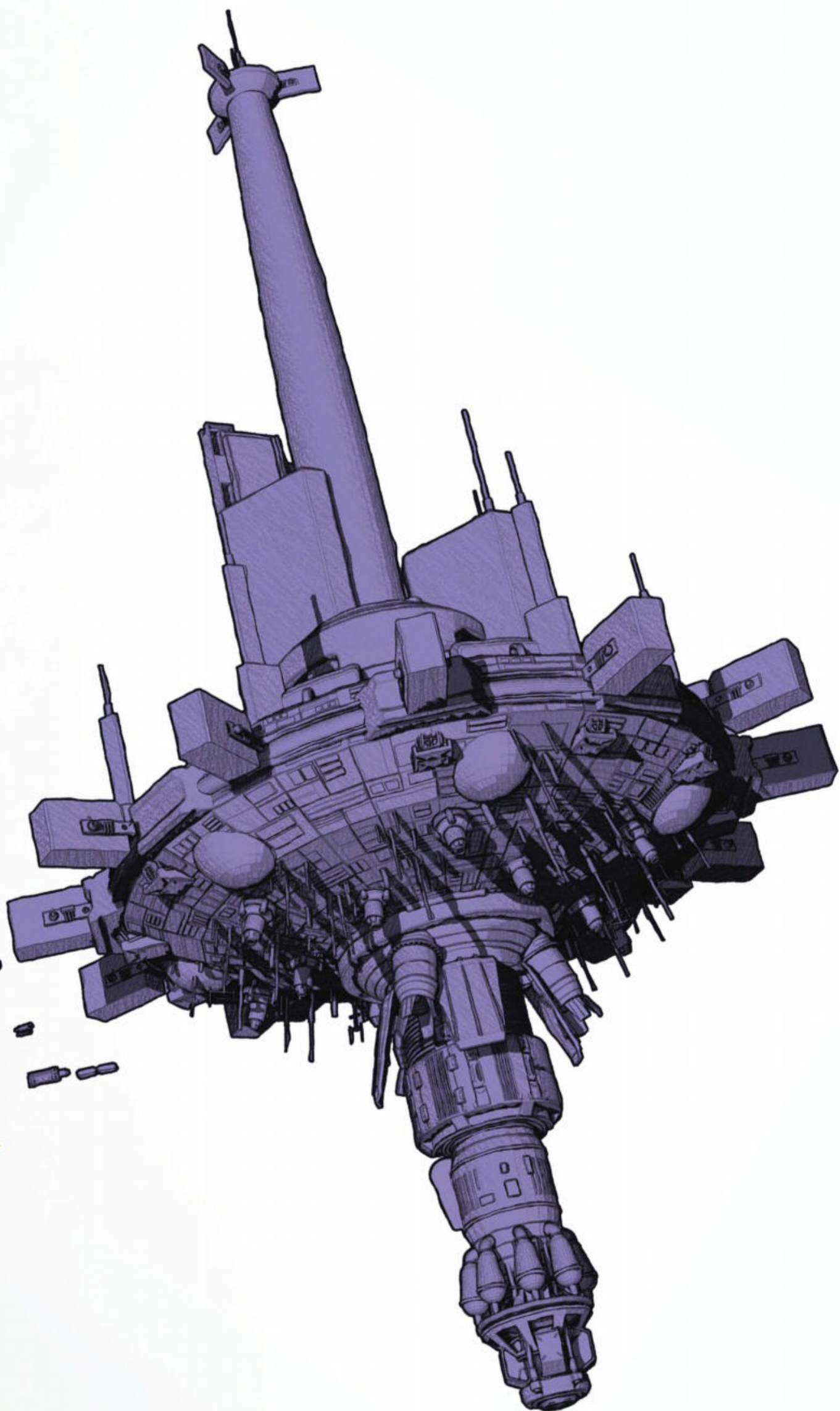
“Maybe we should head to where the action is,” Velko said as Avar Kriss led the way to the turbolift.

“An excellent idea, administrator,” Keen agreed. “I think you’re going to fit in perfectly.”

THE END

STAR WARS
THE HIGH REPUBLIC

NEXT ISSUE:
Part one of an
all-new story of
The High Republic
by Justina Ireland,
exclusive to
Star Wars Insider!



JEDI MASTER'S QUIZ

Through smuggling runs, and epic space battles, the *Millennium Falcon* has served as home to numerous owners, most notably Han Solo and Chewbacca. Make the jump to hyperspace to demonstrate your expert knowledge of the iconic freighter.

Compiled by
Jay Stobie



"THE FASTEST HUNK OF JUNK IN THE GALAXY!"

"Punch it," to answer these questions about the *Millennium Falcon* at lightspeed.

GOING SOLO

1: For what reason did Qi'ra seek to hire Lando Calrissian and his ship?

- A/ To fly to Corellia
- B/ To smuggle coaxium
- C/ To attack Crimson Dawn
- D/ To rescue Enfys Nest

2: Who piloted the *Millennium Falcon* to Kessel?

- A/ Lando Calrissian and L3-37
- B/ Han Solo and Qi'ra
- C/ Lando Calrissian and Han Solo
- D/ Han Solo and Tobias Beckett

3: What historic event occurred during the escape from Kessel?

- A/ Han dumped an entire cargo of spice
- B/ Han was hired by Jabba the Hutt
- C/ Han set a record for making the Kessel Run
- D/ Han encountered the bounty hunter Boba Fett

4: Where did the *Falcon* crash land following the Kessel Run?

- A/ Numidian Prime
- B/ Vandor
- C/ Mimban
- D/ Savareen



5: How did Han and Chewie acquire the *Millennium Falcon*?

- A/ They stole it
- B/ Lando gifted it to them
- C/ Han won it in a game of sabacc with Lando
- D/ They rescued it from the scrap heap

ENGAGING THE EMPIRE

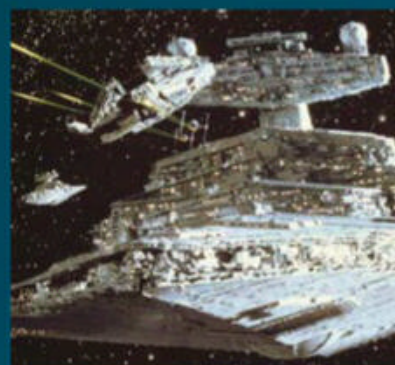


6: What ensnared the *Millennium Falcon* after the crew discovered the remains of Alderaan?

- A/ A fleet of Star Destroyers
- B/ The Death Star
- C/ A group of bounty hunters
- D/ A delegation led by Bail Organa

7: How did the *Millennium Falcon* evade Imperial Star Destroyers before heading to Cloud City?

- A/ Hid on a Star Destroyer's hull
- B/ Cloaked itself
- C/ Jumped to hyperspace
- D/ Rescued by the rebel fleet



8: What was the *Millennium Falcon's* model number?

- A/ YT-1300
- B/ YT-2400
- C/ VCX-100
- D/ VCX-2000

9: What concerned Han Solo about lending the *Falcon* to Lando at Endor?

- A/ That Lando might decide to keep it
- B/ That the hyperdrive was broken
- C/ He thought he'd never see the ship again
- D/ He wanted someone else to pilot it



10: Who was Lando's co-pilot during the Battle of Endor?

- A/ Chewbacca
- B/ Nien Nunb
- C/ Admiral Ackbar
- D/ Wedge Antilles

FIGHTING THE FIRST ORDER

11: Where did Unkar Plutt keep the *Millennium Falcon*?

- A/ Tatooine
- B/ Anoat
- C/ Coruscant
- D/ Jakku

12: Who served as the *Falcon's* gunner during the Battle of Crait?

- A/ Finn
- B/ Poe
- C/ Rose
- D/ Rey



13: What maneuver did Poe utilize that angered Chewbacca and Rey?

- A/ Hyperspace hopping
- B/ Lightspeed skipping
- C/ Coaxium cruising
- D/ Gravitational sliding



14: Which First Order ship took the *Falcon* from Pasaana?

- A/ *Finalizer*
- B/ *Supremacy*
- C/ *Steadfast*
- D/ *Devastator*

15: After Exegol, why did Rey borrow the *Falcon*?

- A/ To bury Luke and Leia's lightsabers on Tatooine
- B/ To return to Jakku
- C/ To visit the former Jedi Temple on Coruscant
- D/ To hide on Ahch-To

“NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS!”

Calculate the number of dejarik games that could be played during the voyage between each system.



CLUE: EACH LETTER EQUALS ONE

- 1. TAKODANA x KEF BIR
- 2. SINTA GLACIER - CRAIT
- 3. STARKILLER BASE + (D'QAR)²
- 4. AJAN KLOSS + AHCH-TO
- 5. BESPIN x KIJIMI

“IT’S THE SHIP THAT MADE THE KESSEL RUN IN LESS THAN TWELVE PARSECS!”

Decipher the memorable quote referring to the *Millennium Falcon* that’s hidden in the images below. Clue: Say what you see, then shorten it.



QUIZ: 1. B, 2. A, 3. C, 4. D, 5. C, 6. B, 7. A, 8. A, 9. C, 10. B, 11. D, 12. D, 13. B, 14. C, 15. A. “NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS!” 1. 48 games, 2. 7 games, 3. 30 games, 4. 15 games, 5. 36 games. “IT’S THE SHIP THAT MADE THE KESSEL RUN IN LESS THAN TWELVE PARSECS!” “Chewie, we’re home.” 1. Chewie, 2. We’ (Weazel), 3. Re (Max Rebo) 4. Home (The Lars homestead.)

DID YOU NAVIGATE YOUR WAY TO THE CORRECT ANSWERS? 0-9: It’s definitely your fault. Next time check the compressor before you take off. 10-19: Great work... but don’t get cocky. You’ve still got a lot to learn. 20-24: Looks like you’ve got it where it counts. Excellent job!

NEXT ISSUE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE | ISSUE 203

STAR WARS INSIDER

203

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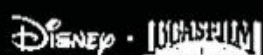
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