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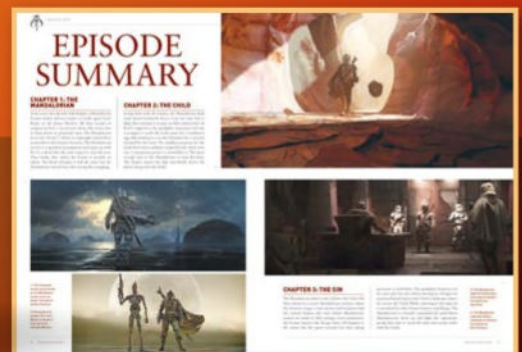
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A deluxe collector's edition exploring the debut season of the hit *Star Wars* series *The Mandalorian*, streaming only on Disney+!

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WELCOME...

Where were you when you
had your first brush with *Star
Wars*? I first saw it when *A
New Hope* debuted on UK TV
on a wet evening in October
1982. It was reduced into a
square 4:3 format to fit the
screen, had advertisement
breaks that really spoiled the
flow of the film, and the picture
had a yellow hue thanks to

problems with the signal. In short, it was less than the
optimal high-quality presentation that George Lucas
would have approved of! Nevertheless it started a 40
year love affair with the saga that shows no sign of
slowing down.

This souvenir edition pulls together some of the
very best features from *Star Wars Insider* magazine,
including features about the making of *Star Wars*:
The Mandalorian: an interview with C-3PO himself,
Anthony Daniels: and a look at the action figures that
fired up the imagination of many a child - and many
a collector! Hopefully there will be something for
everyone, whether you started your love affair with
Star Wars back in the day, or are currently binge-
watching the saga on Disney+!

Jonathan Wilkins

Jonathan Wilkins
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**"I'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT
JON'S TONE WOULD BE
REALLY, REALLY GOOD
FOR *STAR WARS*."**

DAVE FILONI



MAKING THE MANDALORIAN

JON FAVREAU & DAVE FILONI

With a second season already in production, *Star Wars Insider* talks to Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni on working together to bring *The Mandalorian* to fans around the world.

WORDS: BRYAN YOUNG



ave Filoni is a name that has been long familiar to *Star Wars* fans. He was selected by George Lucas to help build Lucasfilm's animation department that gave us *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020), *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018), and—most recently—*Star Wars Resistance* (2019-2020). While cloistered up at Skywalker Ranch in the early days of working on *The Clone Wars*, Filoni met Jon Favreau.

Although their paths diverged, with Favreau going on to make some of the most popular films of the last decade, Filoni had hope his creative peer would return to *Star Wars*. At least, that's what he revealed to *Star Wars Insider* when the pair of them sat down to talk about the epic new *Star Wars* TV show *The Mandalorian*, which began streaming on Disney+ on November 12, 2019.

"The first time I ever saw *Iron Man*," Filoni recalls, "I thought it had that same great feeling as *Star Wars*, because to me it combined a lot of fun moments, a lot of adventure, action, and comedy, with an incredible sense of, 'I care about this and it could still get dramatic.' And that didn't come at the expense of the meaningful nature of the characters or their relationships. I've always felt that Jon's tone would be really, really good for *Star Wars*."

Favreau got his start in the movie business by way of comedy, most notably with the indie-hit *Swingers* (1996), which he wrote, produced, and starred in. The creator of *The Mandalorian* knew before he came aboard that there had



“[TELLING STORIES] IS AS EXCITING TO A 50-YEAR-OLD FAN AS IT IS TO A 10-YEAR-OLD, WHEN YOU DO IT RIGHT.”

DAVE FILONI



01

► to be some guiding light for the use of comedy in *Star Wars*, and he relied on Filoni to help him craft those guidelines. “Dave was very clear about it. There are certain types of humor that can be used in *Star Wars* and there are certain types that can’t be,” Favreau explains. “If we’re making fun of *Star Wars*, we’re stepping outside of it.”

Something Old and Something New

The tone and craft of the long-running saga is something that is baked into Favreau’s DNA as a storyteller and as a filmmaker, and it was his love of *Star Wars* that grabbed his heart and held onto it at a very young age. “My whole taste

in movies was probably formed in a big way from seeing George Lucas’ original film,” he says. “I learned about cinema through the lens of *A New Hope*. While watching it, my father would explain to me how things were inspired by something you would see in a samurai movie or a western or a World War II film. That first movie was my inroad.”

As they developed the series, Favreau and Filoni agreed they would embark on *The Mandalorian* with an eye on staying true to the things that made George Lucas’ *Star Wars* films great. “We really tried not to make it a reflection of what we interpreted *Star Wars* to be,” Favreau explains, “but instead went back to the source code and looked at

the films that influenced Lucas. So, looking at films by Akira Kurosawa, John Ford, Sergio Leone—through the eyes of that generation—and then trying to channel that as best we could. Now of course, we were always going to put our spin on it, because filmmakers, cast, and writers are always going to put their spin on a project. However, we always made sure we adhered to something that had structure and respect for what came before.”

One of the things that fascinates Favreau so much about working on *The Mandalorian* is this shifting of the generational lens through which *Star Wars* is viewed, and how George Lucas reacted to the movies he grew up with—the films of the

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World War II generation and their ideals of good and evil—from his perspective as a Baby Boomer. “With the subversiveness of their movies in the 1970s, George’s generation had respect for the films they grew up with, but they put a twist on them,” says Favreau. “Then my generation was presented a cinematic view through the lens of George Lucas. And now we’re telling stories for another generation.”

“I think it’s as exciting to a 50-year-old fan as it is to a 10-year-old fan, when you do it right,” Filoni adds. “The trick is in getting that formula right. It’s very hard.”

Keeping It Unreal

Just as George Lucas had done with *Star Wars*, Favreau and Filoni worked to push the technology used on making *The Mandalorian*. Their challenge was to create a theatrical quality experience for a streaming television service. “That’s one of the dreams George had even when I worked with him on *The Clone Wars*,” Filoni reveals. “He would talk about the future; the idea of streaming and being episodic.”

The disconnect between the affordability of effects and the quality of filmmaking required to make *Star Wars* work on the small screen had previously prevented hopes for a live-action *Star Wars* TV series taking shape, but technology has since taken huge leaps forward. At 2019’s SIGGRAPH event (an annual



FACTS AND FIGURES

THE PITCH

“After the stories of Jango and Boba Fett, another warrior emerges in the *Star Wars* galaxy. *The Mandalorian* is set after the fall of the Empire and before the emergence of the First Order. We follow the travails of a lone gunfighter in the outer reaches of the galaxy far from the authority of the New Republic.”

Number of Episodes: 8
First Aired: November 12, 2019

WRITERS:

Jon Favreau (Chapters 1-4, 7, 8)
Dave Filoni (Chapter 5)
Christopher Yost and Rick Famuyiwa (Chapter 6)

DIRECTORS:

Dave Filoni (Chapters 1 & 5)
Rick Famuyiwa (Chapters 2 & 6)
Deborah Chow (Chapters 3 & 7)
Bryce Dallas Howard (Chapter 4)
Taika Waititi (Chapter 8)

computer graphics conference), Jon Favreau revealed that *The Mandalorian* was utilizing the Unreal Engine—a method of rendering photo-real graphics in video games—to replace a lot of the traditional green-screen work audiences might normally expect to find on a *Star Wars* production. This iteration of *Star Wars* has worked to break barriers in technology like all the best *Star Wars* projects before it, and filmmakers on *The Mandalorian* were able to simultaneously work with both the actors and environments on a live set as well as the digital elements that would traditionally be inserted in post-production. Instead of the green screens for set expansions like George Lucas pioneered on *The Young Indiana* ►

- 01 Pedro Pascal plays the Mandalorian.
- 02 The Child, around whom the plot of the series hinges.
- 03 Dave Filoni (left) with Jon Favreau (right) at *Star Wars Celebration* 2019.

► *Jones Chronicles* and the *Star Wars* prequels, the Unreal Engine allowed the minds behind *The Mandalorian* to drop in LED panels that were tied to the position of the camera. As the camera moved, the scene on the panel shifted, creating real-time, in-camera special effects. It's a modern blend of old-school matte-painting effects and post-production background replacements. And since it compressed the time between production and post-production, it made shooting a television show like *The Mandalorian* much more cost-effective, and also afforded it the movie-quality effects *Star Wars* fans are accustomed to seeing.

Much To Learn

Both of these experienced executive producers came to *The Mandalorian* with skillsets honed in different mediums: Favreau was a Hollywood veteran of highly successful live-action movies while Filoni's critically acclaimed animated series' have introduced many fan-favorite characters into the *Star Wars* saga. Within this dual creative dynamic in mind, what did each bring to the *dejarik* table, and what did they learn from one another?

"Working with George on *The Clone Wars*, he would always speak in terms of live-action, so I was familiar with the terminology but I didn't always understand how to apply it," Filoni explains. "Working with Jon is really natural. He's very

forward-thinking with regards to technology and using tools to help enable greater storytelling; I saw that in *The Jungle Book* (2016), which was just incredible and so very inspirational, and with the work that he's done in *The Lion King* (2019). For me, it was a great opportunity to collaborate with

someone who worked in a similar vein while really being challenged, and Jon has challenged me."

"A lot of what's wonderful about working with Dave," Favreau adds, "is that continuity of vision passed down by George Lucas. That has been a really special thing for me."

Filoni also likens the process to a boot camp in the world of live-action filmmaking. "It definitely has affected the way I look at what can I accomplish in a day," he elaborates. "That's a big difference for me, filmmaking-wise. When we arrived on the back lot, Greig Fraser [the director of photography on Chapter One] was like, 'Well the sun is up, we gotta get going.' And I thought, 'Oh, right! Because it's gonna go down!' In animation we don't really have that problem," he laughs.

So, while Filoni credits Favreau with mentoring him in live-action filmmaking, when it came to the ways of the galaxy far, far away, the roles were somewhat reversed. "I

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"IT WAS FUN TO ADD EASTER EGGS THAT HARKED BACK TO PAST STORYLINES FAMILIAR TO THE AUDIENCE."

JON FAVREAU



tried to offer the knowledge that had been passed on to me by George for *Star Wars* things," Filoni explains. "If there was some minutia of *Star Wars* detail that I was very sold on because it had always been that way, Jon would ask, 'But why?' You know who else used to do that all the time? George. Occasionally when I would come to him with something, he would ask, 'Why does that have to be that way? That's never been said.' Depending on my response, sometimes he would go for it, and then other times he would just say, 'Maybe that's not the best story.'"

Favreau agrees with Filoni's assessment. "Dave has been a treasure trove of information, and during the course of creating the show we tried to work stuff in, like making a reference to Life Day or including a prop that is appreciated by a core group of

04 The eponymous bounty hunter.

05 The Child: a small, green force of nature.

06 Nick Nolte provides the voice for vapor farmer Kuiil

07 New rules at the Mos Eisley Cantina.

08 Gina Carano (Cara Dune) with Chapter 4 director Bryce Dallas Howard.

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fans. It was fun to add Easter eggs that harked back to past storylines familiar to the audience—and that included content from the animated programs Dave worked on. But at the same time, we didn't want to divide and segment the audience; we wanted to bring everything together so it created an overarching narrative that rewarded everyone, to include not only the people who have grown up with *Star Wars* since they were kids but also for newer fans who are experiencing *Star Wars* for the first time."

Filoni reveals, "I feel this is some the best stuff I have worked on,

because I wanted to be challenged, to hit another level. It has been a great collaboration and a great step for me to take. I'm really thrilled with the show and I hope the audience is, too."

Favreau's evident excitement at being able to collaborate with Filoni on this project is also palpable, with his enthusiasm lighting up the room. "I wouldn't be doing this without Dave Filoni," he's happy to admit. "It's this relationship and what I learned from him, and what he learns from me, that really makes it. We're both students. We both love to learn." 🍷



—THE—
MANDALORIAN

Pedro Pascal

The Mysterious Gunslinger

Who is the Mandalorian? If you've not yet caught the new live-action *Star Wars* television series, then all we can tell you is that the actor who plays the mysterious bounty hunter is Pedro Pascal. *Insider* caught up with Pascal shortly before the series premiered on Disney+, where a sense of mystery was all part of the fun.

WORDS: BRYAN YOUNG



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Pedro Pascal is no stranger to big franchises like *Star Wars*. Over the course of his career, the Chilean-born actor has appeared in TV shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Game of Thrones*, and feature films such as *Kingsman: The Golden Circle* (2017). Most recently, he even landed the villainous role of Maxwell Lord in the upcoming *Wonder Woman 1984*, the sequel to 2017's smash hit film starring Gal Gadot. Now, he has stepped into a galaxy far, far away, taking on the title role of *The Mandalorian*, a mysterious character who says little and reveals even less.

Much like his character on the Disney+ *Star Wars* show, Pascal likes to present a taciturn image, especially when asked to spill the beans on the Mandalorian bounty hunter and his adventures. Who is the Mandalorian? Where

does he come from? What is he after? These questions drive both the storyline and Pascal. "Sometimes we're very much a mystery to ourselves," he reflects. "Our own identity is in the discovery of what you're capable of, or what your destiny is, or whether you will live for yourself or for others. It's very much a part of Jon Favreau's vision of the story, which is built upon the galaxy George Lucas introduced to all of us."

So, are we to believe that this bounty hunter might fight for something more than himself and a fistful of credits by the end of his assignment? Will there be more at stake for him than just the money? Pascal makes it clear those are questions that can only be answered by watching the show.

Inside The Armor

One thing Pascal is happy to talk about is his iconic costume, although he remains cagey about whether audiences will see the character remove

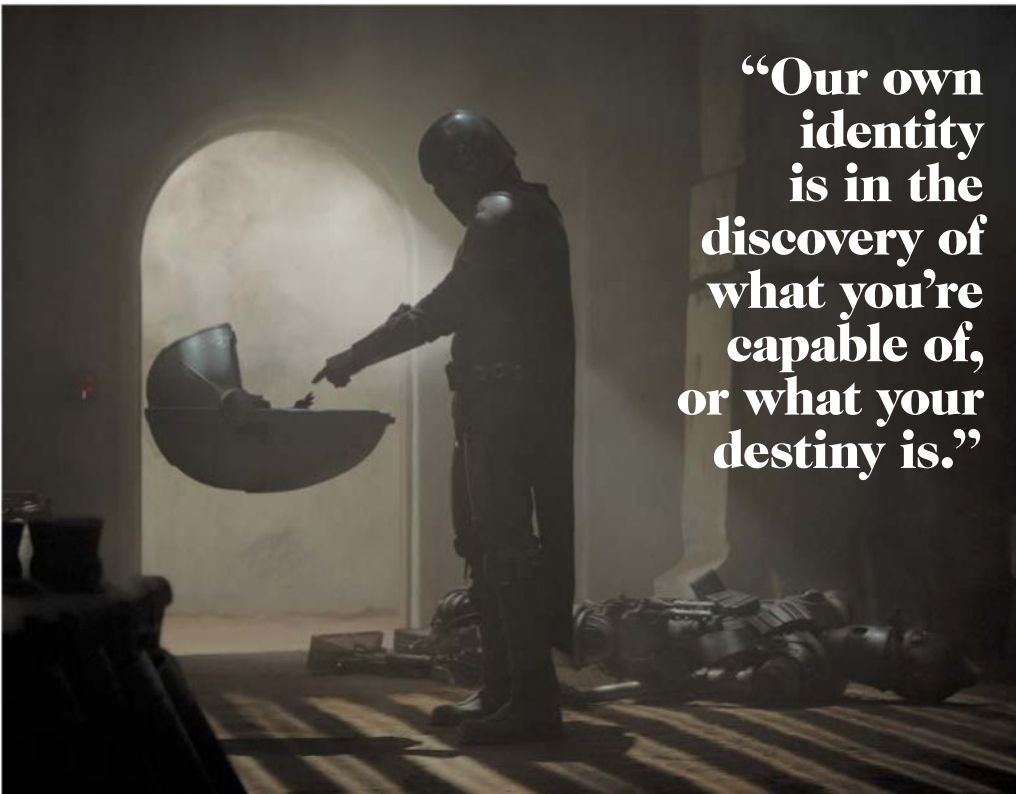
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PROFILE PEDRO PASCAL

Born in an era of political unrest in his native Chile, José Pedro Balmaceda Pascal relocated with his family to Denmark when he was still a baby, before the family moved to the U.S. and settled in Orange County, California. He studied acting at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and enjoyed an extensive stage career as an actor and director. Pascal appeared in numerous TV series, including an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in 1999, before finding international fame as Oberyn Martell in *Game of Thrones* (2014), and as DEA agent Javier Peña in *Narcos* (2015-2017).

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“Our own identity is in the discovery of what you’re capable of, or what your destiny is.”

01 The Mandalorian (Pedro Pascal) with the mysterious Child.

02 Never removed in public, the inscrutable beskar mask of the Mandalorian.

03 Under attack, the resourceful Mandalorian won't let competitors stand in the way of securing his bounty.

04 The fateful first meeting between the Mandalorian and the Child.

his helmet during the course of the series. As cool as he knows it looks, the armor can be difficult to work with. “Nothing that looks that good is going to be easy to wear,” Pascal admits. “You just have to surrender to that fact and focus on the story. Because the language of the character is strictly physical, negotiating his story—with *all* of the costume pieces—is his story, essentially. That’s new to me. It’s cool and very challenging.”

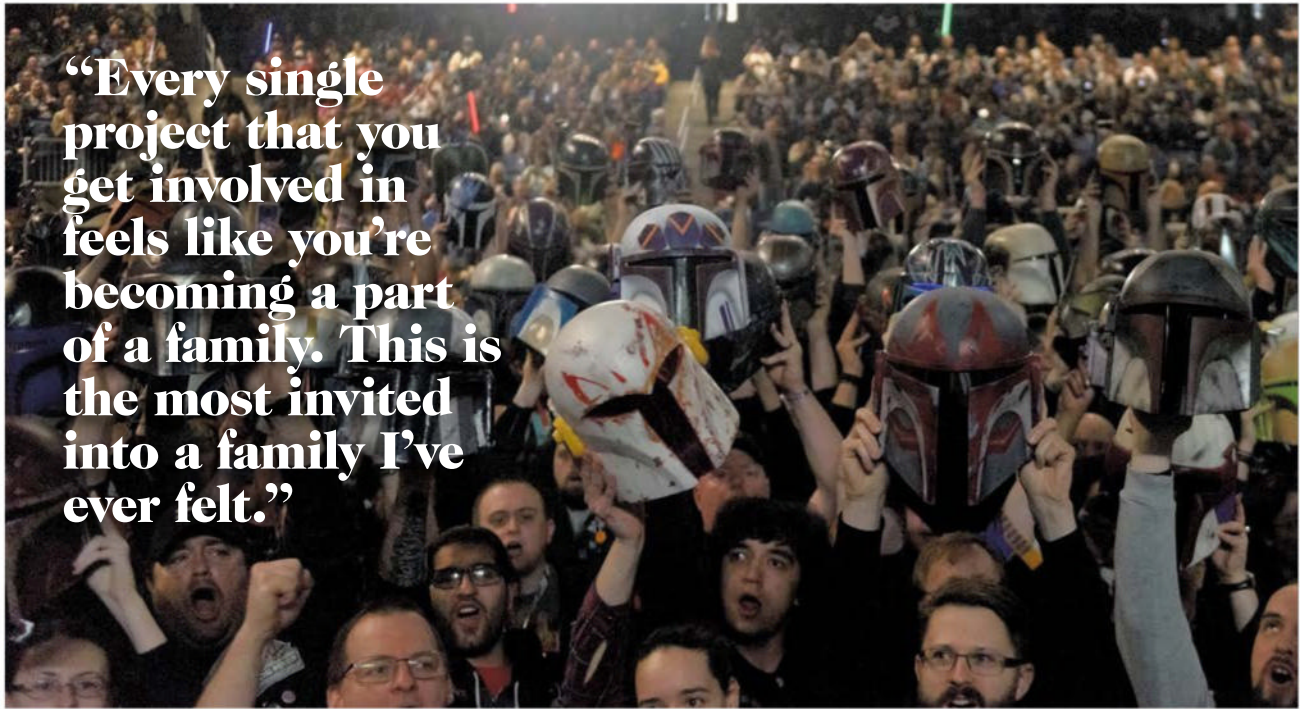
Despite the fact that it caused the actor some physical pain at times, Pascal is quick to credit the costume designers who created the impressive outfit. “We talk about the characters and the filmmakers, and all the departments involved in making the whole piece, but to me the biggest stars, really, are the people who

work on the show, on every single detail of our costumes, of the sets, the special effects, the lighting,” he says. “It’s a humbling reminder to really respect the artwork that goes into building this world.”

It’s All About the Story

Mandalorian armor may not be the most comfortable apparel, but Pascal keeps his focus on his performance and staying true to the amazing storytelling set forth by executive producers Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni, for whom he has nothing but kind words. “Dave Filoni is very self-deprecating and humble,” Pascal says. “But he’s also extremely open. He has no agenda. You don’t get that too often, especially with ▶

“Every single project that you get involved in feels like you’re becoming a part of a family. This is the most invited into a family I’ve ever felt.”



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► something that is as established as the *Star Wars* galaxy.”

Pascal is equally as effusive about working with Favreau, and he feels the combination of the two creatives has made for a very special project. “To have people who are as excited about it as you are, and as the fans are—and as anyone who really wants a good story is—it makes for a really, really genuine, unique experience,” he says.

For his part, Pascal feeds on that energy, crediting their enthusiasm for the *Star Wars* galaxy as a key part of what he has been able to bring to the role of the Mandalorian. “That energy helps you do the job,” he explains. “It’s a component that you don’t count on, especially with *Star Wars*, because it can be very

05 Pascal describes the welcome he received at Celebration 2019 as a visceral “exchange of energy.”

06 Dave Filoni and Pedro Pascal have fun with the audience at *Star Wars* Celebration.

07 Taking a bow at Celebration 2019: (Left to right) Jon Favreau, Dave Filoni, Pedro Pascal, Gina Carano, and Carl Weathers.

intimidating. It is a visual-effects experience, and an art-department experience. As a cast member, to have that kind of support to lift you into it, is such an essential component—more so than anything I’ve ever done.”

Another pleasant surprise for Pascal has been how welcoming the wider world of *Star Wars* has been, including how the fans have embraced the series. “Every single project that you get involved with, it feels like you’re becoming part of a family, but this is the most invited into a family I have ever felt,” he shares. “It is an exchange of energy. It hit me like the back of a jet in Chicago at *Star Wars* Celebration. It’s like a visceral realization. I have never felt anything like that.” 🤖





GARY KURTZ

THE SPARK THAT LIT THE FIRE

Without the input and tenacity of Gary Kurtz, producer of *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), it's quite possible the movie landscape of today would be very different—and *Star Wars* merely a footnote in the annals of film history. Before his sad passing in 2018, *Insider* spoke with the award-winning producer, director, and production manager to discover just what it took to get a certain unnamed space-fantasy project off the ground.

WORDS: PAT JANKIEWICZ



Gary Douglas Kurtz was a seasoned assistant director by the time his path crossed with that of a young filmmaker named George Lucas in the early 1970s, having already worked for a number of big-name Hollywood studios including Crown International, American International Pictures, and Paramount, across a variety of genres from westerns to horror. But it was through his collaborations with Lucas on *American Graffiti* (1973), then *Star Wars: A New Hope* and its much-loved sequel, *The Empire Strikes Back*, that he had a hand in defining popular culture.

"I promise you, that's not how we saw it," the experienced producer revealed to *Star Wars Insider*. "We didn't look at *Star Wars* as a big thing, it was just another movie.

"We originally had a two-picture deal with United Artists, but they backed out after reading the *American Graffiti* script," Kurtz recalled of those early days in his and Lucas' working relationship. "I then took it to Universal Pictures, because I had done a film named *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971) for them and knew Lew Wasserman, the legendary talent agent and studio executive. So, we did *American Graffiti* for Universal and talked about doing *Star Wars*, which, back then, was known as our 'Unnamed Science-Fiction Project.' Lew turned it down, which he later told me was one of the biggest mistakes of his life," the producer laughed. "He told me, 'What can I say? I just don't like sci-fi!'"

"We didn't look at *Star Wars* as a big thing, it was just another movie."

Luckily for the film-making duo, not everyone shared that sentiment. "In the end, the picture wound up at Twentieth Century Fox because it was the only studio that was interested," admitted Kurtz, candidly. "If you look back carefully at the 1970s, almost all of the science-fiction movies made at the time were dour, post-apocalyptic tragedies; *Logan's Run* (1976), *Rollerball* (1975), and the various *Planet of the Apes* sequels, were all about how the world was terrible—or going to be terrible," he laughed. "No wonder science-fiction was unpopular! Nobody understood that what we were pitching with *Star Wars* was the kind of film that was a mix of the *Flash Gordon* serials from the 1930s and *Forbidden Planet* from 1956. That's how we talked about it, but the studios really didn't see it."

With their sci-fi fantasy adventure floundering before cameras had even started rolling, the prospects for the galaxy far, far away being made looked ever more distant—until salvation arrived in the form of Twentieth Century Fox head of production, Alan Ladd Jr. (known to friends as 'Laddie'). "Laddie said he was interested, but admitted that was mainly because *American Graffiti* had done so well," Kurtz recalled. Ladd would later reveal that Chewbacca was the character that finally convinced him to produce *Star Wars*, because the giant Wookiee was reminiscent of the primate leads in Fox's most popular franchise. "The *Planet of the Apes* films did very well for Fox and I think that may have persuaded them to do something else in the science-fiction area," Kurtz confirmed. "*Star Wars* is quite different from a storytelling point of view, but Fox was the only studio that had recently done well in science-fiction, so that was very lucky for us!"

Making Your Own Luck

While *Star Wars* and the sci-fi genre were altogether different beasts to the movie they had already made together, Lucas and Kurtz had

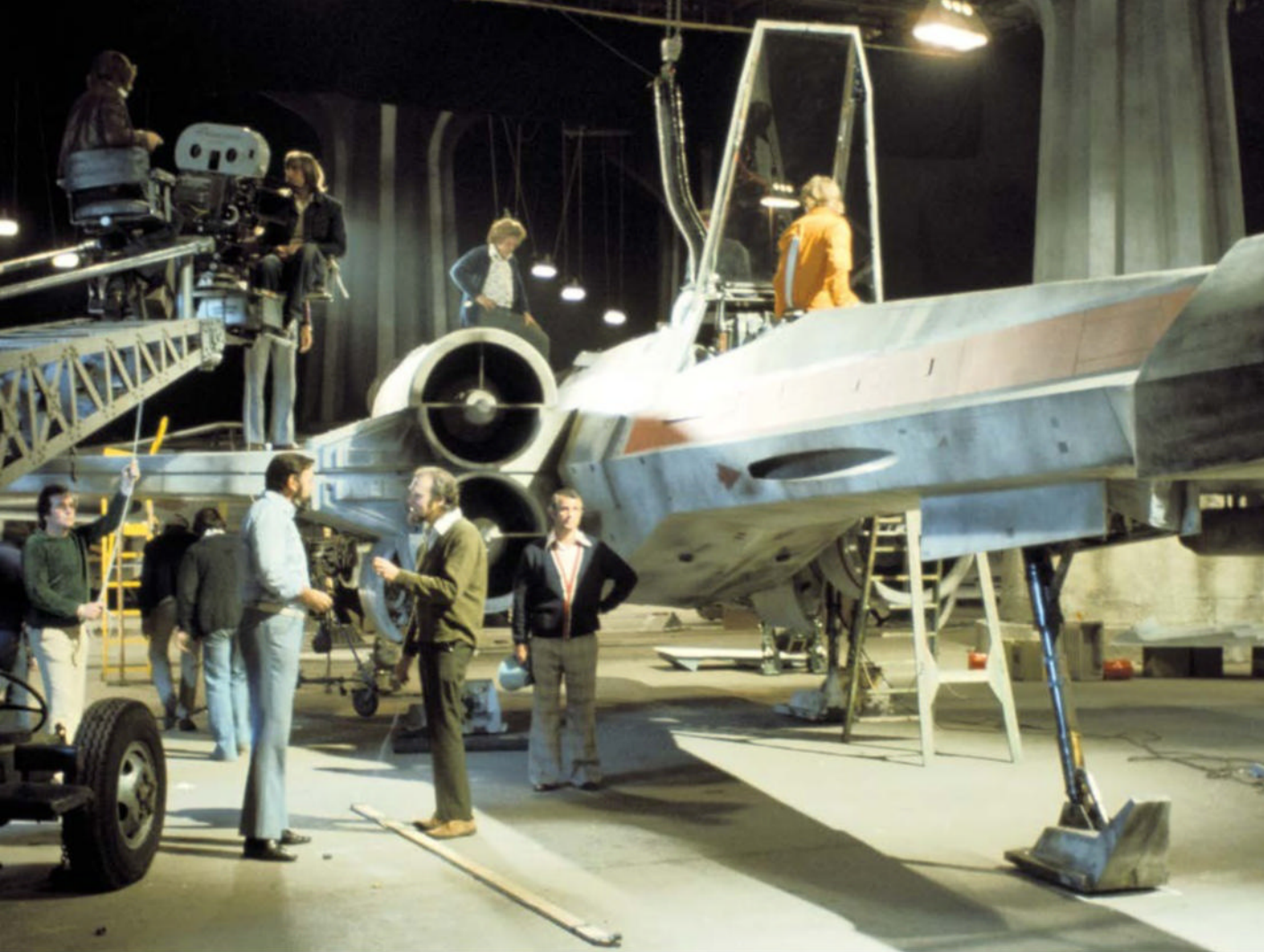
proven themselves to be bankable, as the producer recalled. "*American Graffiti* had done well," he said, "so it was much easier for Ladd to go to the board of directors and say, 'These guys made this low-budget film, it made money, and now they want to make a low-budget science-fiction film. The script is dense, convoluted, and difficult to read, but let's take a chance. The worst that could happen is we lose nine million dollars! We have these other movies that we're spending much more on and they're bound to work.'"

Despite Ladd's support, Lucas and Kurtz realized that conveying their complex vision was going to take some doing. "The team at Fox didn't really understand the script for *Star Wars* and, I have to admit, it didn't really read easily at all," the producer gamely acknowledged. "With all the funny characters, strange names, and odd things scribbled in, it took a lot of visual imagination to make any sense of it," he added. Thankfully, Lucas and Kurtz had an ace up their sleeves worthy of Lando Calrissian, in the shape of Ralph McQuarrie's exceptional concept art. "Ralph's artwork really did help," said Kurtz. "It meant we could show it to the studio and say, 'This is what we see; this is what it's going to be like.'"

KURTZ'S CAREER

Born in Los Angeles in 1940, prolific producer and director Gary Kurtz carved out a name for himself in the film industry as an assistant director and production manager during the 1960s, but was forced to put his career on hold when called up for military service in Vietnam as part of the U.S. Marine Corps.

After his return to Hollywood, Kurtz concentrated on building a career in studio pictures, and in the early 1970s began a collaboration with filmmaker George Lucas that would ultimately change his life. After working together on the cult coming-of-age movie *American Graffiti* (1973), Kurtz went on to serve as producer on both *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). After permanently relocating to the U.K., the producer went in search of new projects rather than returning for the final instalment of the original trilogy, and the early 1980s saw him attached to several big-name projects, including the Henson Company's *The Dark Crystal* (1982), Disney's *Return to Oz* (1985), and *Slipstream* (1989)—which featured *Star Wars*' very own Mark Hamill. Kurtz later helmed several films and TV shows, including *The Thief and the Cobbler* (1993), and *The Steal* (1995). His last project was as executive producer on the critically acclaimed film *Gangster Kittens* (2016).



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01 Kurtz on the rebel base hangar set at Elstree Studios in London.

01 *Star Wars: A New Hope* producer Gary Kurtz on location in Tunisia.

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Their forward thinking paid off when Ladd confirmed his studio would back the film. “Laddie said, ‘Yeah, we’ll take a chance on it,’” Kurtz revealed. “At the time, it was only an investment of eight-and-a-half million dollars—although it ended up eventually being ten—but for Fox it wound up being a really low budget film, because they had several movies that year that were going to end up with \$25-30 million dollar budgets.

“To Fox, *Star Wars* was an easy risk. They figured it would probably appeal to a hard core science-fiction audience. If it did, it would make its money back, maybe make a small profit, and that would be the end of it,” Kurtz laughed. “That’s kind of how they looked at it—a minimal risk on their part!”

However, one creative decision presented a potentially expensive problem, as Kurtz explained. “As it turned out, we made the decision to distribute the film with a Dolby

► Stereo mix, so *A New Hope* became one of the first films released with a Dolby Stereo soundtrack. But none of the cinemas that *A New Hope* first opened in were set up to use the sound system, and they didn't want to spend the money upgrading, especially on a film they weren't sure about. So, Fox had to guarantee the cost of Dolby installation in those first 35 theaters."

The studio was determined to make a return on this costly outlay, and used its much-anticipated *The Other Side of Midnight* (1977) as leverage to induce theaters to pick up *A New Hope*. Kurtz recalled that, "Fox told theaters, 'If you take *Star Wars*, you'll get *The Other Side of Midnight*.'" These days, with *Star Wars* now established as one of the most successful film franchises of all time, it seems ridiculous to imagine cinemas would need incentives to

03 Gary Kurtz (right) with Sir Alec Guinness.

04 (Left to right) Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker), Gary Kurtz, and Harrison Ford (Han Solo)..

05 Kurtz with George Lucas during a production meeting.

take the picture, but back then it was a different story. "It was quite common in those days, and all the studios did it," the producer revealed. "If they had a big, popular film coming out in the summertime, they would say, 'I've got these two little films and you've got to take them if you want the big one.' They had to do that with *Star Wars*, because the cinemas were as wary of science-fiction as the studios were."

Spreading The Word

With funding for their project finally secured, it was time to embark on the next charm offensive—but this time, it wasn't studio executives that would need to be won over. "I had this idea that we would sell the science-fiction audience on the fact that nothing like this had been made in a long time, and if we got these fans behind us, we would have a kind of 'talking wave' to inspire word of mouth," Kurtz recalled.

But to spark any level of interest in the new movie, they first had to track down those all-important fans. Nowadays, a director may drop a cryptic clue or post a couple of behind-the-scenes-images on social media and, with the click of a button, allow the viral wonder of the internet to work its magic, but back in the heady days of the mid 1970s, reaching out to fans meant only one thing: they had to hit the convention trail.

"It was amazing how many people were interested in a film they hadn't yet seen."

"Charley Lippincott was head of marketing, and he had contacts in the fan world as well," Kurtz recollected. "We did *everything* that we could think of to put the film out there, so people would know about it by the time it opened. It was a conscious effort to push all of those markets. We went to several science-fiction conventions. There was the Worldcon, regional cons, and the San Diego Comic-Con. We took statues of C-3PO and R2-D2 and a mock-up of Darth Vader with us, and all of the Ralph McQuarrie artwork. We set everything up, just to give a feeling of what the picture was going to be like, and presented it in the most upbeat, positive way that we could."

Kurtz's presentation even ran to an early teaser trailer, of sorts. "We had some slides from the live action unit of the film and set up a small slideshow. There were no visual effects in them because they weren't ready at the time, so the screening wasn't *all* that impressive," he chuckled. "But the idea was that the fans would talk it up a bit, so that by the time the film came out, there would be enough of a fan base that it would do okay. We were trying to get the image of the film embedded in peoples' minds. It was amazing how many people were interested in a film they hadn't yet seen."

5...4...3...2...1...Go!

Kurtz and his team clearly did a good job creating a buzz around the movie because, as the producer acknowledged, "The word on *Star Wars* was pretty strong by the time we got to Worldcon and Comic-

"With all the funny characters, strange names, and odd things scribbled in, it took a lot of visual imagination to make any sense of it."



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Con. It was good, and knowing that the fan base was there relaxed us a bit. We figured the film would do well enough to make Fox—and us—a little bit of money.”

Star Wars may have had the convention scene under its belt, but the publicity machine didn’t stop there. “We also made a comic-book deal with Marvel Comics, with the plan that a *Star Wars* comic book would come out three months before the film,” Kurtz explained.

With the marketing front covered, attention turned to testing the finished film in front of an actual audience. “When the time came for the film to be finished and opened, we screened it in San Francisco for a select audience, and thankfully it went over well,” Kurtz recalled. “It was a cross section of people, aged from five to 85 years old. It wasn’t a cheering, ecstatic audience, but they reacted as we had expected.

“We handed out preview cards so that the audience could write down their thoughts on the movie, but only because the studio asked us to. I’ve never liked those cards because they require people to make intellectual comments about

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an emotional experience, and I don’t think it helps much,” Kurtz said. “We knew that the audience responded well because we watched them as they watched the film. Their response validated it. The preview was just to give the studio a sense of comfort, and the film wasn’t changed in any way.

“I did get one preview card from that screening that I kept, which I still have,” Kurtz revealed with a smile. “The guy—I think he must have been probably only 16 or 17—said, ‘This is the worst film I have seen in my life since *Godzilla Vs. The Sea Monster!*’ [Laughs] I had that one framed!” 🙄





Had it not been for Gary Kurtz's service as a photographer in the Marines in Vietnam, his

most famous movie collaboration might never have happened. Director Francis Ford Coppola was looking for someone with military experience to produce *Apocalypse Now* (eventually released in 1979), and it was Kurtz who he turned to.

"I'd worked with Francis on his first film, *Dementia 13* (1963)," Kurtz, told *Star Wars Insider*. "He rang me up one day and said: 'I've got this project about Vietnam that John Milius wrote, but there's nobody around me on my team with any knowledge of the military whatsoever.' So I went up to San Francisco to talk with him about *Apocalypse Now*, and that's how I met George Lucas. He was editing *THX 1138* at American Zoetrope (the independent production company Coppola and Lucas had established in 1969), and Francis introduced us," recalled Kurtz.

Coppola suggested that the pair should make *Apocalypse Now* together, which had initially been written by Lucas. "We talked about it," Kurtz revealed, "and I spent a lot of time researching it. We put a plan together with Columbia to finance it, but in 1971 they pulled out. The war was still going on, and the studio told us, 'Audiences don't want to see a comedy, even a black comedy, about Vietnam while people are dying over there every day.' They were probably right."

However, Lucas also had another idea in mind about a rock and roll high school musical that would eventually become *American Graffiti*. "The idea was to go and do *Graffiti* and a second picture, which we called our 'Unidentified Science-Fiction Project,' at the time," Kurtz revealed. "We planned to make those and then go back to *Apocalypse Now* later."

Eventually, however, Coppola decided to make the movie himself, freeing Lucas and Kurtz to focus on their space-fantasy film, which

would ultimately be released in the summer of 1977.

Birth of an Empire

Star Wars: A New Hope (1977) was a huge hit and the media were hungry for word on a sequel but, as Kurtz embarked on a world tour to promote the first *Star Wars*, he and Lucas hadn't had time to consider a title for the recently announced follow up.

"Because *Star Wars* opened around the world some six to eight months after it did in the U.S., Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, and I went on this promotional tour, and a journalist asked me about the next film," Kurtz recalled. "He said, 'What's the title?' And I said, 'I don't know yet, we don't even have a script. Right now, the working title is *Star Wars II*, but that's not what it's going to be, because we don't like numbers.'"

Both Lucas and Kurtz were fans of the Buster Crabbe *Flash Gordon* serials, which had been one of the inspirations behind *A New Hope*, and their exotic chapter titles helped inform their choice for the *Star Wars* sequel's name. With *The Empire Strikes Back* script marking a tonal shift from *A New Hope*, adding a darker twist to the story, there were also changes made behind the scenes. For one, Lucas decided not to direct the sequel, bringing in his old USC college instructor, the acclaimed Irvin Kershner, to sit in the big chair.

"Kershner was an actor's director," explained Kurtz. "He worked very hard with our main people, to add depth to their parts, and they really responded to that. George spent time on the casting of each role. He wants people in real life to be very much like the characters they're portraying in the story. George's theory was, if they behaved as they are, then the story works. In *American Graffiti*, the story worked really well because the actors were themselves. I think it's a style, a technique. Half of the character you show onscreen is who the actor is, what he or she looks like, how they behave."

Because of the nature of the story, Kurtz also wanted *The Empire Strikes Back* to have a different look and feel to that established by *A New Hope*'s director of photography, Gil Taylor. "I looked at the work of five cameramen," Kurtz recalled, "and eventually met with Peter Suschitzky." Suschitzky, whose biggest credit at that point had been *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), was seen by some as an odd choice, but Kurtz had been convinced by his style. "I talked with Peter about what we were looking for, and how he worked. He used a lot of soft light and bounce light, and I thought that would give us a non-Hollywood look."

Soundstage Stress

Working with a new director, albeit one as experienced as Irvin Kershner, also brought a few problems. "Kersh could be somewhat maddening sometimes," Kurtz admitted. "I would set out a schedule, I would work with him on the schedule of how much time he had to shoot this, this, and this... and then he would change his mind," Kurtz laughed.

"You could make the argument that in a popular series, it doesn't have to be a great movie, but when you're in the midst of making it, you want it to be the best it can possibly be. You can't get into the Kubrick mindset, where everything has to be perfect. That's impossible—Kubrick was the only guy who could really get away with that."

Kurtz knew this firsthand, as the legendary director of *The Shining* (1980), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) was instrumental in delaying the filming of *The Empire Strikes Back*. "Kubrick was making *The Shining* at Elstree

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Studios at the same time as we were making *Empire*, and I had a lot of conflict with him," Kurtz said. "There was a fire that destroyed one of the soundstages at Elstree, so we needed the stage that Kubrick was using, but he was shooting way over schedule—more than four months over—and he just carried on. When Kubrick was shooting, he was very single-minded. He shot and shot on that set for another three weeks. I saw him in the commissary and said, 'Stanley, I've got to have that stage. I'm way behind on building our sets.' He said, 'I'll be finished over the weekend and then you can have your stage.'"

01 Gary Kurtz (left) with (clockwise) Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and director Irvin Kershner.

02 Kurtz directed second unit photography with the wampa.

03 The final scene shot for *Empire* involved cutting open a tauntaun.

04 Kurtz (right) with Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher.

But when Monday came, Kubrick was still shooting his movie. Kurtz recalled: "I said, 'You're striking that set, right?' And he said, 'Well, maybe I just need one more day.' After that day, he said, 'Okay, I'll just get by with what I've got,' but he wasn't really happy about it.

"I did give Stanley a tour of *The Empire Strikes Back* sets. He told me the ice in the Hoth sets looked pretty believable. He asked what we were going to do about seeing the characters' breath. I told him, 'We've given up on that.'"

It transpired that when the crew moved to Norway to shoot the Hoth exterior scenes, they discovered that the only time that you can actually see breath in cold weather is between freezing point and 10 degrees Celsius. "If it gets colder than that, the moisture in the air just disappears," Kurtz explained. "So, if it's 20 degrees below, then you won't see any breath!"

Filming in Norway caused no end of production issues, but the inclement weather lent a reality to

"Kershner was an actor's director. He worked very hard with our main people, to add depth to their parts, and they really responded to that."

“The satisfaction of making a film that people enjoy and get a good experience out of watching is really the primary thing.”

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WORKING WITH WAMPAS

Following the tragic death of second unit director John Barry in the first week of shooting *The Empire Strikes Back*, Kurtz was sequestered into directing some sequences until a replacement could be found, including the scene of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) escaping the wampa's ice cave.

“We were falling behind and we had to shoot with two units for several days, just to catch up,” Kurtz explained, noting that they wanted to strike terror into the hearts of the audience through suggestion, by showing as little of the wampa as possible—a technique pioneered in Edgar Ulmer’s *The Black Cat* (1936).

“We wanted it to be a little scary, and as the wampa didn’t move so well, keeping him in the shadows made you imagine that he was much scarier than we could possibly actually show.

“The very last thing that I and a small second unit crew shot, after everyone else was gone, was the tauntaun out in the snow,” added Kurtz. “I shot them cutting open the dead tauntaun. The FX department had to come up with something for when its guts poured out, which they found at a meat market. It really did smell terrible. Han Solo’s hand holding the lightsaber is me. That was the very last shot.”

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Hoth’s incredible look. “We had a lot of snow and blizzard conditions in Norway. We didn’t have enough wind machines to fake a storm, so it looked stormy because we just shot in a real blizzard,” Kurtz said. “We couldn’t shoot as fast as we wanted to, so I directed part of the second unit to help Kershner catch up.”

An Equal Sequel

The Empire Strikes Back routinely joins *The Godfather: Part II* (1974) on lists of the best movie sequels, which gave Kurtz a great sense of pride. “I enjoy the fact that something I made is really popular and people really like it,” he said. “The satisfaction of making a film that people enjoy and get a good experience out of watching is really the primary thing. It doesn’t have to be top of the list to me or any other filmmaker.

“I think it’s the best of the films,” he added. “It’s got a good story, the characters are really good, and we have the advantage of being the second act of a three act play, in the

sense that you already know the characters. There’s no exposition of where these characters came from, or how they relate to each other. In the first act, you put your main characters up in a tree; in the second act, you set the tree on fire; and in the third, you get them out of it,” he laughed. “*The Empire Strikes Back* is the ‘tree on fire’ act, so everybody is in trouble. That made it more believable and realistic.

“From a script point of view, we were no longer in space opera-land anymore,” noted the producer. While *Star Wars* had the comic-book feel of a *Flash Gordon* serial, “It



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▶ wasn't particularly serious," believed Kurtz. "You had a good time, you enjoyed it, and the characters did a good job, but you didn't have to believe in all of the battle scenes or all of the elements to make it work for you. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, you believed in everything—the sword fights; the characters' relationships, particularly Luke and Vader, and Han and Leia. The more time goes by, the more *Empire* is seen as a film in its own right. It's a more serious working of the storyline and how it deals with the characters. And it doesn't end like a typical movie would. It doesn't resolve anything at the end of the film. It's much more complicated than *Star Wars*."

Not Returning With The Jedi

Kurtz decided to move on after *The Empire Strikes Back*, and as George Lucas set about creating *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983), Kurtz instead made *The Dark Crystal* (1982) with directors Jim Henson and Frank Oz.

"It was originally going to be a kind of bittersweet, open-ended thing with an entirely different story thread."

05 Kurtz on the medical frigate set with Hamill and Fisher.

06 Irvin Kershner directs Harrison Ford as Kurtz looks on.

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"I think it came down to the fact that George wanted to make an upbeat conclusion story, but it was originally going to be a kind of bittersweet, open-ended thing with an entirely different story thread," stated the producer. "Han Solo gets killed, and it was going to be much more down. When it became obvious that George wanted to go in a different direction than I did, we both equally agreed that it would be better if I left. I felt that it would be better that someone else make it

and do the best job that they could with it while I would do something that I was more interested in, and Jim Henson was ready to do *The Dark Crystal*."

Despite his move away from the *Star Wars* galaxy, Kurtz remained gratified by the impact and success of his work with George Lucas on *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, and the ongoing appeal of both movies.

"A movie is a group effort, and it's all down to the people making it, but in the end it's just a story," he said. "You can go and see practically any film with a group of six people, and when you come out and talk about it afterwards everyone has a different response. There's something going on in your life that it resonates with in a different way to the person sitting next to you. In the case of the *Star Wars* films, the world that we created resonates strongly with a lot of people. They really enjoy it, and enjoy repeating that experience, which is why they see it again and again." 🍿

*In Memoriam Gary Kurtz:
July 27, 1940-September 23, 2018*

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方東 慶普

映週三第

STAR
THE
**EMPIRE
STRIKES BACK**
WARSTM

「星球大戰」
原班人馬再度
合作結晶！

睇過「星球大戰」
不可不睇！
未睇「星球大戰」
不可錯過！

星球

DOLBY STEREO



帝國反擊戰
大戰

止觀為嘆 特技 太空

杜比系統攝製

霍士公司片王

Soldiers of the Empire

POLICING THE WORLDS OF
SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY

INTRODUCING THE NEW SPECIALIZED STORMTROOPER UNITS OF *SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY*, AND THE UNRULY NEW PLANETS THEY PATROL.

Crime runs rife throughout the Galactic Empire, from the smugglers and pirates of the Outer Rim territories to pockets of insurgency on worlds which refuse to accept the rule of the Emperor. Maintaining order in such lawless times are the stormtroopers, policing the worlds of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* with ruthless efficiency and relentless versatility.

The Empire has the resources to adapt its frontline troops to meet any and all opposition, deploying troops with specialized armor, equipment, and vehicular support to cope with any type of environment. An overwhelming presence is often all that is needed, but each planet presents its own unique set of demands, like the deserts of Tatooine or the freezing wastelands of ice planet Hoth. *Solo: A Star Wars Story* introduces a host of new environments for the stormtroopers to deal with, including the industrial alleyways of Corellia and the mud-encrusted plains of Mimban, meaning several new looks for these elite soldiers of the Empire.





Mimban

Not every planet welcomes the Empire with open arms. Some stubborn worlds refuse to capitulate to Imperial rule, worlds like the mud-covered planet of Mimban. Although the Empire is well equipped with the latest technology, the fifth planet of the Circarpous system has proven to be a challenging world to control. The environment alone makes everything difficult, and Imperial forces have encountered strong resistance from the native population of this harsh, rain-soaked mudball. Well suited for combat in the sludge-covered battlefields, the rebellious locals—the Mimbanese—continue to battle ferociously to rid their world of Imperial intruders.



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IMPERIAL STORMTROOPER

● Forming the backbone of Imperial army action on Mimban, the standard Imperial stormtrooper has undergone expert training, and wears armor that allows them to be deployed effectively in a wide variety of hostile environments.



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MUDTROOPER

● Specialized stormtroopers, known as Mudtroopers, or Imperial swamp troopers, carry additional equipment onto the muck-filled battlefield, including protective capes to guard them against the ever-present rain, breathing apparatus to filter out toxins, and advanced blasters and munitions.



Vandor

A breathtakingly beautiful world, notable for its jagged snow-capped mountains and lush, verdant plains, this frontier planet has barely been touched by technology. Vandor is home to the hard-edged and vibrant trading port of Fort Ypso, a haven to those of a criminal disposition.

The Imperial expansion requires the settlement of vital operations on remote outpost worlds such as Vandor, but these facilities can be vulnerable, as can their supply lines.



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RANGE TROOPER

● Wearing partial cold-weather gear and magnetic boots, range troopers provide a resilient and unbreakable defense against would-be thieves and pirates, intent on stealing supplies and cargo before it reaches its destination.



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PATROL TROOPER

● As the Empire asserts its authority on planets across the galaxy, local defense forces are being complemented—and ultimately replaced—by Imperial stormtroopers. For policing expansive cities and industrialized areas on worlds such as Corellia, the Empire deploys Aratech C-PH speeder bikes, piloted by specialist patrol stormtroopers.



Corellia

The Empire has refashioned the famous shipyards of Corellia into one of its primary starship production facilities, constructing endless TIE fighters and entire fleets of fearsome Star Destroyers. As such an important element in its military pipeline, the Empire takes security on Corellia very seriously, and there is a strong stormtrooper presence.



NEW PLANETS, NEW PERILS!

REMEMBER WHEN HAN AND CHEWIE TEAMED UP WITH A RABBIT
AND A PORCUPINE IN A WILD WEST-STYLE GANG? NO? WELL, AS THE
WRITER OF *STAR WARS*' FIRST SPIN-OFF ADVENTURES IN 1977,
COMICS STALWART ROY THOMAS ISN'T ABOUT TO FORGET!

WORDS: MARK WRIGHT

I

n April 1977, Marvel Comics published the first issue of an epic six-part adaptation of

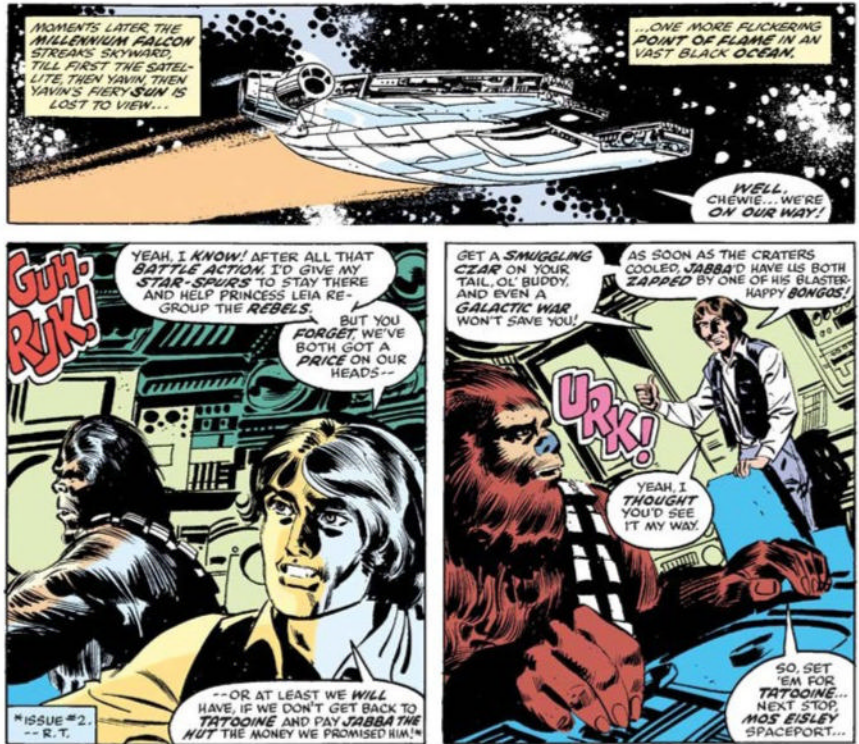
George Lucas' 'monumental' new science-fiction movie, *Star Wars*. The first two issues hit newsstands before the movie's premiere on May 25, 1977, and gave readers their first glimpse into an exciting new universe.

In the wake of the original *Star Wars*' success, Marvel's comic adaptation was a best-seller. Writer and Marvel's former editor-in-chief Roy Thomas was instrumental in bringing the title to his employer after discussions with George Lucas and the film's merchandising officer, Charles Lippincott, in early 1976. "It was actually the very first Ralph McQuarrie Han Solo production sketch that sold me on the idea," Thomas, who began his comics career as a staff writer at Marvel in the mid-1960s, recalls. "It was the cantina sequence, as Charley called it when he turned over the picture. I said I'd talk to [Marvel publisher] Stan Lee and see if I could get permission for us to do this. It reminded me so much of the space-opera stuff I loved."

New Adventures

Thomas—whose work at that time included writing *The Avengers*, *Fantastic Four*, and *Savage Sword of Conan*—wrote all six issues of the *Star Wars* comic adaptation, with Howard Chaykin providing the pencil art. With the movie's industry-changing success and associated sales of the comic, it was quickly decided that Marvel's *Star Wars* would continue with a seventh issue – and beyond. With a big-screen sequel still several years in

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the future, this required Thomas to come up with the very first original adventures set in the *Star Wars* universe—and he focused on two characters in particular.

"I went to see George Lucas to discuss the idea that I had for continuing," Thomas remembers. "I hadn't worked out a plot yet. I just said I'd like to do a story

01 Han and Chewie set off on new adventures in *Star Wars* issue #7.

02 The duo get a typical reception on Aduba-3, art by Howard Chaykin.

that's a homage to the Western film *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), and [the Akira Kurosawa movie that inspired it] *The Seven Samurai* (1954). It seemed to me that's the kind of thing *Star Wars* was a science-fiction version of." The original production drawing that Thomas saw influenced his decision to plot this new adventure starring Han Solo and Chewbacca. "It's partly because that's where I first saw Han, and also because I was doing this Western homage. I thought if I stuck with Han Solo, I probably wasn't going to run into any ▶

"There weren't many restrictions on what I did with Han and Chewbacca, as long as I just had some adventures with them."

► big continuity problems, which it seemed likely I would with Darth Vader or Luke and Leia.

"Staying away from Vader was the main restriction," he continues. "I could have used Luke and Leia, but there was this feeling, without any details being given to me, that I should not do anything about a potential romance between Han and Leia, so I didn't really know where to go with it. I would have had to tiptoe around, and while I liked those characters, it was really Han and Chewbacca that I liked the best. There weren't many restrictions on what I did with those guys, as long as I just had some adventures with them, wandering around the universe after the events of *Star Wars*. I didn't have to tie it in with the Rebellion or anything that happened after the Death Star blew up."

'Aw, Shucks'

As he started to plot out the story that comprised *Star Wars* #7-10, Thomas felt his Western-influenced adventure suited the appeal of Han Solo's character: "He's your Western loner, the kind of guy who rides into town and gets into some trouble and cleans things up. He's a smuggler and a criminal, but he wasn't really hurting anybody. He was just getting by. And that's what appealed to me. All he had to do was wander into a place, and something was going to happen, somebody was going to offer him something, or try to take something from him, or appeal to him in some way. He was a very easy character to hang a hook on. He didn't have to be involved with rebellions. He was just getting by in life, and was going to get into all sorts of adventures and exploits.

"Han has this nice, roguish feel that's all there in George's writing," adds Thomas. "He's a character who could be heroic and yet at the same time, it was this 'Aw, shucks' kind of heroics,

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like a Gary Cooper type character rather than a Roy Rogers."

For *Stars Wars* Issue #7, the first to be published following the adaptation, Thomas wrote "New Planets, New Perils," a story that served as a bridge into the main story planned for the following three issues. Han and Chewbacca said goodbye to Luke and Leia and blasted off in the *Millennium Falcon* to pay their debt to Jabba the Hutt. However, a group of space pirates had designs on relieving Han of his recently

03 Han Solo's motley group of heroes, the Star-Hoppers of Aduba-3.

04 Tom Palmer shared art duties with Chaykin on issue #10.

acquired wealth.

"Crimson Jack and Jolli," Thomas elaborates. "I gave the feeling that they had a past together. Han already had a past with Jabba the Hutt. So I figured if he was a pirate and smuggler, he'd know other pirates, so why wouldn't those guys rob each other? The name Jolli came from Jolly Roger, and Crimson Jack sounded like a good pirate name to me! With Han's reward from the Rebellion taken from him, he was back to square one. Han has

“In those days, I almost always worked on the original pencil art, drawing the dialogue balloons right on the pages.”

to be on the make in order for it to be any fun.”

Planning, Plotting, Dialogue

“It was plotting, pencil art, then dialogue to fit the layouts,” says Thomas of the preferred method of writing for Marvel Comics in the late 1970s. “The only question would be whether I actually wrote down a plot. Sometimes it was done with just a conversation, although I suspect I wrote something down for these. I came up with the general plot, and Howard was adding a lot of detail as he went along.

“I’d just moved to Los Angeles during the summer of 1976, right before I started working on *Star Wars*. A place called Oakwood Garden Apartments, right up the hill from the Warner Brothers studio. I had a two-bedroom apartment; one was my bedroom, one was my office. I worked on a Remington electric typewriter. No computers then! *Star Wars* was a monthly title, so the whole turnaround was a month. In my case, I’d spend a day, or maybe just a couple of hours, working on the plot, and then I wouldn’t see anything for a week or so. Then suddenly, a bunch of pages would arrive in the mail from Howard—it might be three pages, it might be 10. Then I’d sit down over the next day or so and write the dialogue.

“I was also responding to what Howard was doing. I gave him a story, but when I got the pages back, it was always more than I’d given him. Then I’d send it off and Frank Springer inked it. Tom Palmer inked the later issues. In those days, I almost always worked on the original pencil art, drawing the dialogue balloons right on the pages. I never liked working with photocopies,

because it was too easy for the people at the other end to ignore what I’d done!”

With Han and Chewbacca once again facing monetary embarrassment, their journey across the galaxy brought them to the dusty world of Aduba-3, where opportunities quickly arose for the smuggler and his first mate. In *Star Wars* issue #7, the two heroes assisted with the somber burial of a half-man, half-droid on Spacers’ Hill, high above the town they had just arrived in. Thomas happily acknowledges the influence of *The Magnificent Seven*. “That’s like the beginning of the movie with Yul Brynner and Steve McQueen. There’s a funeral in town when they take the hearse up Boot Hill. I just swiped it from there.

“The movie was probably a little too much on my mind at the time. I thought I was going to do *The Magnificent Seven*, *Star Wars* style, so that’s what I did, with enough differences. I was having a lot of fun with it. I was a big fan of that movie, but perhaps more a fan of the concept behind it. As a superhero comic writer, I’ve always loved the group books. My favorite superhero 1940s comic was the *Justice Society of America*, and at Marvel I liked writing *The Avengers*, *X-Men*, and *Fantastic Four*. I always liked a disparate group, different heroes with different weapons and things.”

Bugs Bunny with a Ray-Gun

At the close of *Star Wars* issue #7, Han and Chewbacca came to the attention of a village in search of a champion to defend



ROY THOMAS, COMIC AVENGER

Born in 1940, Roy Thomas was a comics fan from an early age, writing and drawing his own comics which he gave to family and friends. He became editor of comics fanzine *Alter Ego* in 1964 while working as a high school English teacher, and a year later moved to New York to work as an editorial assistant at DC Comics, a job he held for eight days before accepting a job offer from Stan Lee, the Editor-in-Chief at rival publisher Marvel Comics.

Working as Lee’s protégé, Thomas was soon writing *Sgt. Fury* and his *Howling Commandos*, *X-Men*, and a run on superhero team book *The Avengers* that lasted from 1966 to 1972. In 1970, Thomas began writing comic adventures for Robert E. Howard’s literary creation *Conan the Barbarian*, and he succeeded Stan Lee as Marvel’s Editor-in-Chief in 1972, when his mentor became the comic company’s publisher. Thomas moved over to DC Comics in 1981, and wrote for many well-known characters including *Green Lantern*, *Batman*, and *Wonder Woman*.

it against attacks from the Cloud Riders of Serji-X Arrogantus, a colorful enemy in the Western tradition. With no money and a price still on his head, *Star Wars* issue #8 saw Solo assembling less a magnificent seven, but rather *Eight for Aduba-3*. This allowed Thomas and Chaykin to let their imagination run riot in depicting a diverse gang of spacers and alien vagabonds. ►

“In the original McQuarrie production drawing I saw, I recall an alien that reminded me of Porky Pig, and that immediately made me think of Bugs Bunny,” Thomas recalls. This led to the creation of team Solo’s most controversial member: Jaxxon, a “six-foot rabbit who gnaws on hambones instead of carrots.”

“Other people before and after were doing things with rabbits in the wake of Marvel’s *Howard*

05 Jaxxon, the memorable green alien rabbit.

THE LOST EGGS OF LIVORNO

Roy Thomas’ alien rabbit Jaxxon bounces back in a new tale penned by writer Cavan Scott in IDW’s first *Star Wars Adventures* annual. *Insider* asked Scott what inspired him to bring back the space bunny with a motor-mouth:

What is your personal history with Jaxxon?
I read Marvel’s *Star Wars* comics long before I saw my first *Star Wars* film. My dad picked up a job-lot of Marvel U.K.’s *Star Wars Weekly* in a second-hand bookshop and I just devoured them, including the issues which reprinted Jaxxon’s first appearance. I must have read them over and over again, and as someone who’d missed the first film at the cinema, Han Solo’s Star-Hoppers were just as important for me as Luke and Leia. I remember being really surprised, and not a little disappointed, that Jaxxon wasn’t in *The Empire Strikes Back*!

How did Lucasfilm react at the idea of bringing such an unusual *Star Wars* character into canon?
The idea came from them! I think I’d mentioned my love for the comics, and Jaxxon in particular, during meetings, and when Lucasfilm’s Michael Siglain realized that the first *Star Wars Adventures* annual was coming out at Easter time, the idea of doing a story with *Star Wars*’ very own giant rabbit was too good an opportunity to miss. I jumped at the chance to bring Jaxxon back. And as this was for Easter, I knew I had to send Jaxxon on an egg hunt.

Where is Jaxxon when you pick up his story?
In trouble! His once lucky ship—the *Rabbit’s Foot*—is out of control and plunging toward a space dock. The story takes place at some point between *A New Hope* and *Empire*, but things haven’t been going well for our furry smuggler.

How closely does your version of Jaxxon come to the original wisecracking alien rabbit?
I tried to keep him as close as possible. Jaxxon is still very much a motor-mouth and still knows Han, although their relationship is best described as a friendly rivalry. Jax is currently working with gangster Amaiza Foxtrain, another of the original Star-Hoppers, although we’ve given them a new droid in the form of ML-08. So yeah, it’s pretty much business as usual...

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the Duck,” adds Thomas. “It just seemed right to me. I was trying to go one step beyond Chewbacca, who’s kind of a cartoon character. Jaxxon isn’t a green rabbit; he’s an alien who happens to look like a rabbit. I did tell Howard to make him look like Bugs Bunny with a ray gun, and he did it very well. This was an expansion on those cantina scenes. Sometime later I wrote *Captain Carrot and his Amazing Zoo Crew*, so I guess I like rabbits!”

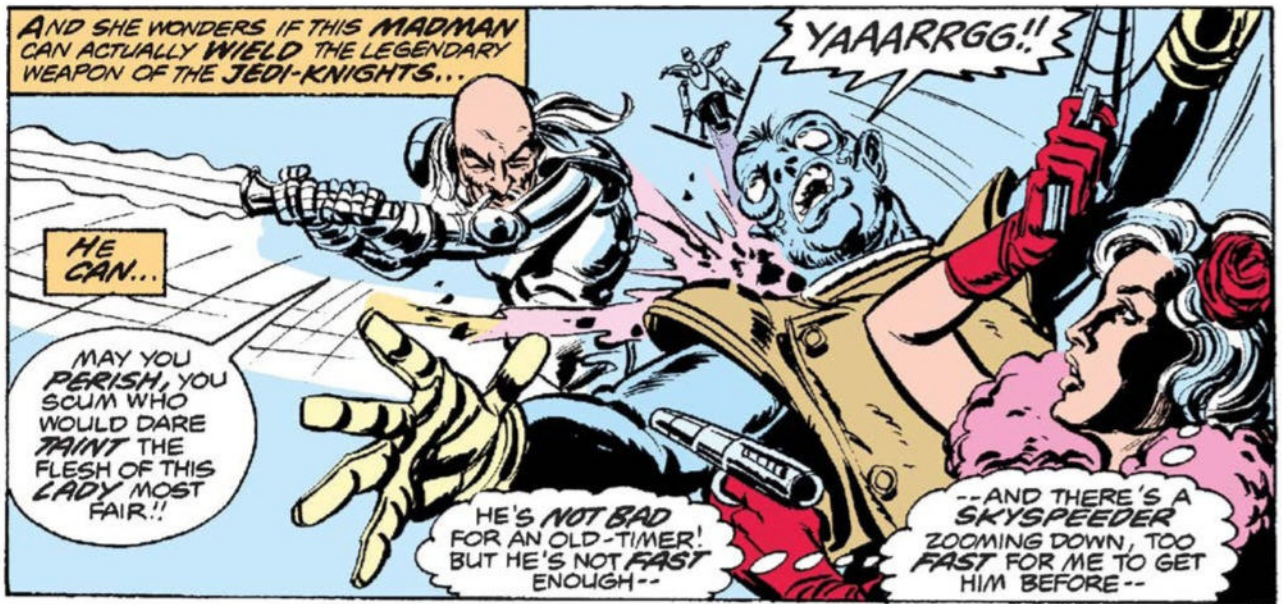
Moving on to the ill-fated Hedji the Spinner, the Aduba-8’s other alien member, Thomas continues: “There was an old sword-and-sandals movie back in the ’50s called *The Adventures of Hajji Baba*. We all liked that movie, and that name came up

for this character. I’m not quite sure what he is, to be honest! On the cover, he looks like a porcupine. And if quills are the weapons of a porcupine, you can have an alien who has that weapon as its power. Makes him a nice weapons guy, who has his thing, as opposed to just a ray gun. Marvel had a supervillain called the Porcupine in those days, so you get ideas from everywhere. As writers, we become magpies. You grab everything you ever thought of, because you’ve got to fill those pages by the deadline!”

With the character of Amaiza Foxtrain, Thomas looked to his many years of reading comics for inspiration. “I totally know where I got her name, from my favorite science-fiction newspaper strip, *Chris Welkin, Planeteer* (1952-64), by Russ Winterbotham and Art Sansom. There was an

“I thought I was going to do *The Magnificent Seven*, *Star Wars* style, so that’s what I did...”

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alien woman in the strip called Amaiza, and I always liked the name, so I gave it to her."

Han had past dealings with Amaiza, and calls her the 'Den Mother of the Black-Hole Gang.' Here again, Thomas took his cue from the real-life Wild West. "That's a take-off of the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang [which included infamous bandits Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid]. I figured people would see that reference and think it was kind of cute. I probably had an idea that the Black-Hole Gang might have

figured in another story if I had continued writing for the *Star Wars* comic."

Jedi and Starkillers

"I've done a number of things where I've added a Don Quixote character," Thomas says, moving on to the character of failed Jedi Knight Don-Wan Kihotay. "When you are talking about knights errant, soldiers of fortune, and *The Magnificent Seven*, somehow a Don Quixote character tends to fit right in. As soon as you see him and hear him, if you

06 Failed Jedi Don-Wan Kihotay proves his lightsaber skills.

07 FE-9Q, the Starkiller Kid, Don-Wan Kihotay, Jaxxon, Amaiza Foxtrain and Hedji team up with Han and Chewie.

know anything about literature, you already know what kind of character he's going to be. Was he really a failed Jedi Knight? He certainly talks like he was a Jedi Knight! The readers can make up their own minds."

For one of the final members of the Aduba-8, Thomas delved into the early days of *Star Wars* development with the Starkiller Kid (who was joined by tank-droid FE-9Q, 'Effie' for short). "That was a joke from when Luke Skywalker was called Luke Starkiller," Thomas explains. ▶



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▶ “I never thought they would ever use the phrase ‘Starkiller,’ so knowing that had been one of the possible names for Luke, I thought, why not? Here I riffed on the character Chico in *The Magnificent Seven*, who’s a younger guy who tries to become part of the group. He’s a would-be Billy the Kid type, so I thought of ‘Starkiller Kid’. It even has a little internal alliteration. I figured George wouldn’t mind—and he didn’t object, so...”

With the Aduba-8 finally assembled, the gang took the fight to Serji-X Arrogantus and his Cloud Riders. “I named the villain after my friend in L.A., Sergio Aragonés, the great *Mad Magazine* artist. I don’t know if I asked him, but he didn’t seem to mind! For the Cloud Riders, there was the Marlon Brando movie, *The Wild Ones* (1953), with the motorcycle gangs, and I went back to the same influences as George did with *Star Wars*, which was *Flash Gordon* (1936-1940) and *Buck Rogers* (1939), all those pulpy serials. But George was doing his own thing with it.”

Stepping Back

By the end of *Star Wars* issue #10—which Thomas co-plotted with Donald Glut, who wrote

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the overall script [and the later novelization of *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*—the Aduba-8 had defeated the Cloud Riders and saved the village from their tyranny. In the final panel, Han and Chewbacca rode off into the sunset on banthas, looking for new adventures, but Thomas would not be along for the ride, stepping down as both writer and editor from that issue.

“*Star Wars* worked out pretty well,” Thomas remembers modestly, “and I was happy with those Han Solo issues. I never really thought about what I was going to do beyond those four issues. Maybe I’d have figured out how to do something with Luke, but I was having success with *Conan the Barbarian* at Marvel and liked to do my own thing, so it was best for me to just step away, because *Star Wars* didn’t need me.”

“Jaxxon isn’t a green rabbit; he’s an alien who happens to look like a rabbit.”

08 The covers for issues #7 to #10 of *Star Wars* comic (Far left).

09 Even in comic books, it isn’t wise to upset a Wookiee.

10 Jaxxon “ain’t no rodent!”

Marvel’s original *Star Wars* title ran for 107 issues between 1977 and 1986, and Thomas looks back on his input into developing those adventures with fondness. “*Star Wars* is a little more significant than most, because of what it became. I didn’t realize when I got into it, but it became more important than a run of 10 issues would ordinarily have been. I still look upon it as a positive experience. At the time those comics had an impact, and it’s a nice thing to have on your résumé.” 🐾





ANTHONY DANIELS

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

From the first line of dialogue heard in a *Star Wars* movie through to the *The Rise of Skywalker*, Anthony Daniels has more than inhabited the golden shell of protocol droid C-3PO.

In part one of our exclusive two-part interview, Daniels reveals how he came to write his new *Star Wars* memoir, *I Am C-3PO: The Inside Story*.

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD

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uffice it to say, *I Am C-3PO: The Inside Story* isn't Anthony Daniels' first foray into writing about

Star Wars. Back in 1995, he began contributing a wonderful column to early editions of the magazine that you're holding right now.

Star Wars Insider: Some years ago, long before your C-3PO memoirs, you wrote the Wonder Column for *Star Wars Insider*.

Anthony Daniels: I did, and I'm thrilled when people remember it. I wrote the column with Dan Madsen, who ran the official *Star Wars* fan club at the time, to tease my brain, I think. It was written in a particular style that was certainly elliptical and humorous, and slightly challenging to read. It made me laugh. I remember writing something about Julius Caesar going to the supermarket during spring break and getting a six-pack of steak knives in his back, so I tried to extend the remit, if you will. Dressing up as C-3PO only goes so far, so I tried to show that I wasn't just a man in a suit.

Your book isn't a straightforward autobiography, as it focuses very much on your *Star Wars* work.

Apart from one or two dives to the left and right, it is purely about my life in *Star Wars*, which has been 44 years. I wish it had come up to a nice number like 50, but I've got to live a few more years to do that. I made a decision, and it was absolutely conscious, to only really talk about my life with *Star Wars* and the *Star Wars* spin-offs, which are legion, and things that are associated with *Star Wars* of which I'm a part. But if you use the word autobiography, no it's not.

What made you decide to write your memoirs at this point in your career?

Well, I didn't. It wasn't my idea at all. The publisher asked me. They asked for 40,000 words, and that sounded manageable, and I said,

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01 Anthony Daniels with his C-3PO costume from *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980).

02 Daniels as C-3PO, enduring the desert heat in 1976.

03 Daniels on the set of *A New Hope*.





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"OK, if you think people will be interested," and they said, "Oh yes," so I agreed. Then they said 60,000 would be better, so I've written 95,000, give or take the odd word. I hadn't thought about doing it before because it's a lot of work to write a book, even with a computer and a keyboard. My heart goes out to Charles Dickens. And thank goodness for the spellcheck.

You mentioned wondering whether potential readers would be interested in C-3PO. Are you surprised that people are so passionate about the character, and *Star Wars* in general?

It's funny you should ask that, because I explain why I get it *now* in the opening chapter of the book. It's an entirely true story, and it only happened ten years ago. I was hosting *Star Wars* In Concert, so I was in a situation where night after night I was facing thousands of *Star Wars* fans and lovers of John Williams' glorious music. And because they were live shows, live theater, there was a real energy that came across the footlights at me. It was like a crash course in what I'd been missing all these years. Genuinely, I began to see through to the fan's faces, so I'm a late learner.

So, until the penny dropped, you only saw *Star Wars* as a job?

It is a job. An amazing job. One that I initially turned down because I didn't think it was a good idea, not something I wanted to do. But circumstances changed my point of view, thank goodness. It has always been a gig, and it worries me sometimes that I don't want to fib about that, that I don't want to eulogize for the sake of saying "I'm a disciple too." No, it's a job. I play C-3PO, and I'm very glad people like him. Do I want to play him every minute of every day? Absolutely not. Do I have a perfectly lovely private life? Absolutely. And of course, the one helps the other.

The only *Star Wars* object on display in my home is a LEGO statue of C-3PO. My wife and I both adore that figure because it represents more than C-3PO. It's more than *Star Wars*, it's more than LEGO, it's a unique piece of art that was a gift from LEGO to me when I was on stage with them at Celebration Anaheim. I love it partly because of that history, but also because it's a piece of pop art.

You've told so many stories at conventions like Celebration over the years. Did you find you'd ever mis-told a story when you came to research the book?

When you tell a story, whether it's in a book or onstage, or when you're telling a story to friends or telling a joke, you naturally have to enhance it. Not all true facts come in an

"DRESSING UP AS C-3PO ONLY GOES SO FAR, SO I TRIED TO SHOW THAT I WASN'T JUST A MAN IN A SUIT."

encapsulated form with a beginning, a middle and an end. I do try to end each episode in the book with a flourish, because that makes it worth reading. In writing, and in talking, you naturally have to dramatize and make it interesting. At a convention, the audience needs a little cue, when to applaud, and sometimes you see speakers who don't understand that and the audience is waiting for that cue, their hands are poised to clap, and it doesn't happen. But they do it anyway out of politeness.

Does your new book address any of the urban myths surrounding your character, like being left on a trolley in the desert while the crew went off for lunch?

Oh, the ridiculous stories. Not for one moment was I ever left

unattended. People's jobs were to make me as comfortable as possible, which was difficult. It had taken two hours to put the costume on, so they weren't about to take it off for lunch. That was difficult, but on the second day we did because I said I can't do this. People's loyalty was extraordinary, nobody would have dreamt of doing something spiteful.

Some of these silly stories, like they left me in the costume for hours—they had to, because there was no time to take it off. That I fainted in the desert—no, but I fell over a couple of times. In every movie I fell over. Fortunately, I know how to fall. Not my favorite thing.

How honest have you been in the book about your experiences making the movies?

I think you'll be surprised. There are no shocks, no great revelations, there's nothing sensational in it, but there are things where, in normal conversation, you might mold your language and thoughts to what is acceptable in public. It's important to note, this is not a book for children, at all. It's a book for people who are interested in *Star Wars*, interested in this particular character, and by extension in me a bit. It's not entirely comfortable, because if I said everything was wonderful, I'd be on a different kind of medication.

It's a rather odd and surprising journey, through a world I never thought to inhabit. Certainly, I censored myself around *The Rise of Skywalker*, but I showed J.J. Abrams what I was writing, and he said it was all fine.

Did writing the Wonder Column help develop your ability to turn a phrase?

I have them on file, and I was amused to find that occasionally I would do the opposite of a one-word sentence. I would weave, purely for effect. It was totally written for another medium. But this, ►

► being a proper book, I needed to be more grown up. It sort of came naturally. What you will find odd is that I wrote the end first, because curiously endings are one of the things we're most secure about. To begin at the beginning is slightly tired, so why not flip people's expectations? Sometimes you have to manipulate a story, and make sure you give evidence, so that the audience is prepared for the payoff and appreciate it, and everybody's satisfied. So mechanically it's a bit like writing the *Insider* column. I have had to trick my brain into concentrating properly.

There is a certain pretentious pleasure in choosing exactly the right word, and then a few days later thinking, "Oh no, that word is much better," or to reverse a phrase so it's more felicitous than before.

I've completely trashed the rules of punctuation. Any schoolchild reading this will be destroyed, because they'll have been told that a sentence must have a subject, a verb, and an object. I have one-word sentences, because we speak like that, we speak in interrupted thoughts, we speak in ellipses. It's how I think.

Was it difficult to remember all of the *Star Wars* things you've been involved with?

Being involved in all of the movies, some of the stories were pretty fresh, or constantly being refreshed in my mind. *The Yoda Chronicles* sticks in my mind as being one of the most wonderful offshoots of the whole thing, but when I look at some of the chapters, I had to think. I've done so many things I can't remember.

I write about how some things were achieved when making the movies, which I thought

people might be interested in. I use the phrase "movie magic," because sometimes it just is magic. Sometimes it's stage magic, old fashioned smoke and mirrors, literally mirrors. Always with the single eye of the camera, which can be tricked quite simply and magically, and very inexpensively. A ten-year-old would enjoy it; a ten-year-old who wanted to buy dad a Christmas present, now that would be a double whammy (*Laughs*).

There's a bit about being at the Academy Awards, which was a nightmare. Backstage in this huge green room. It was one of the most terrifying moments I've had. Terrifying. But the story is not so

much about that, it's about what *nearly* happened. Boy, does that survive in my head. And also being on *The Muppet Show*.

In which C-3PO danced!

Yes, he did. And I amazed myself. I

actually found the choreographic notes that I wrote for the dance number. Wait, step left, step right, tap—all that kind of simple stuff.

Did you find the writing process difficult at all?

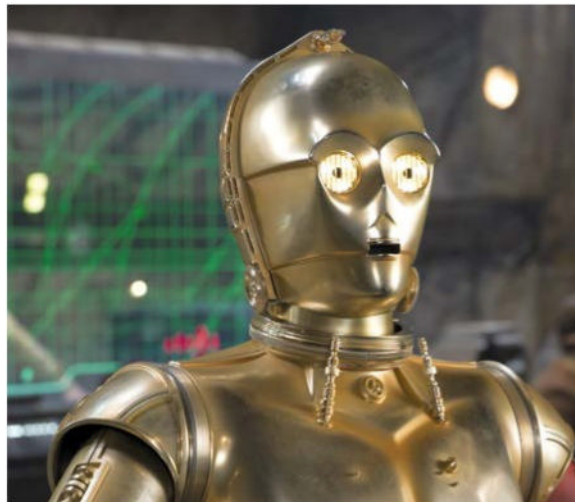
I wasn't afraid of writing. It wasn't like, "Where do I begin?" I could never, ever write a novel or a mystery, or a thriller. I recognize that I just don't have that kind of brain—absolutely not. But I do know some of the rules of writing a cliffhanger, for example, and hopefully not insulting the reader's intelligence. I hope it doesn't talk down in any way to anybody.

And the relief of finishing it, finally, of not being able to fiddle with it, because I'm a great tinkerer. I can think of a better way of saying that now. ►

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04 Daniels returned to the role of C-3PO in *The Force Awakens* (2015).

05 Anthony Daniels as protocol droid C-3PO.

06 C-3PO is reunited with his sparring partner R2-D2, at the climax of *The Last Jedi* (2017).



► **So you now understand how George Lucas must have felt, when he decided to make the *Special Editions*?**

Some people were critical of him making them, but suddenly I began to see why he wanted to do that. It was like he'd thought of a better way of phrasing them. I suppose the difference is that my book hasn't become public before I fiddled. I fiddled before the fact, his was after the fact, in a fairly major way.

People have asked me, "How do you feel, now you've finished it and you don't have to write?" Most mornings I was up early, typing away. I was on airplanes typing away, I was on the film set. I was on trains. Anywhere I got a moment. In France, in our new house with no central heating, wrapped up in scarves, overcoat, blankets, a hot water bottle. I found space, but now I don't have to do that anymore, it's quite curious.

Is that a relief? Do you miss it?

Half and half. I think I might actually read it the next few days, knowing I can't change anything. It's something I had to do, and



07 Daniels promises that *The Rise of Skywalker* sees C-3PO at his best.

08 Anthony Daniels with director J.J. Abrams.

09 C-3PO actor Daniels is a veteran of three *Star Wars* trilogies, having appeared in all nine Skywalker saga movies.

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only I could do it, so that was a bit weird. I hope people like it. Whether or not they do, I am not unsatisfied with it. I have said what I have said, I don't need to say anything else. There are areas that I touched on lightly, there are areas that I remember better than others. Christine (*Daniels' wife—Ed.*) pointed out that I seem to have a very full memory of the first film. But why wouldn't I? It was such a seminal experience, in so many ways.

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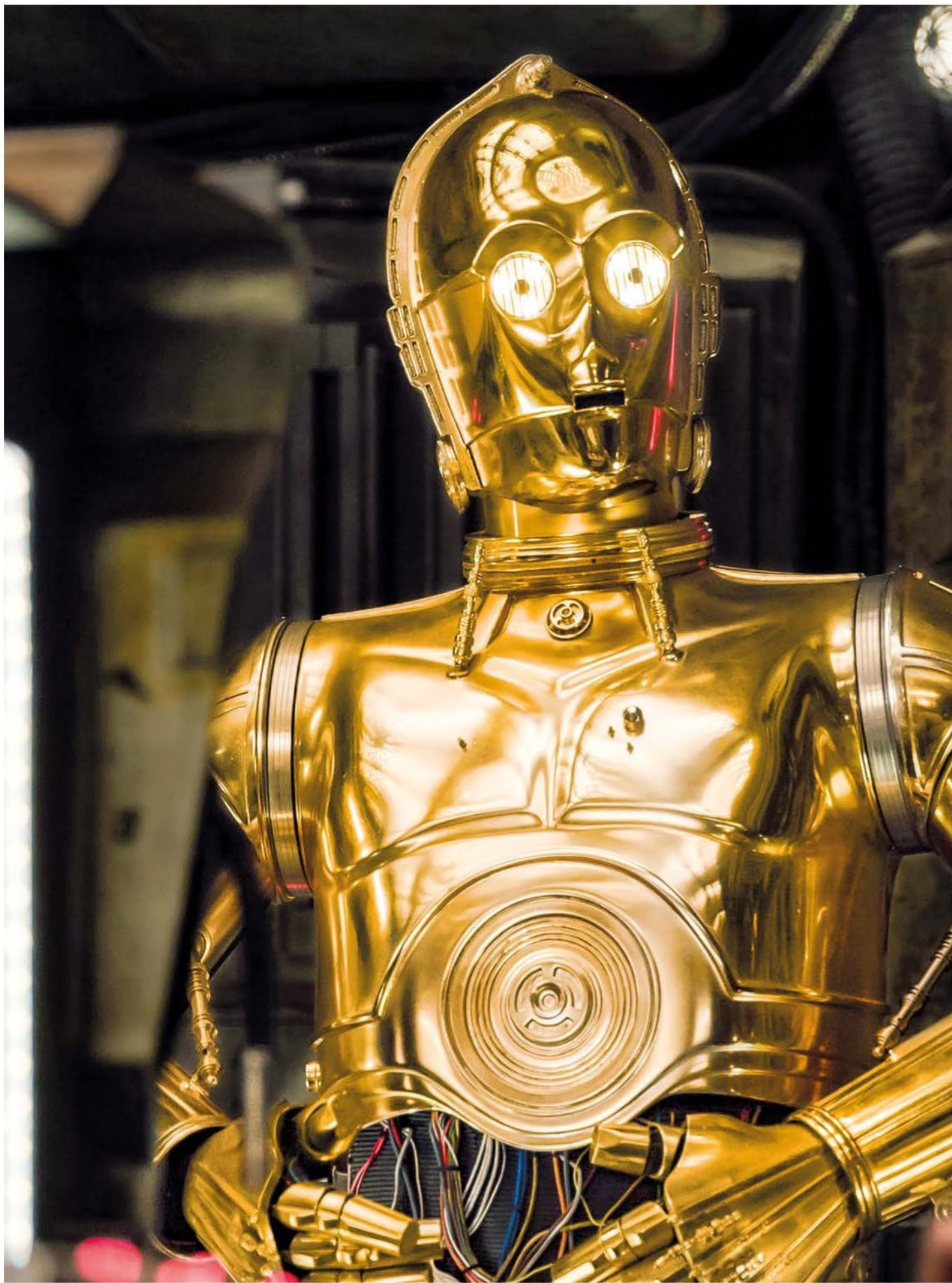
You're not going to remember making all nine of the films to the same degree.

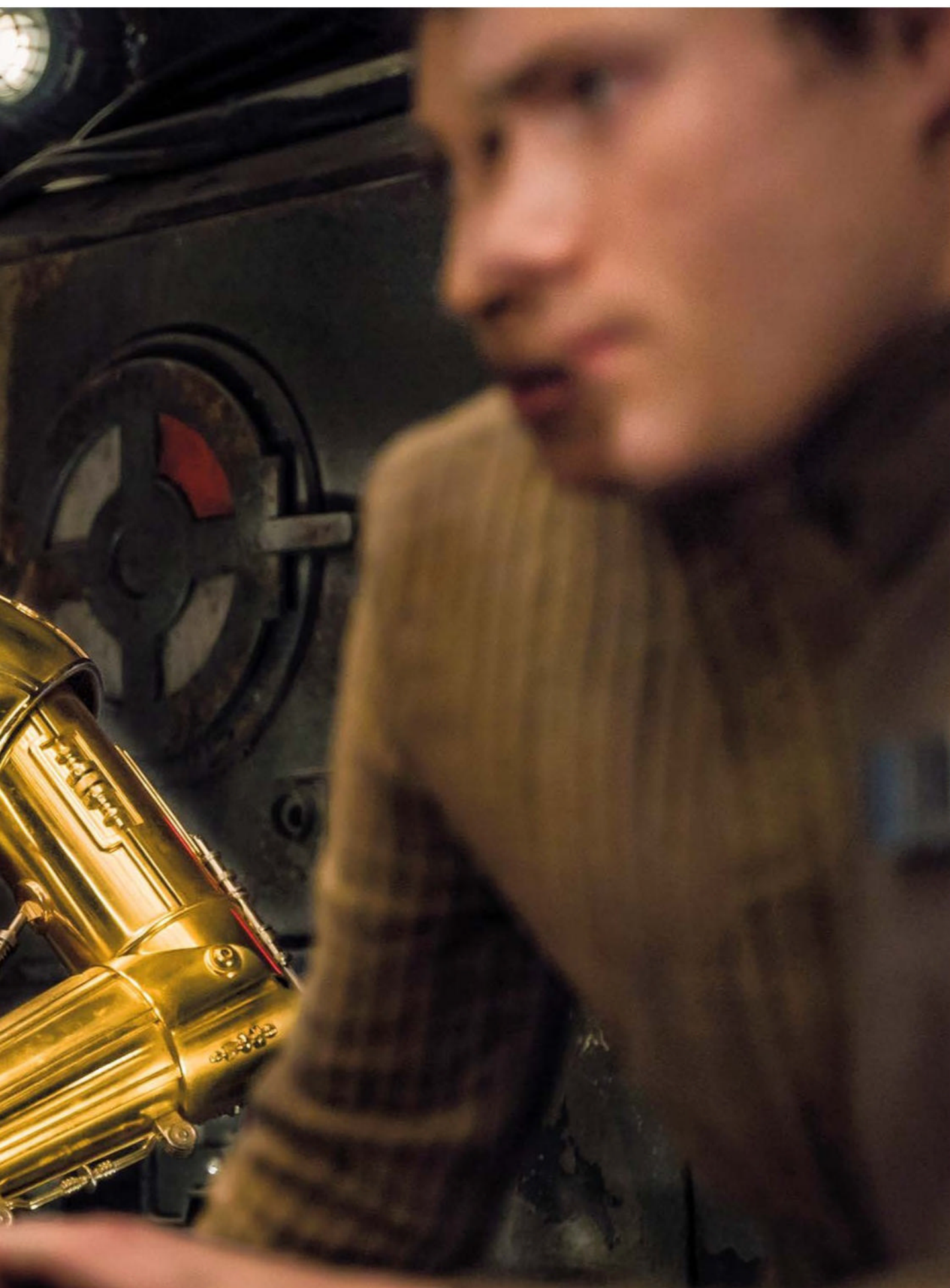
No, which is kind of a bit sad. But then we came back for Episode 7. Working with J.J. Abrams was so visceral, I think you can tell how much we enjoy working with him. It's been a complete joy. And now C-3PO is back in action in Episode 9, and what an end piece for him.

Now that we've reached the final episode of the Skywalker saga, would you be happy to play C-3PO again?

Oh, totally. He's my best friend, apart from my wife. He's a very good friend.









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George Lucas had initially envisaged C-3PO as a more salt-of-the-Earth character, with

all the patter of a used automobile dealer. Instead, Anthony Daniels on-set delivery imbued the droid with a sense of British uptightness that stuck, as the actor explained when he sat down with *Star Wars Insider* to talk about his new memoir, *I Am C-3PO*.

Star Wars Insider: It was originally planned that C-3PO would be re-dubbed with another voice. Were you surprised when your full performance found its way into the film?

Anthony Daniels: It never occurred to me that it wouldn't. I was doing the job, I was in front of the camera, I was talking. I assumed it was a given. I'd been on television, where you stand there in the light and you speak, they record your face and your voice, and you watch it on TV. Why would it be different? George left me to do the physical

side totally on my own, and he could have done the vocal side totally without me, but as we know he changed his mind.

When you first played C-3PO, how long did it take you to find the core of the character?

The fact that I had already inhabited C-3PO by proxy for six months while we were still making the costume, before we even saw a film camera, I guess something of him went inside. Being C-3PO became instinctual. Some actors, some really good actors, gently talk about the art of acting. Some really bad actors really talk about the art of acting. I don't, because I actually don't really understand it, and I look at people on screen and on stage and wonder "How do you do that, because it's brilliant?" And I can't do it.

Did you approach the role any differently for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)?

It was different words, and different situations. Being partnered with

01 Daniels as C-3PO, with Mark Hamill and George Lucas, on set in Tunisia for *A New Hope*.

02 C-3PO's rusty look in *Attack of the Clones*.

03 Daniels returned to the role to voice C-3PO in episodes of *The Clone Wars* (2008-2013).

04 Anthony Daniels (left) during the recording of the *Star Wars* radio adaptation, with Bernard Behrens (Obi-Wan Kenobi), Perry King (Han Solo), and Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker).

Han Solo very cleverly gave C-3PO a different dynamic. As an actor you're given what to say, and told where to stand. Many of the choices are made elsewhere, in the writing room or in the directors' mind, which, in the case of *Empire*, was Irvin Kershner. The difference, possibly, was that it was all a bit more self-conscious, whereas when we were making *A New Hope*, which wasn't even known as Episode 4 then, it was the one and only. On *Empire*, I was very self-conscious that I was making a fool of myself on set, as a character that might be thought of as being a bit wonky. But nobody was saying, "Well that's a bit rubbish, can you try something else." You have to throw yourself into it, because if you do it half-heartedly the audience absolutely won't believe you.

Is that the only way to perform a character like C-3PO, to go big and project to the back row?

It's an interesting question. To talk about somebody else's performance, Ahmed Best has a huge brain and a huge wit. In Jar Jar Binks he



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was given a character to play and was directed how to play it, and as a performer he threw himself absolutely into it, as a professional. The character may have split opinions, but if you meet people who were ten years old at the time of *The Phantom Menace* (1999), their favorite character is Jar Jar.

Both of the characters we're talking about are masked and semi human. Both speak in our language, they're both bipedal, they have two legs, two arms. They have human elements but are heavily disguised. You have got to be careful when you're inside all that, because if you're too subtle nothing is going to get through the latex or the metal. If you're too over the top, people go "Whoa, that's too much." Some people found Jar Jar too much, some people find C-3PO too much. But when I meet people in their middle age, they remember the great joy the characters gave them as young people. These things stay with them.



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Some locations must have been difficult to work in. What was the toughest?

Anywhere that didn't have a flat, smooth floor. Anywhere with steps, that was dark, that had a low ceiling (*laughs*). And because there's a human reaction to not being able to breath or sensing that you cannot

"GEORGE LEFT ME TO DO THE PHYSICAL SIDE TOTALLY ON MY OWN, AND HE COULD HAVE DONE THE VOCAL SIDE TOTALLY WITHOUT ME, BUT AS WE KNOW HE CHANGED HIS MIND."

breathe, that was one of the horrible things. There's an almost immediate panic reaction, and certainly that CO₂ reflex—you need to breathe, and if you have something pushing onto your diaphragm so you can't physically move it, that is scary. It's happened to me two or three times.

How did you get past that?

Shouting, "Get me out, get me out!" And having people who care enough to be understanding and right there with you.

So, did you have a spotter watching out for you?

Oh, it was beyond spotters. There was always one, and often two people, who were my dressers from the prop department, because the suit was so technical. Absolutely looking out just for me.

Over the course of the book, you'll see I gradually went through a series of people over the years, because they could only take so much. And indeed, because I've been doing this for so long, some people have retired. I was hoping Brian Lofthouse would come back for the sequels, but by then he'd retired too.

Presumably you were the least comfortable in the costume during the first film?

There were issues on the last film too, but nobody had ever made a costume like C-3PO before *A New Hope*. Even the robot character ▶



04

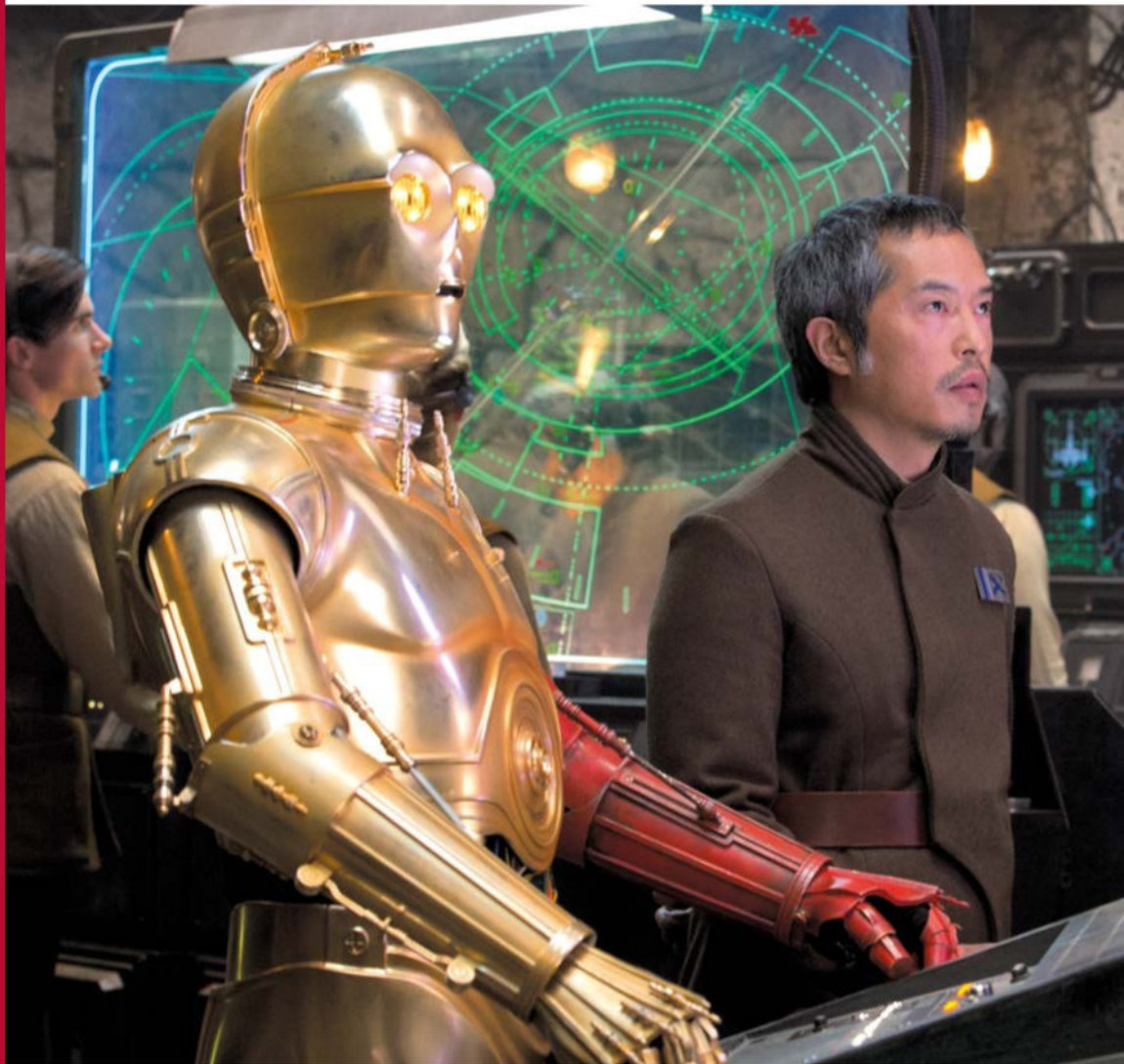
THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN JACKET

Anthony Daniels has been a part of *Star Wars* Celebration since the very first event in Denver, Colorado in 1999.

SWI: You always wear a golden jacket when you host a Celebration stage. Is there a reason for that?
AD: The gold jacket came out of the first Celebration, where I decided to make sure people understood that I had a sense of humor, particularly against myself. Not even self-deprecating. Take me seriously, but don't take me too seriously.

SWI: How much to you enjoy the pageantry of *Star Wars* Celebration?
AD: I enjoy it hugely. When we did the original, we had nothing. We had some temporary stages, some lights, and me and two other people with microphones. Now it's a tour de force of electronics, earpieces, lots of microphones, monitors onstage. I'd written the whole program; it was all written on the palm of my hand. Now it has become a phenomenon. What I love is people making friends there, swapping stories, sharing their passions. I particularly enjoy people who dress up in costume, especially if they've made it. Celebration is a great thing.

SWI: You seem to have a lot of fun, especially when you're bantering with Warwick Davis onstage.
AD: Warwick is better at it than me, because I'm three times older than him, and my brain doesn't work quite as fast. His ability with repartee is phenomenal. Sometimes I can't answer because he just makes me laugh, and I'm left standing there like a fool. I always make him dress up as an Ewok, and I always promise I'll never do it again. It's one of the joys of Celebration, and long may that continue.



05 C-3PO (Anthony Daniels) returned for *The Force Awakens*.

06 Carrie Fisher (Leia) and Anthony Daniels during filming of *The Empire Strikes Back*.

07 Connix (Billie Lourd) and C-3PO surrender in *The Last Jedi* (2017)





05



07

► from *Metropolis* (1927) didn't compare. And, even in spite of everybody's hard work, it just didn't work. I think one of the reasons the costume was slightly problematic is because our human bodies have layers of skin and fat that you can push slightly aside, but metal is very unforgiving, and it stays where it is. It wasn't the greatest experience. It all made sense in the end, and of course the audience don't need to know about the issues of wearing a difficult costume. They just see the finished result.

Long after the mania of the original trilogy, you were approached to return for the prequels. What was your first thought when they asked you back?

Well, C-3PO had never really left me. Although I'd done all sorts of other jobs and gigs, I had often been involved with other spin-off activities, like exhibitions and writing for *Star Wars Insider*, but

I was very surprised when I met with George Lucas, who explained C-3PO's origins, his nascence, and how he'd forgotten everything.

They had somebody else operating the C-3PO puppet for *The Phantom Menace*, so I was just doing the voice, but that changed in the second episode where I wore—and, to my horror, destroyed!—the puppet. It was interesting to do, to carry and perform him in a way that wasn't physically wearing the suit. But then George changed the storyline, and the puppet never appeared in the movie. C-3PO was just a rusty version instead.

In *Empire*, when C-3PO was physically blasted apart, I wore the costume in all sorts of strange ways,

either with the face on the back of my head, so I was looking this way and his face was looking the other way, or with my hand up through his chest. I was literally puppeteering. We did it in so many ways. Balancing on one leg, in costume, holding a prop leg, and speaking and acting, "I'm standing here in pieces and you're having delusions of grandeur." I was stood there with one leg in my hand and this leg up behind me, because you can really cheat with the single eye of the camera, provided you've aligned things, so you couldn't see my leg behind me. It's much easier now, with so much greenscreen everywhere.

I talk about the magic of stage illusionists in the book, and that

there are effects in *The Empire Strikes Back* where we created so much just by wearing the costume in a different way. And I could speak normally, and breathe!

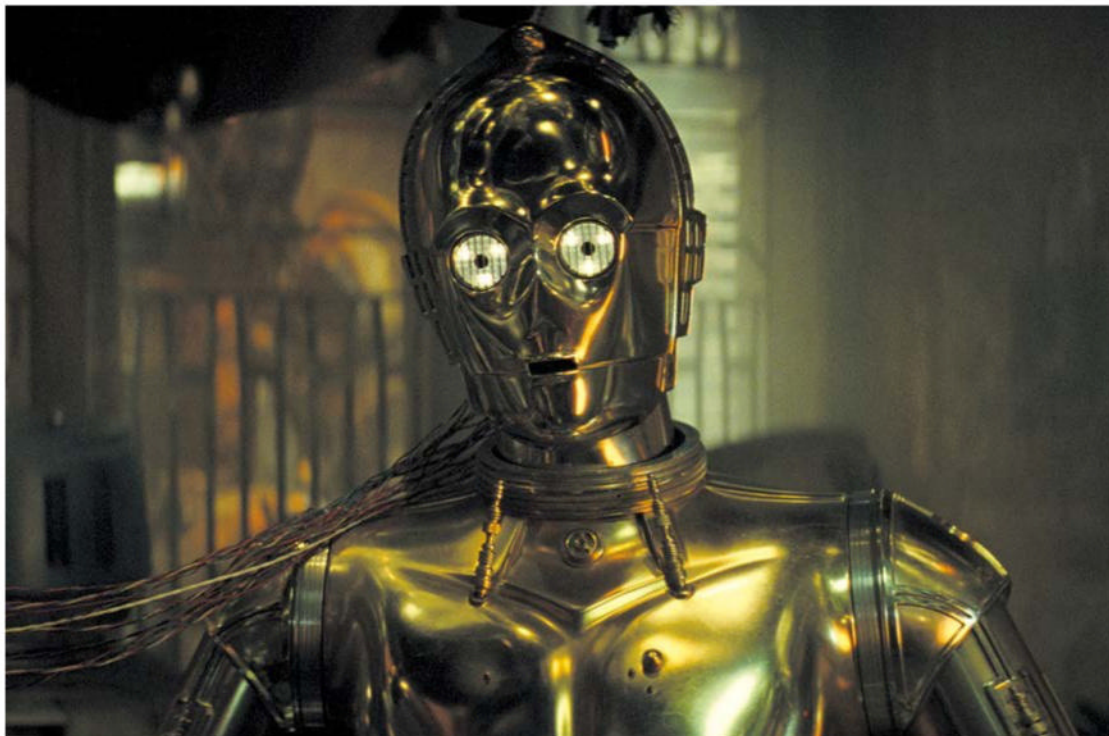
"BEING PARTNERED WITH HAN SOLO VERY CLEVERLY GAVE C-3PO A DIFFERENT DYNAMIC."

With the many pinch points and

unforgiving edges of the costume, how did that effect the physical element of your performance?

There's no room for normal gestures. We're very manual, as humans. It's part of our sense of expression, although other nations and countries do it differently. I knew that if I moved in a certain way then the costume would pinch me, but I would still do it because occasionally you had to. And the hands! Only in this very last movie do I quite deliberately pick things up that are small, because I've never been able to do that before. I learned to use what I had. In the book, I talk about one of my favorite moments in all of the movies—my confrontation with Han Solo ►

08



08 C-3PO takes a last look at his friends in *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019).

09 In the finale of the Skywalker saga, C-3PO (Anthony Daniels) once again finds himself in the middle of the action.



09

► with the Ewoks—when Han got too impertinent, and you can see the fury on C-3PO's face, but of course his face doesn't change.

You know exactly what C-3PO is thinking at that precise moment. It's all there.

I know, it's mad! Liz Moore, the sculptor who created C-3PO, gave him this face that has the ability to be a very beautiful blank canvas. Without getting too technical about it, depending on its relative position to the shoulder, to the body, or whatever, and the angle, the speed of movement, you've got so many options to play with.

When you're interacting with other actors, do you sometimes find that the costume is a barrier?

What I envy on the set is being able to improvise. You use slightly different energy in the performance than in rehearsal, but I need to know where things are. The geography of the sets is a nightmare, so I'm triangulating on anything that hopefully doesn't move. Various shots were very difficult because of effects and floor textures and so on. Finding marks is difficult, and I don't always get it right. I was rehearsing one day with the gang, Oscar Isaac, Daisy Ridley, and John Boyega, and they're saying, "Maybe we should do this?" and suddenly I'm leaping in with this major piece of pantomime, because I rehearse exactly as I am in performance. I hope the book gives you a general idea of the joy and the pain of it.

Many people had a hand in the creation of C-3PO, but is the essence of the character you?

The essence of C-3PO is C-3PO, I'm afraid. I've written this book, all these pages. Maybe I wrote it as much for myself as for anyone else, because what genuinely surprised

me was realizing that I've written about a journey. I never thought it was going to be a journey, certainly not a hero's journey. It never occurred to me that in 45 years I'd have gone from A to Z. It was only when I began to read the pieces that I saw this transition, this progress, up hills and down.

It's odd, there was

a lot of preparation in creating C-3PO, in every sense of the word, by the whole team and by me, but somehow he sort of happened. You can almost explain it, but maybe some things are better left as a piece of magic. 🍷

"LIZ MOORE, THE SCULPTOR WHO CREATED C-3PO, GAVE HIM THIS FACE THAT HAS THE ABILITY TO BE A VERY BEAUTIFUL BLANK CANVAS."





SITH UNSEEN

A RETROSPECTIVE

Collectibles, merchandise, and all kinds of licensed products have been a part of *Star Wars* since the very beginning, and are naturally must-buys for hardcore fans and collectors alike. But often these supplements to the main feature films offer more than simply tie-in entertainment. *Insider* examines how novels, games, and comics expanded *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* beyond the confines of its onscreen story.

WORDS: JAY STOBIE

In an age where every cinematic universe creates a tight web of narrative links between movies

and their spin-offs, modern genre fans have become accustomed to seeing the latest blockbusters arrive with an abundance of tie-in material, in the form of video games, novels, comics, and more. These supplementary sources often divulge new details and subplots that relate to the feature's central story, offering fans an ever more immersive experience in which to explore characters, events, and even entire worlds beyond the confines of the movie itself.

While this approach is now commonplace—and since the 2014 reset of *Star Wars*' fictional history, has been a core element of Lucasfilm's storytelling—the company pioneered the use of a well-focused, multimedia push when *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* was released on May 19, 2005. Prior to that date, expectant fans could already play *Star Wars: Republic Commando* to get a sneak peek of General Grievous and the build-up to the Battle of Kashyyyk. Once the film hit theaters, fans who wondered about Obi-Wan Kenobi's cryptic line concerning “that business on Cato Neimoidia” had the chance to read James Luceno's *Labyrinth of Evil* and discover

the story behind it. And anyone who wanted to learn about the film's aftermath need only turn to Luceno's follow-up novel, *Dark Lord: The Rise of Darth Vader*.

The connections presented in these off-screen offerings alluded to *Revenge of the Sith* in various ways, from referencing unseen characters to describing the events that immediately preceded the movie's opening crawl. While these stories have since been superseded by new tales from Marvel, Del Rey, and others, examining the plots of the most prominent licensed product from 2005 offers a fascinating window on efforts at the time to create a cohesive narrative across different media.

STAR WARS: GENERAL GRIEVOUS

STAR WARS: GENERAL GRIEVOUS

RELEASE DATE:
March to August 2005

AUTHOR: Chuck Dixon
PENCILS: Rick Leonardi
INKS: Mark Pennington

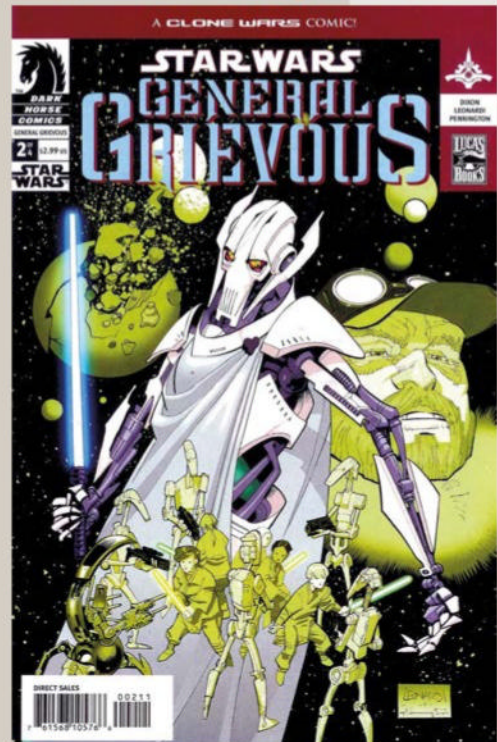
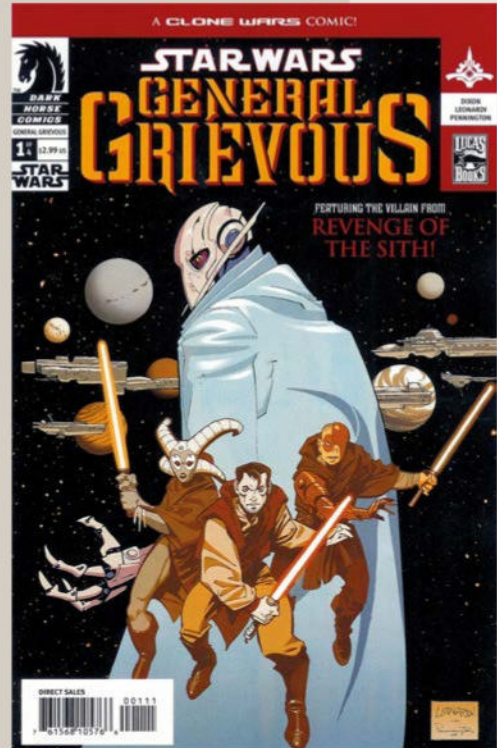
PUBLISHER:
Dark Horse Comics

Set a year prior to the events of *Revenge of the Sith*, the four-issue *General Grievous* comic superbly emphasizes the Separatist leader's status as a murderous war criminal, who poses an imminent threat to the Jedi. Combined with Count Dooku's training, Grievous' metallic physique and fiendish demeanor generate a ruthless Jedi killing machine, leading three Jedi to become so concerned that they leave the Order to track the General down and assassinate him.

In the meantime, Grievous continues to ravage the Republic by slaughtering a Mon Calamari starship's crew, ordering another Jedi's execution, capturing several Padawans, and leading a genocidal invasion that wipes out the majority of Ugnaughts living on their home planet. The General devises an even more diabolical fate for the Padawans: he envisions replacing much of their anatomy with droid exoskeletons designed to harness their Force talents for evil. When the Padawans escape their cell, Grievous quickly grows tired of the chase and prepares to put the younglings to death. The rogue Jedi catch up with Grievous in the nick of time and prioritize saving the Padawans over eliminating their target. Two of the three Jedi even give their lives fighting Grievous to buy enough time for the children to retreat off-world.

The comic clearly establishes General Grievous as the imposing villain that we encounter in *Revenge of the Sith*, and paints him as a ruthless beast in an effective effort to showcase why the galaxy fears Grievous so much.

**COMBINED WITH COUNT DOOKU'S
TRAINING, GRIEVOUS' METALLIC
PHYSIQUE AND FIENDISH DEEMANOR
GENERATE A RUTHLESS JEDI
KILLING MACHINE.**



THE 10 BEST GAMES

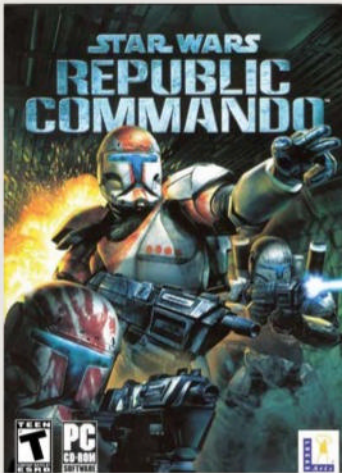
STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

RELEASE DATE:
February 28, 2005

PUBLISHER:
LucasArts

In this first-person video game, players take on the role of RC-01/138, a clone commanding the elite unit Delta Squad. Nicknamed 'Boss,' you lead a team of three troopers into warzones strewn across the *Star Wars* galaxy.

The game's storyline follows Boss from the conflict's opening salvo at the Battle of Geonosis, as seen in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002), with the player guiding Delta Squad in missions that span the duration of the war. Levels include investigating the seemingly derelict Acclamator-class assault ship *Prosecutor* to a recognizable engagement on the planet Kashyyyk.



Delta Squad's excursion to the Wookiee homeworld includes numerous links to *Revenge of the Sith*. Boss and his comrades arrive on Kashyyyk prior to the Battle of Coruscant, where they uncover General Grievous and the Separatists collaborating with Trandoshan slavers on a plan to enslave the local population. The Trandoshans have imprisoned Tarfful,

the Wookiee chieftain who later works with Chewbacca to facilitate Master Yoda's escape after Order 66. Delta Squad successfully rescue Tarfful from his reptilian captors and, possessing the vital intelligence they've uncovered, Tarfful leaves the planet in order to deliver the data to Coruscant. Grievous escapes to his ship, the *Invisible Hand*, linking the game directly to the opening space battle of *Episode III*.

The Separatist presence on Kashyyyk in Republic Commando is what prompts Master Ki-Adi-Mundi's question to the Jedi Council in *Revenge of the Sith*: "What about the droid attack on the Wookiees?" In response, Yoda announces he will oversee the Republic's response to this invasion, and Tarfful can clearly be seen waiting when the Jedi Master arrives at the troop staging area to prepare for departure. Back on Kashyyyk, Boss and Delta Squad operate against the Separatists in Tarfful's home city of Kachirho, contributing covering fire for the Republic's reinforcements.

The game concludes on a cliffhanger, with Delta Squad ordered to exfiltrate aboard a gunship and await further instructions. At that point, Yoda has arrived on the scene, ready to head up the Clone Army's war strategy. Republic Commando's final moments tease the upcoming Battle of Kashyyyk that would feature in *Revenge of the Sith*, setting the stage for the Separatists' offensive against the clone troopers and Wookiees who are establishing defensive positions on Kachirho's beaches.

**REPUBLIC COMMANDO'S FINAL MOMENTS
TEASE THE UPCOMING BATTLE OF
KASHYYYK THAT WOULD FEATURE
IN *REVENGE OF THE SITH*.**





↓ΞΥ ΛΙΝ↓-ΖΥΞΖ ΑΖΥΕΛΥΝ

LABYRINTH OF EVIL

RELEASE DATE: January 25, 2005

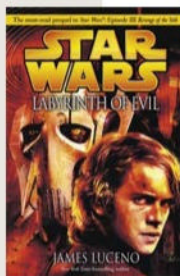
AUTHOR:
James Luceno

PUBLISHER: Del Rey

While *Star Wars: Republic Commando* deals with matters from a previously unknown clone trooper's perspective, *Labyrinth of Evil* follows the pre-*Revenge of the Sith* actions undertaken by major players Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, General Grievous, Count Dooku, Yoda, Mace Windu, and Darth Sidious.

The novel contains a plethora of tethers to the final episode in the prequel trilogy, yet takes time to create some interesting adventures of its own. Commander Cody, who would later fight alongside and eventually betray Obi-Wan on Utapau, appears during Skywalker and Kenobi's attempt to capture Nute Gunray on Cato Neimoidia. We learn that Asajj Ventress gave Skywalker the scar on his face, and are introduced to the Jedi initiative to give the clones names and treat them with compassion; each gripping chapter abounds with provocative disclosures.

Another oft-quoted slice of *Revenge of the Sith* dialogue—when Kenobi denies requiring Skywalker's help during “that business on Cato Neimoidia”—receives its own intriguing explanation here, too. Skywalker did protect Kenobi from a battle droid, but the statement most likely refers to a dire situation when the two Jedi found themselves separated. After losing his rebreather, Kenobi faces down battle droids numbering in the dozens while in a semi-drugged state. Skywalker rushes to save his master, only to discover that Kenobi has somehow managed



**THE NOVEL
EXPLAINS
THAT DOOKU
AND SIDIOUS
MASTERMINDED
A SHUTTLE
ACCIDENT THAT
LEFT GRIEVOUS'
BODY BROKEN.**

to thrive in his hallucinatory disposition and defeated his mechanical foes. Skywalker brings Kenobi the missing rebreather, although the notion of whether or not he saved his master clearly becomes a matter of jovial ribbing between the two friends.

Elsewhere, Count Dooku privately muses to himself about Grievous' descent from fully organic being to technological hybrid. The novel explains that Dooku and Sidious masterminded a shuttle accident that left Grievous' body broken, forcing the General to agree to cybernetic augmentation. During the surgical process in Geonosis' depths, the two Sith ordered the Geonosians to manipulate the General's mind to make him cruel and believe he has always been so ruthless. The alterations drive the General to genocide, exhibited by his order to massacre 27 Jedi and more than 10,000 fleeing civilians during a failed Separatist invasion above Belderone.

Then, Supreme Chancellor Palpatine delivers an address to the Senate about advancing into the Outer Rim, which lines up precisely with Kenobi's briefing in the movie regarding the sieges in that region. Palpatine highlights Mygeeto, Saleucami, and Felucia as key targets, and these three planets each make an appearance during Order 66's notorious Jedi execution sequence.

The novel also references Skywalker and Kenobi's lengthy service tenure in the Outer Rim, where they have undertaken a secretive mission to hunt down Darth Sidious. The duo's deployment fits well with Skywalker and Padmé Amidala's emotional reunion after the Battle of Coruscant, as captured in the movie.

Labyrinth of Evil's final chapters chronicle the Separatists' surprise attack on Coruscant and Grievous' capture of Palpatine. The novel completes its tale with Skywalker and Kenobi readying themselves to jump to the Republic's capital and reinforce the fleet. Although never originally intended to be combined as a set, *The Dark Lord Trilogy* later packaged *Labyrinth of Evil* alongside the movie's novelization and *Dark Lord: The Rise of Darth Vader*.



↓EVIL SADD ODE ↓EVIL DINE

REVENGE OF THE SITH – MOVIE NOVELIZATION

RELEASE DATE: April 2, 2005

PUBLISHER: Del Rey

AUTHOR: Matthew Stover

The novelization of *Revenge of the Sith* primarily relays the film's consequential scenes, but also opens a window into the thoughts and motivations that influenced notable actions.

Anakin Skywalker's visions pertaining to Padmé's death during childbirth, his desire to protect her, and his anger over not being granted the rank of Jedi Master, are all well-documented onscreen, but the novelization lends further insight into the young man's frustration relating to his status on the Council. He knows the Jedi Temple contains holocrons filled with knowledge from generations of Jedi, but protocol states that only Jedi Masters retain access to those resources. Anakin initially plans to research other Jedi who have experienced prophecies and whether the foreseen events could be prevented, but his focus shifts when Palpatine tells him about Darth Plagueis' ability to save people from death.

JUST AS Labyrinth of Evil EXPOUNDS ON ITS SOURCE MATERIAL, THIS NOVELIZATION OFFERS ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO FAMILIAR SCENES.

In Skywalker's mind, he needs to be a master so that he has a chance to dig through the Archives, learn as much as possible about Plagueis, and save Padmé.

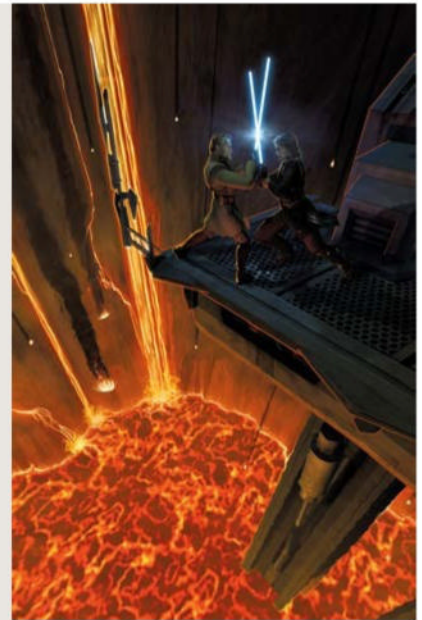
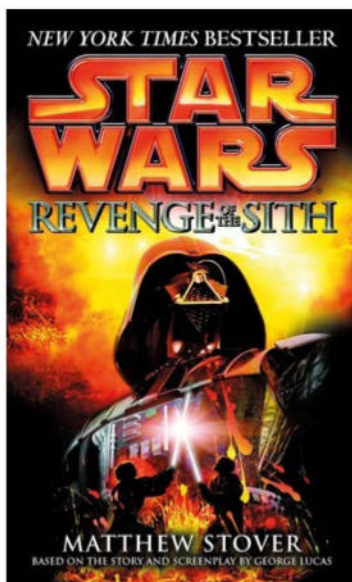
Just as *Labyrinth of Evil* expounds on its source material, this novelization offers additional insight into familiar scenes. For instance, while the war rages, Palpatine disturbs his critics by installing Republic governors accompanied by clone units to many planets. Allegedly sent to help local officials, these forces surely act

as a foothold for the Imperial government once the Empire replaces the Republic.

Equally, on his way to altering the message being broadcast by the Jedi Temple's beacon, the book also reveals Kenobi's humorous ruse to dispatch the troopers guarding the

building. He poses as a hunchback intent on surrendering a Jedi infant to the troops... a baby who turns out to be a fully grown, lightsaber-wielding Yoda.

Skywalker's choice to serve the Emperor and be renamed Darth Vader is not the only evolving relationship to be conferred here. While Yoda explains to Obi-Wan about communing with Qui-Gon Jinn in the film, the novel actually portrays one such interaction. Following his failure to best the Emperor in combat, Yoda converses with Jinn's disembodied voice and becomes aware of the potential to live on through the Force after death. In a parallel to young Skywalker's submission to the darkness, the older Yoda pledges to open himself to new teachings and become Jinn's apprentice. Ironically, the Jedi uncover the means to avoid death, a talent that Sidious and Vader so desperately sought.



↓EVIL SADD ODE ↓EVIL DINE

REVENGE OF THE SITH – THE VIDEO GAME

RELEASE DATE: April 2, 2005

PUBLISHER: LucasArts

Unleashed on the public prior to the film's official premiere, the *Revenge of the Sith* video game sees players battle through levels as either Anakin Skywalker or Obi-Wan Kenobi. The release stuck to the movie's plot and revolves around consequential moments, so supplementary themes do not truly materialize in this format.

However, the game spearheaded an appealing new approach to marketing a movie, previewing exclusive locales prior to their official arrival in cinemas, including the *Invisible Hand*, Utapau, and Mustafar. It also contained more than 10 minutes of actual scenes from the yet-to-be-released theatrical version. Such an extensive use of previously unseen footage is rarely seen outside of approved trailers and inexorably binds the game to its counterpart on the big screen.

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DARK LORD: THE RISE OF DARTH VADER

RELEASE DATE: November 22, 2005

AUTHOR:
James Luceno

PUBLISHER: Del Rey

The final entry in *The Dark Lord Trilogy*, *The Rise of Darth Vader* landed in stores several months after crowds first saw *Revenge of the Sith* in theaters, and James Luceno's novel catalogues the war's closing chapter, the Republic's transition into the Galactic Empire, and Darth Vader's early exploits as a Sith Lord.

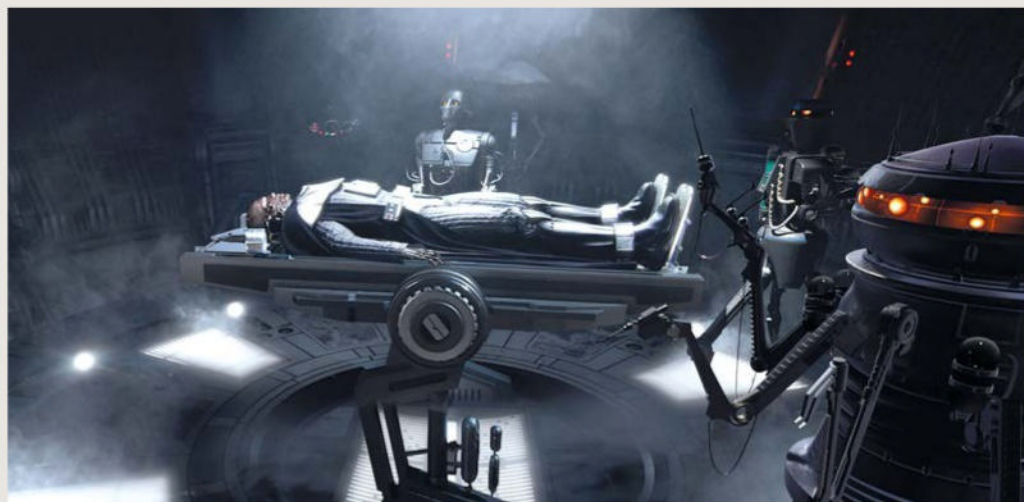
Vader undertakes a mission to punish clone troopers who hesitated to carry out Order 66 on Murkhana, thus leading several Jedi to be spared the fate suffered by their peers. The Jedi struggle to deal with the confusion, presenting an eyewitness account from combatants far removed from the Jedi Council's inner circle during the war's abrupt end. The group react to factors outlined in the movie, including the Jedi Temple beacon's initial recall message, Kenobi's alternate order to hide, and a general puzzlement regarding what occurred between the Jedi and Palpatine.

Ultimately, only two Jedi escape the clutches of their pursuers and flee Murkhana. The elder one believes their cause to be lost and holds a desire to move on with his life, while his younger companion wishes to search for other survivors. The less experienced Jedi actually succeeds, assembling a rag-tag group who hope to stoke the Jedi Order's flame once more. Their endeavor results in failure, as congregating together just makes it easier for Darth Sidious to trace their movements and come close to wiping them all

out at once. In this regard, the novel presents a logical reason why Yoda, Kenobi, and other Jedi stragglers select solitude instead of coordinating an effort to reform and initiate a counterattack against the Emperor.

The novel offers Darth Vader's reflections on his reimagined physical form in the weeks after his defeat on Mustafar. Vader internally expresses anger toward Palpatine and the medical droids who built his suit, as the ill-fitting armor hinders his movements, hampers his fighting technique, and causes him to feel imprisoned in its confines. The Sith Lord's dexterity gradually improves as he draws upon the dark side to engage and slaughter several of the Jedi trying to consolidate their forces.

Another thread that extends from *Revenge of the Sith* pertains to the surprise reemergence of Qui-Gon Jinn and Luke Skywalker's concealment on Tatooine. Obi-Wan Kenobi begins to panic when he learns that Anakin lived, understandably concerned that placing the baby with the Lars family on his former friend's homeworld puts Luke in danger. The novel reveals that Jinn reaches out to his former Padawan and assures him that Vader's fear of reliving painful memories prevents him from stepping foot on Tatooine. Author James Luceno connects Yoda's encouragement for Obi-Wan to commune with Qui-Gon with an explanation as to why Kenobi believes Luke will remain safe on Tatooine. 🌵



**THE NOVEL OFFERS
DARTH VADER'S
REFLECTIONS ON
HIS REIMAGINED
PHYSICAL FORM IN
THE WEEKS AFTER
HIS DEFEAT ON
MUSTAFAR.**





AHSOKA LIVES!

Ashley Eckstein talks exclusively to *Insider* about returning to the role of Ahsoka Tano in the seventh and final season of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-14, 2020) and *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). Plus, she reveals the quote that has become her personal motto.

WORDS: AMY RATCLIFFE

**“In my life, when
people need you,
you help them. No
matter what.”**

Ahsoka Tano

Star Wars: *The Clone Wars*' final season brought back Ahsoka Tano—an Ahsoka we haven't seen

before. Although it's been seven years since we watched her walk away from the Jedi Order in the show's season five finale, only a short time had passed in the galaxy far, far away, and the character is still coping with that huge upheaval in her life. *Insider* spoke with the actress about Ahsoka's long-awaited return.

Star Wars Insider: Fans were so surprised to hear about the return of *The Clone Wars*. How did you react when you heard the news?

Ashley Eckstein: I first heard about it from Dee Bradley Baker. I was at Disney World riding rides with my husband, and I got this text message. I knew that Dee was wine tasting with the *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018) cast and that Dave Filoni was there, so when he sent me the text message and he said, "*Clone Wars*, 12 episodes coming back," I didn't believe it. I was like, "That is top secret news."

"When *The Clone Wars* was canceled, it was so sad. We didn't get the proper goodbye."

So it wasn't something you expected to hear in a text message?

I forget exactly how the text chain unfolded, but Dee was like, "No, no, for real. This is happening." Of course, I was excited because if Dee is telling me that it's for real, then I want to believe him because he is like a brother to me.

I heard from my agent next, and I still didn't believe it. I said, "Wait a minute, I haven't heard it from Dave. This can't be real." So, I called Dave and he said, "Hey, what's going on?" I said, "Do you have something to tell me?" Dave felt really bad. He said that wasn't how he wanted me to find out, but that it was true, and I was so excited. I didn't fully believe it until I heard it from Dave Filoni.

How emotional was it to know that you'd be coming back?

When *The Clone Wars* was canceled, it was so sad. We didn't

get the proper goodbye. We didn't get that final recording session or that happy wrap party. So, I took *The Clone Wars*, locked it in a place in my heart, and I threw away the key. I was so hurt and didn't want to allow anyone to hurt us again. When I found out that it was happening, I was in absolute disbelief. Obviously Dave Filoni was crucial to it, but one person that is the unsung hero, that is not getting the credit that she deserves, is Carrie Beck (vice president of animation and live-action development at Lucasfilm Ltd). I'm forever grateful to the fans for not giving up, I'm forever grateful to Carrie Beck for believing that it could come back, I'm forever grateful to Dave Filoni for getting the gang back together, and I'm forever grateful to Disney+ for giving it a home.

You mentioned the fans never giving up. They threw their all into the "Save *The Clone Wars*" campaign for years, and now it's #CloneWarsSaved. Did it warm your heart to see that support over the years?

Yes. Though I'm usually a very, very positive person, I was not so positive about *The Clone Wars*. I never thought it would ever come back. It's kind of ironic that the last fortune cookie caption for the last episode in which Ahsoka had appeared was, "Never give up hope, no matter how dark things seem." The fans never gave up hope. They always had hope that *The Clone Wars* would be saved, and here we are. They took that very last fortune cookie to heart.

What conversations did you have with Dave Filoni about Ahsoka's return to the screen?

They always happened in the studio right before we would record



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an episode. Before we started, Dave [Filoni] would come in and he would give us a 20 to 30-minute breakdown of each episode. That's how I learned *Star Wars*. I've been a lifelong *Star Wars* fan, I grew up loving *Star Wars*, but I didn't know it like I do now. Dave would always tie the breakdowns to other parts of the saga. I learned so much.

Those moments were like lost episodes. He would tell us what our character was going through, what emotional space we were in, what head space we should be in, what our agenda for that episode was for our characters. What were they trying to say? What were they trying to achieve? What were they going through? It was truly a deep dive into each episode.

The cast records together, so how productive was that first session when you were all reunited?

We're all professionals, but there was so much joy. So much laughter, so many jokes, so much acting up,

01 Ashley Eckstein strikes an Ahsoka Tano pose at *Galaxy's Edge*.

02 Ahsoka Tano was the breakout character of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

“Every single time we walked into the studio, it was one step closer to the end.”

so much silliness. But also, so many emotions. The episode records got very deep at times. They got very sad, very emotional. When we were recording *The Clone Wars* before, we knew that we had so many episodes ahead of us. There was never that thought of, “This is the last one.” We never had the countdown, but with these last 12, we did have that countdown.

Every single time we walked into the studio, it was one step closer to the end. There was a bit of sadness every single time. Dave really had to keep us in check because we brought an essence of sadness and deepness to these episodes ▶

A VOICE IN THE DARK

Ashley Eckstein on her experience of reprising the role of Ahsoka Tano in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.

“I found out I was doing it a couple days before I went into the studio,” explains Eckstein about her character's surprise vocal appearance in the movie. “I walked into the theater at Bad Robot, and there was Matthew Wood [supervising sound editor] and J.J. Abrams, the director. J.J. shook my hand and introduced himself, and immediately thanked me for being in the movie. I couldn't believe it.”

Ahsoka's ethereal voice is one of many Jedi lending support to Rey in her darkest hour, so how did Eckstein approach her character's dialogue given it's impossible to determine which time period Ahsoka was speaking from?

“J.J. asked a similar question after I'd recorded the lines. He said, ‘Being a voice actor, obviously you're not on set, you're not physically acting a scene out, so what do you visualize when you read your lines?’ I can't say that it's necessarily something I visualize, it's actually a feeling that I have. I know when my voice is in the right spot. I can feel it. My own voice, as in just Ashley Eckstein, sometimes it's too high pitched. I get too excited, I go too high, so I have to tone it down a bit. There's a feeling I get when I know that I'm in the right vocal range for Ahsoka, and I also feel it when I know that I'm not.”



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- ▶ that our characters wouldn't have had. It was definitely a mixture of heightened emotions. Heightened happiness, joy, sadness; and in between somewhere the episodes got done.

You had to take Ahsoka back to a place before she was the wise mentor we saw in *Star Wars Rebels*. Was it difficult to rediscover her younger voice?

That's something we talked about a lot. I did go back to the end of Season Five, because these episodes do pick up right where we left off, and I tried to get my voice back to where Ahsoka was then. It was

quite difficult for me to get my vocal performance to where Ahsoka was in *Star Wars Rebels*, but I eventually got into that sweet spot where I could just fall into her voice. This time I had to forget everything I'd learned for *Star Wars Rebels* and go back to *The Clone Wars* place.

Eventually where we settled was somewhere in between. *Star Wars Rebels* Ahsoka was what was fresh in everyone's minds. Ahsoka, after she walked away from the Jedi Order, was in a much more serious place. She was in a dark and sad place. When we're in a sad place, oftentimes our voice does become lower and deeper. So, I made my voice somewhere in



04

"I care about Ahsoka as though she is a part of me. I never want anything bad to happen to her."

between Season Five Ahsoka, and *Star Wars Rebels* Ahsoka.

Until *Star Wars Rebels*, we didn't know if Ahsoka survived Order 66, and then it was all about whether she'd survive against Darth Vader and the Inquisitors. Was it a relief to record this time knowing she had a future?

It was definitely a relief. I care about Ahsoka as though she is a part of me. I never want anything bad to happen to her. I will always care so deeply, on a human level, about what happens with this character. So it was nice to know that Ahsoka survives. I have these new pins coming out that



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illustrator Karen Hallion has done the art for. I picked a word for each character, and for Ahsoka, it was very important to me that her word was “survivor” because while we always say “Ahsoka lives,” actually Ahsoka survives. No matter what, against all odds, Ahsoka survives. It’s nice to know that she made it through *The Clone Wars*.

Ahsoka has an incredible line in her return that feels very symbolic of her character: “In my life, when people need you, you help them. No matter what.” Does that quote resonate with you?

There’s a whole story behind this line, and it blows my mind how this came full circle. We’re not allowed to keep our scripts; when we leave the recording studio, we have to leave them with Lucasfilm, but when I read that line as I was recording the episode, something came over me. I said, “This line. This line is going to be my personal motto for the new season and for 2020.” I broke a rule, and I took a screenshot of the line. That’s all I have. It’s just a screenshot of the line only—I cut out the rest of the page because I didn’t want to be responsible for having a page from the script. When I read that line I said, “That’s it. That is going to be my personal motto.”

I wanted to do good with it and help people no matter what. I started working on a new Jedi training program for children that focuses on mindfulness, and I’ve been working with Disney and Lucasfilm to bring this program to



07

children’s hospitals all over the nation. Ahsoka is teaching us that lesson, to help people no matter what. I got goosebumps all over when I recorded that line. I knew it was important, but at the time I had no idea how important it was going to become.

What would you say ties the final season to its predecessors, especially in terms of your character?

It picks up on the theme that ran through *The Clone Wars*: Never give up hope, no matter how dark things seem. When it feels like hope is gone, there’s always hope. All these episodes include beautiful examples of friendship; whether it’s between Ahsoka, Trace, and Rafa, or between Ahsoka and Captain Rex. They’re beautiful

03 Eckstein wrote the Little Golden Book, *I Am a Padawan*.

04 Ashley Eckstein’s high fashion take on Sith style.

05 Ahsoka Tano (Eckstein) made her screen debut in 2008’s *The Clone Wars* movie.

06 Tano returned in *Star Wars Rebels*.

07 Ahsoka battles her former master.

stories about friendship and about helping each other.

For Ahsoka, they are so powerful. She really comes into her own in these episodes. If you think that what we’ve seen from Ahsoka up to now is that she always wants to do what’s right, boy do you see that in these episodes. Literally, when she doesn’t have to, when everyone is telling her not to, Ahsoka doesn’t compromise who she is. It’s just so powerful.

I changed the hashtag—well, not exactly changed because I still use #AhsokaLives all the time, but I added to the hashtag, #AhsokaLivesInAllOfUs. Especially after these episodes, there’s so much we can take away from her. She’s passed on all these lessons now, after so many years. I think it’s our job to continue her legacy. It’s up to all of us. Ahsoka truly lives in all of us. 🍌

The *Star Wars* Archive

Lights! Camera! Action!
Rare images from the
Star Wars photo archives.





Crew members in the Industrial Light & Magic model shop wear protective gear as they work on the miniature of Darth Vader's Super Star Destroyer, the *Executor*, for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980).





Ten From IX

What valuable life lessons can we learn from the final movie in the Skywalker saga? *Star Wars Insider* explores ten moments from *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* that might help us navigate our own lives.

WORDS: JAY STOBIE

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Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (2019) masterfully tackled the very challenging task of conveying a

powerful story that tied the sequel trilogy together *and* wrapped up all the threads hanging from the entire Skywalker saga. As with every *Star Wars* film, the epic struggle between good and evil on a galactic scale was juxtaposed against the personal trials and triumphs of individuals who participated in the conflict. Despite the fleets of starships and massive superweapons that came to loggerheads above the planet Exegol, the war's outcome hinged on the actions taken by a relatively small group of people. These heroic deeds often resulted from important revelations that changed the courses of our favorite characters' lives. With that in mind, let's dive in and examine ten lessons that we loved and learned from that final chapter.

10

Don't Judge
a Jedi Text
by its Cover

■ We are all flawed in our own unique ways, but making assumptions and casting judgments on others based on superficial observations, uninformed rumors, and harmful gossip stand as

common errors that most of us have made. Trapped beneath the sands of Pasaana, Rey and her compatriots feared they would suffer the same fate as Ochi of Bestoon, and never escape the subterranean maze. To make matters worse, the group stumbled upon a vexis, a massive serpent with menacing teeth that appeared ready to strike at our valiant protagonists.

Fortunately, Rey looked beyond the creature's fearsome exterior and sensed that its



aggression stemmed from a serious wound it had suffered. Braving the serpent's ire, Rey called upon the Force to heal the laceration.

The appreciative vexis moved away without a fight, revealing a much-needed exit from the tunnel system. By searching for understanding and showing compassion, Rey managed to save her friends, bring comfort to an injured reptile, and avoid a confrontation. If only we could all be so wise!

09

Reach Out

■ Unless you're a Jedi, it's virtually impossible to know what thoughts, concerns, and fears are running through someone else's mind at any given time. Vocalizing our emotions can be a troubling experience in and of itself, even when we require a comforting word from a friend. Following the Emperor's defeat, Jannah recognized that Lando Calrissian sat alone at the Resistance celebration and took it upon herself to initiate a conversation. This simple act made Lando feel welcome, and the resulting connection prompted the elder hero to reach out in his own way, by offering to aid Jannah search for her home. A bond that benefited both individuals was formed, and all it took was opening a friendly dialogue.



08

Never
Underestimate
a Droid

■ C-3PO, R2-D2, BB-8, K-2SO, and L3-37 rank as the most prominent examples of droids whose exploits have influenced the course of events on a galactic scale. From R2 and Luke to L3 and Lando, we have also witnessed the way these droids formed close relationships with their organic counterparts. Debuting in *The Rise of Skywalker*, D-O exhibited a previously unseen

potential for emotional depth from the trauma he'd survived while under the ownership of the dastardly Ochi of Bestoon. D-O's hesitation to accept affection from Rey suggested he'd been mistreated while in Ochi's service.

Nevertheless, Rey's kindness did not go unnoticed, as D-O gradually came to see that the Resistance bore no similarities to his murderous former owner. The courageous droid began to trust once again, even offering up important information on Exegol's location during a briefing on Ajan Kloss. D-O's bravery imparted a fresh perspective on the way droids process emotion and delivered a glimmer of hope for audience members who happened to be working to overcome their own traumas.

07

Turn Practice Into Progress

■ When Poe Dameron returned from the Sinta Glacier Colony with information vital to the Resistance's survival, flames ravaged the *Millennium Falcon* and tempers flared between the pilot and Rey. Poe expressed frustration that Rey, a mechanical genius who was strong in the Force, insisted on completing her training at the rebel base on Ajan Kloss rather than making a difference on the battlefield. Considering Rey's heroic history at Starkiller Base and on Snoke's flagship *Supremacy*, the young Jedi knew she could positively impact the fight, she simply hoped that learning under Leia's tutelage would make her even *more* valuable to the Resistance.

Of course, the news about Emperor Palpatine's resurrection changed everything, and Rey resolved to put her practice into action. The decision changed the course of the war, as Rey's leadership sent the *Falcon* and its occupants on a fateful journey that led to Palpatine's downfall. To be clear, Rey demonstrated both wisdom and responsibility in her quest to finish her training, but operating in the real world is sometimes the only way to master our capabilities and uncover our true potential.



06

With Friends, You Are Never Alone

■ As Rey prepared for a solo trip to Pasaana in the hope of discovering clues about a Sith wayfinder, Finn assured her that she would be making the journey, "Alone with friends." This clever statement said so much about Finn, as he clearly never even considered allowing his friend to embark on the dangerous assignment without support. Poe Dameron, Chewbacca, C-3PO, and BB-8 obviously agreed that, while Rey was perfectly capable of handling herself, the most arduous missions run smoother when one has allies at their side.



Rey's views on loyalty mirrored Finn's, and she did not hesitate to launch a perilous rescue mission once she realized that Chewbacca was alive and imprisoned aboard the Star Destroyer *Steadfast*. Poe and Finn voiced the same values when they released Chewie, much to the Wookiee's surprise. Even as Palpatine gloated that Rey faced him alone on Exegol, Rey's Resistance allies fought valiantly in the sky above, a redeemed Ben Solo was on the way to lend a hand, and generations of Jedi awaited Rey's call.

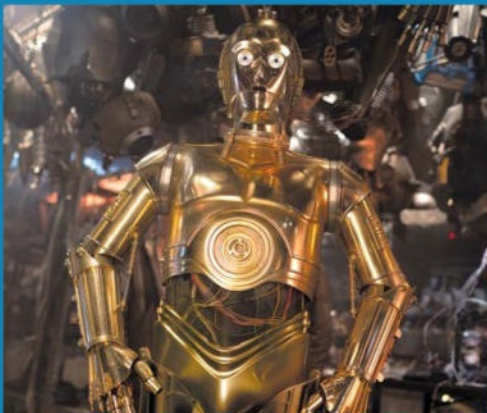
The most arduous missions run smoother when one has allies at their side.

05

Assert Your Feelings

■ Contrary to the Jedi Council's views at the time of the Republic's fall, letting others know how we feel is a key aspect of our development. To be fair to the Jedi, our own society often looks down on people who are open about their emotions. *The Rise of Skywalker* strikes back against this concept on multiple occasions. Before leaving for Pasaana, C-3PO admitted to R2-D2 that the astromech was his best friend. Additionally, the protocol droid spoke a heartfelt goodbye to his comrades as he prepared for Babu Frik to wipe his memory. Even Chewbacca, the mighty warrior who had lived through numerous conflicts, broke down in public due to his unending grief over Leia's passing.

In perhaps the most potent emotional display, Leia used all the strength she had left to call out to her son to guide him back to the light. The general fearlessly opened her heart, experiencing no shame in the love she had for him. On the precipice of change, Ben's grief-stricken conversation with an illusory Han Solo functioned as a catalyst that propelled him to denounce the darkness within him. Taken together, these examples confirm that there is no weakness or folly in sharing one's sentimental side.



We Are What We Grow Beyond

■ During a brief stand-off on the planet Kijimi, Zorii Bliss disclosed a startling secret about Poe Dameron's past to Rey and Finn. As it turns out, the respected Resistance leader and ace pilot had been a spice runner in his younger days. The occupation clearly carried an unwelcome stigma, as Poe's friends initially reacted with shock and disbelief. Considering the brutality exhibited on Kessel in *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), it is understandable why the galaxy might be distrustful of any occupation related to the spice trade.

However, Poe astutely pointed out that he was not the only one with an eyebrow-raising background. Finn rebelled against his training as a First Order stormtrooper, while Rey avoided living out the rest of her days as a Jakku scavenger. Unbeknownst to them at the time, Rey would also eventually go against her heritage as a Palpatine to defeat the Emperor. The lesson inherent in these revelations is two-fold: a questionable history does not automatically make someone an evil person, and we all possess the capability to improve ourselves and grow beyond our mistakes.

A questionable history does not always make someone an evil person.





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There Are More of Us

■ In dire times, the abundance of evil in our world can feel as if it outweighs the good by a significant margin. The Resistance surely felt this way during the Battle of Crait, when every call they sent out to request assistance in their struggle against the First Order went unanswered. As his squadron gradually succumbed to the Sith fleet's weapons above Exegol,

Poe Dameron surely felt an eerie parallel between that horrific scene and his previous experience at the rebel outpost on Crait. With the galaxy's future at stake, the Final Order appeared to be unstoppable.

But as Poe's despair reached its lowest point, Lando Calrissian and Chewbacca arrived with an armada of reinforcements drawn from countless worlds. The tide of the battle against the planet-killing Star Destroyers was turned, while the regular citizens crewing each vessel proved that they outnumbered the Emperor's nefarious forces. Evil may inspire a level of fear that renders the righteous hesitant to act, but decent individuals will eventually stand up for their beliefs once they realize they are not alone.

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No One's Ever Really Gone

■ Losing loved ones is perhaps the most difficult aspect of our mortal existence, and this also holds true for those living in the galaxy far, far away. Already an orphan, Rey endured even more heartbreak when Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Leia Organa each passed away in the sequel trilogy. Despite these trials, Rey carried the lessons she received from her adoptive family forward in her struggle against the Emperor. Remembering their words provided Rey with strength during the dramatic confrontation on Exegol, and Rey even proved



able to call upon the spirits of generations of fallen Jedi to help her in that moment. During her visit to Tatooine, Rey quite literally saw Leia and Luke's Force spirits smiling upon her choices.

Ben Solo's redemption provided two more examples of this concept, as Kylo Ren continued to grapple with having murdered his own father. Han may not have been a Force-user, but his memory lived

on in his son's mind and assisted Ben in his desire to toss away the darkness inside him. On a similar note, the cathartic scene revealed the fact that Ben Solo himself still resided within Kylo Ren. Neither Supreme Leader Snoke nor Emperor Palpatine could erase the good that had previously taken root in the son of Solo's heart, allowing the seed of light to blossom within Ben once again.

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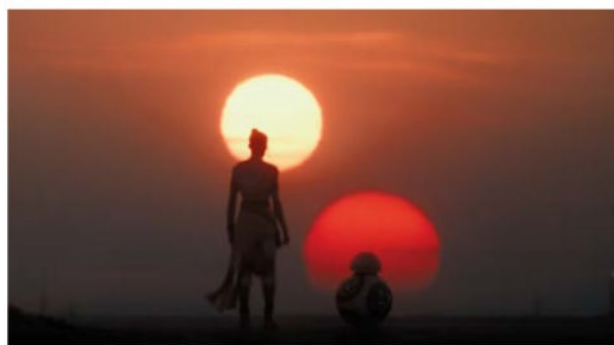
We Choose Our Own Paths

■ With all of the discussion surrounding Chosen Ones and destinies that has occurred in *Star Wars* lore, one might imagine that Leia and Luke would be hesitant about knowingly training a person from Emperor Palpatine's bloodline. Fortunately, the pair understood that Rey's family history did not predetermine her future. Leia's support never wavered, though Luke expressed concerns over his own abilities as a Jedi Master in the wake of his failure with Ben Solo.

As a result, Rey had the unique opportunity to study under both Skywalker twins, who helped prepare her for the final clash with her grandfather. Even after learning about her heritage, Rey opted to follow the light side, stand against Palpatine's evil, and bring the Emperor's reign to an

end. In a defining moment, Rey further rebuked her connection to Palpatine and chose to inherit the Skywalker name.

The same can be said of the actions taken by Finn and Jannah, who had their childhoods ripped away when the First Order abducted them from their families and indoctrinated them to serve as rank-and-file stormtroopers. When the moment came for them to do the First Order's murderous bidding, both Finn and Jannah elected to denounce the oppressive regime and rebel against its status quo. The duo went on to play leading roles in the Resistance's fight against the Sith. Without the contributions from free-willed individuals such as Rey, Finn, and Jannah, the Resistance could never have overcome the First Order or the Sith. 🙌



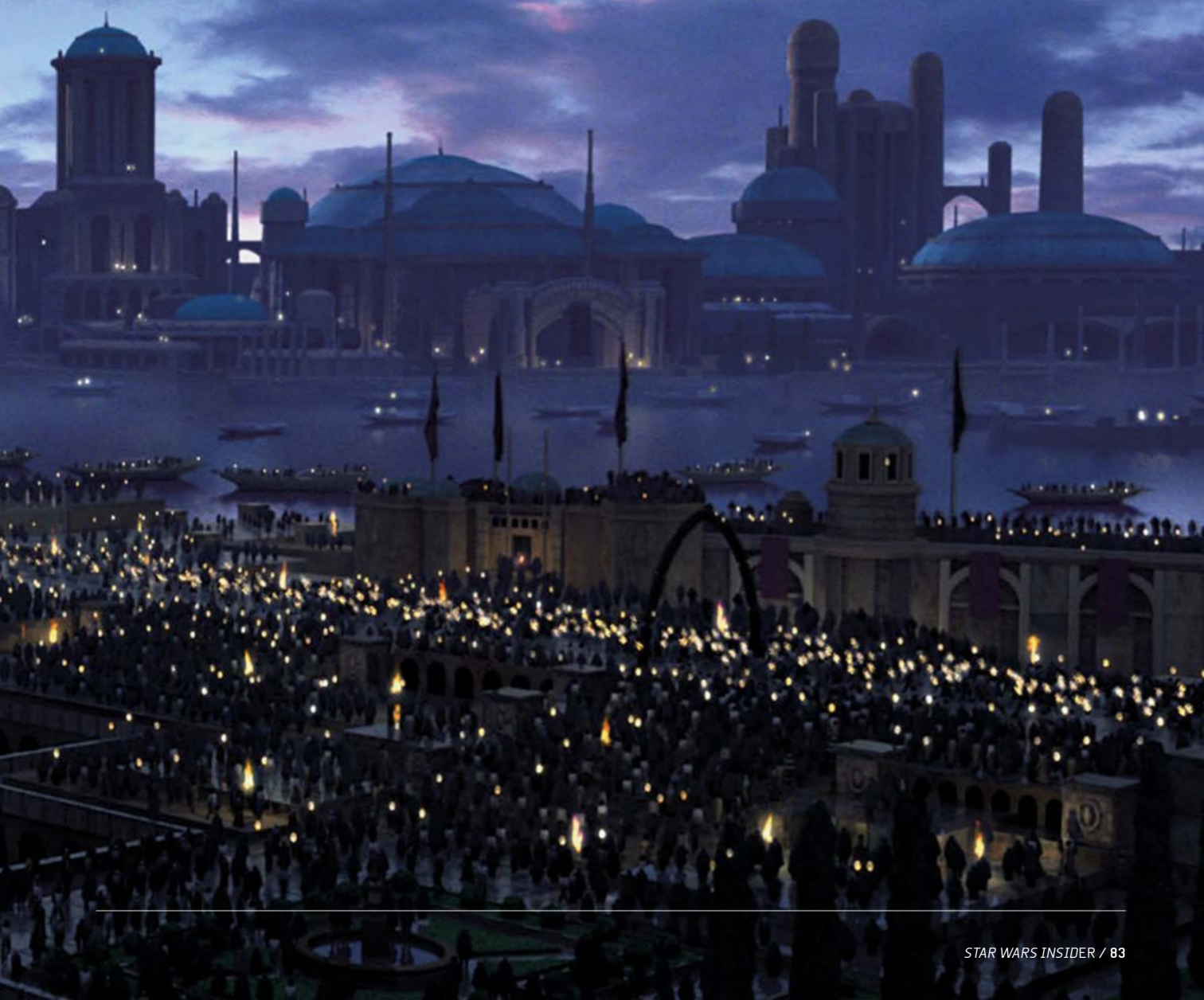




Painting the Galaxy

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

WORDS: JON D. WITMER



The Death Star's chasms. Bespin's Cloud City. The Ewoks' village in the trees of Endor.

The Gungans' home beneath the waters of Naboo. The starship graveyard of Jakku. The rain-soaked crags of Eadu. What could unite such disparate vistas?

From the beginning of the *Star Wars* saga through to its most recent big-screen installments, matte paintings have helped realize far-flung settings that dazzle the eyes and fuel the imagination. By the time George Lucas formed Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) to create the visual effects for the original *Star Wars*, multiple variations of the technique—which combines a live-action element with painted

scenery in order to create the illusion of a larger setting—had been developed and refined. The processes by which visual effects artists bring matte paintings to cinematic life would continue to be finessed over the course of the original trilogy and beyond, taking the paintings into the digital realm.

New Hope, Old Process

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

Based on his illustration portfolio, he was hired as a visual-effects storyboard artist at ILM. Before long, he was also building

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

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

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

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

models and assisting with the Dykstraflex camera that filmed those models on ILM's stage.

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

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

Harrison Ellenshaw was the head of Disney's matte

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

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

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

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

some 70 composites in total—that required the formation of a dedicated matte department within ILM. Ellenshaw returned to head the department, and was again joined by McQuarrie, who painted roughly half of the film's mattes. The department also added painter Michael Pangrazio, photographer Neil Krepela, and photography assistant Craig Barron to its team.

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

"Don Dow was the cameraman I was assisting, and he would turn the matte painting work that came to him over to me. I had an understanding of 2D, so it was

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

rather than being a secondhand duplicate, which would have increased contrast and grain.

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

Through A Glass, Brightly

While making *The Empire Strikes Back*, the art team made more extensive use of matte paintings than they did in *A New Hope*—

pretty easy for me to do matte camera tricks, like moving multi-plane shots in the Cloud City sequence. I also helped Craig and Mike with building miniatures they could use for reference. I could get them something that would work pretty quickly, and I think they appreciated that."

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

During the process the crew also made use of bi-packing as well as rear-projection. For the

ORIGINAL TRILOGY MATTE ARTISTS

Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope

Matte Artist P.S. [Harrison] Ellenshaw

Planet and Satellite Artist Ralph McQuarrie

Star Wars: Episode V The Empire Strikes Back

Matte Painting Supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw

Matte Artists: Ralph McQuarrie, Michael Pangrazio

Matte Photography Neil Krepela

Additional Matte Photography Michael Lawler

Matte Photography Assistants Craig Barron,

Robert Elswit

Matte Photography Consultant Stanley Sayer, BSC

Star Wars: Episode VI Return of the Jedi

Matte Painting Supervisor Michael Pangrazio

Matte Painting Artists Chris Evans, Frank Ordaz

Matte Photography Neil Krepela, Craig Barron

Matte Photography Consultant Stanley Sayer, BSC

PREQUEL TRILOGY MATTE ARTISTS

Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace

Digital Matte Artists Ronn Brown, Brian Flora, Caroleen Green, Jonathan Harb, Paul Huston, Bill Mather, Rick Rische, Mark Sullivan, Yusei Uesugi, Wei Zheng

Additional Matte Paintings Bill George

Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones

Digital Matte Sequence Supervisors Yusei

Uesugi, Paul Huston, Jonathan Harb

Digital Matte Artists Jett Green, Kent Matheson,

Mathieu Raynault, Masahiko Tani, Susumu

Yukuhiro, Toshiyuki Maeda, Brett Northcutt, Mark

Sullivan, Simon Wicker, Wei Zheng

Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith

Digital Matte Supervisor Jonathan Harb

Lead Digital Matte Artists Yanick Dusseault, Brett Northcutt

Digital Matte Artists Richard Bluff, Vanessa Cheung, Jeremy Cook, Max Dennison, Bryant Griffin, Christian Haley, Giles Hancock, Benjamin Huber, Paul Huston, Toshiyuki Maeda, Steve Matson, Yvonne Muinde, Martin Murphy, Joshua Ong, Kevin Page, Benoit Pelchat, David Shirk, Chris Stoski, Masahiko Tani, Johan Thorngren, Yusei Uesugi, Simon Wicker, Barry Williams, Susumu Yukuhiro, Wei Zheng

latter, the live-action plate was projected onto a piece of rear-screen material from behind the glass painting. And once again, certain shots were completed in the optical department, which is also where most of the complex shots were finalized.

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



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

Auto Matte And More

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

This time around, the matte department was working with the new Auto Matte system: "a track-mounted camera that was custom-built there at ILM," as Huston

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

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

explains. "It had standard 35mm and VistaVision movements, and a whole set of lenses, including an anamorphic [widescreen effect] lens so we could photograph the matte paintings for compositing with anamorphic elements."

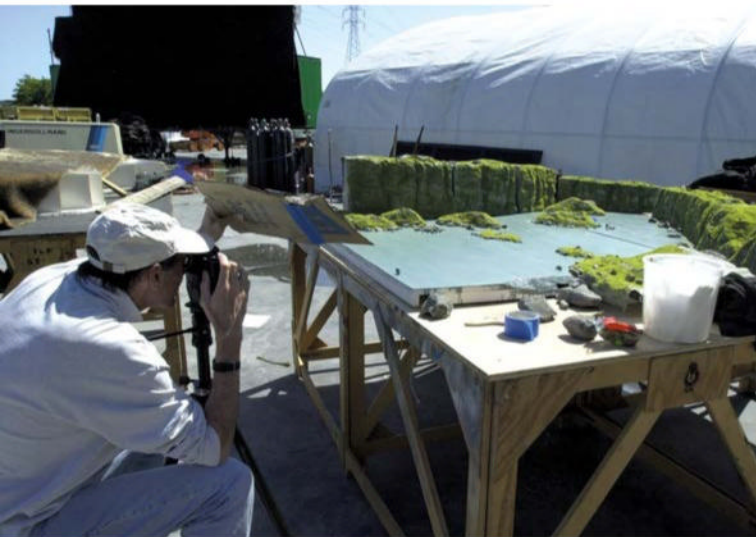
The Auto Matte featured two "carriages" on which matte paintings could be mounted, with each carriage capable of movement in three dimensions. Developed over a period of two years, the system had first been put through its paces on Steven Spielberg's *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and it proved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

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

hold-out matte, to create a plate featuring just the required area for live action, surrounded by black. They then rear-projected the plate for exposure with the hold-out matte, and then composited that pass with the Masonite painting, in which the area where the live-action element would play had in turn been painted black.

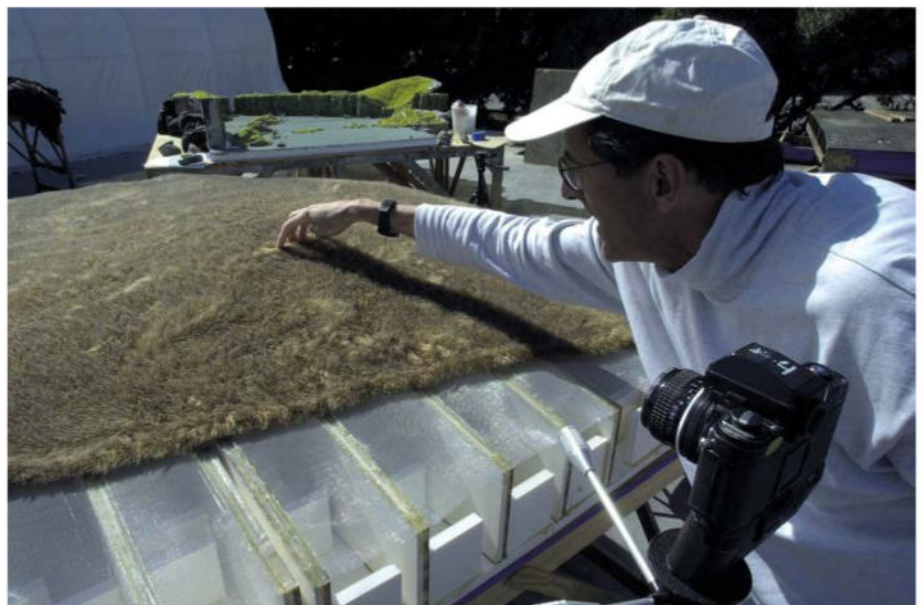
For the shot of C-3PO and R2-D2 in the foreground walking toward Jabba the Hutt's palace in the background, Pangrazio and his team turned to one of the earliest matte painting techniques: the "original negative," also known as the "latent image" or "held take" method. In this process, a glass sheet is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

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



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

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



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

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

Digital Inroads

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

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



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

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

Huston also continued to draw on his prior experience with

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

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

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



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

Into The Modern Era

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

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

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

As the prequel trilogy drew to a close with *Revenge of the Sith* (2005), the line between digital matte techniques and other CG



CANYON OF THE CRESCENT MOON

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

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

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

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

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

tricks became blurred, and this trend has continued through *The Force Awakens* (2015) and *Rogue One* (2016). "In reaction to the wide array of challenges under the group's purview, the digital matte department has since been renamed the 'generalists department,' because we do so many different things" Huston notes.

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

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

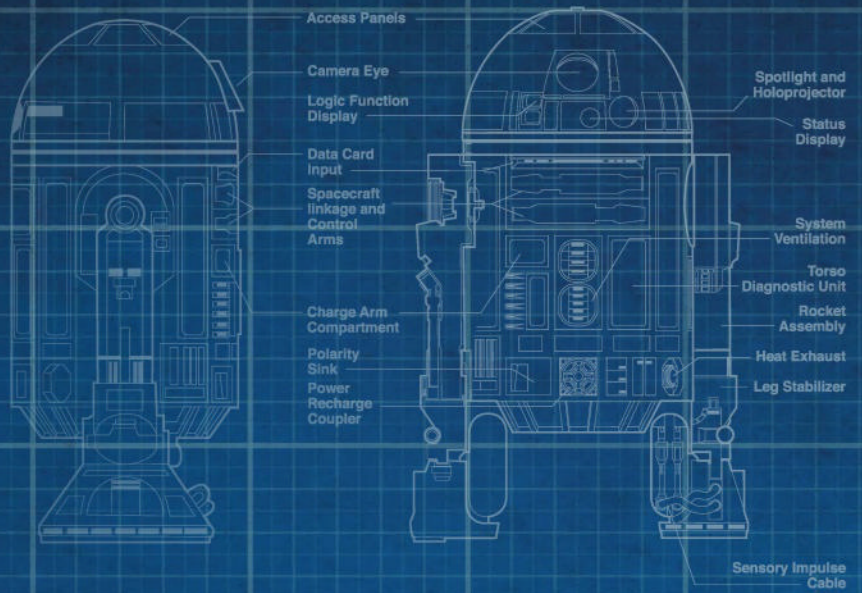
you can go off in a direction that leads to disaster."

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

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

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

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

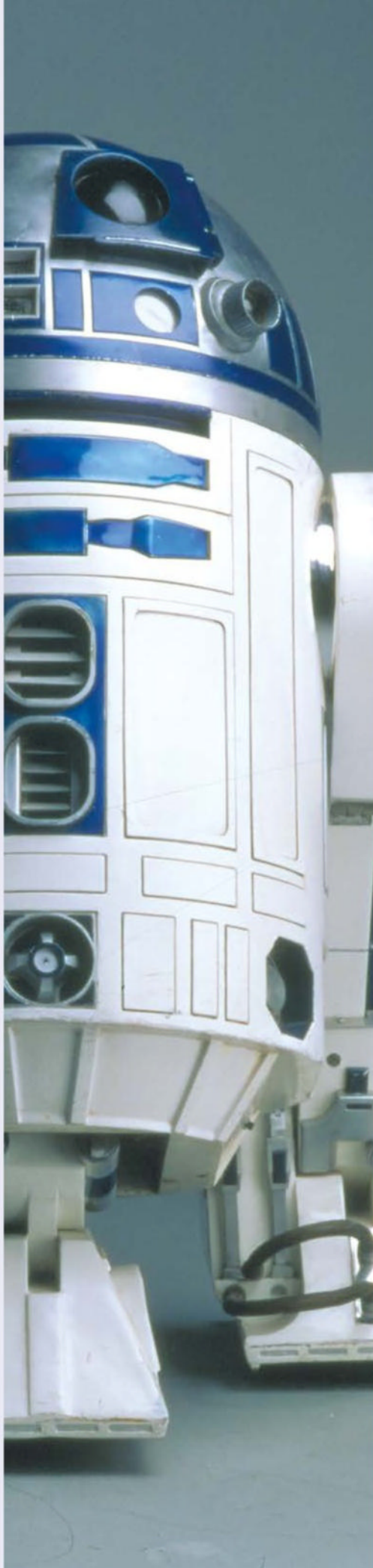


THE MAN WHO BUILT R2-D2!

LESLIE DILLEY

Turning concept sketches and designs into solid objects and real environments for a movie is the job of an art director and set decorator. Leslie Dilley, who fulfilled those roles on *Star Wars: A New Hope*, reflects on his part in creating movie history.

WORDS: PAT JANKIEWICZ



Two-time Academy Award-winning production designer and art director Leslie Dilley has overseen a great deal of onscreen destruction during his career. He's created earthquakes in Southern California for *Superman The Movie* (1978), caused traffic chaos in Piccadilly Circus for *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), facilitated an alien invasion in *Invaders From Mars* (1986), and helped destroy civilization as we know it in *Deep Impact* (1998). But it was his creative input as art director and set decorator on the original *Star Wars* film that has become instantly recognizable to generations of movie fans. In fact, the prolific art director's contribution to the iconic movie was officially recognized in 1978, when he was awarded the Best Art Decoration-Set Decoration Oscar for *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977).

Now a resident of the U.S.A., Dilley—who was born in the Rhondda Valley of South Wales, U.K. in 1941—spent his formative years learning his craft in and around London. An early apprenticeship led to him joining the art department of the prestigious Associated British Picture Corporation (which would later become EMI), where he worked as a freelance junior draughtsman during the 1960s at the legendary Elstree Studios. Little did the aspiring production designer know that, just over a decade later, he would be working at the studios again, on a project that would make cinematic history.

"*Star Wars* came my way in 1975, when I was serving as assistant art director under [production designer] John Barry on *Lucky Lady* (1975), a big Burt Reynolds movie for 20th Century Fox that we were making in Mexico," explains Dilly. "The writers on that movie were Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, who were good friends with George Lucas, and they recommended he use John Barry for *Star Wars*. That's how it happened—John took the job, and I became the art director on the film.

"My work entailed being responsible for everything visual, everything you saw on the screen, apart from the actors," Dilley says. As such, the art director had a direct hand in creating the worn and lived-in look that has become familiar to fans of the *Star Wars* galaxy, and defines it to this day.

In The Beginning

Although *A New Hope* would break new ground in the movie-making arena, both in terms of box-office success and its influence on the sci-fi and fantasy genres, in the early days of production it was a case of all hands on deck for the handful of personnel initially drafted onto the crew, ►



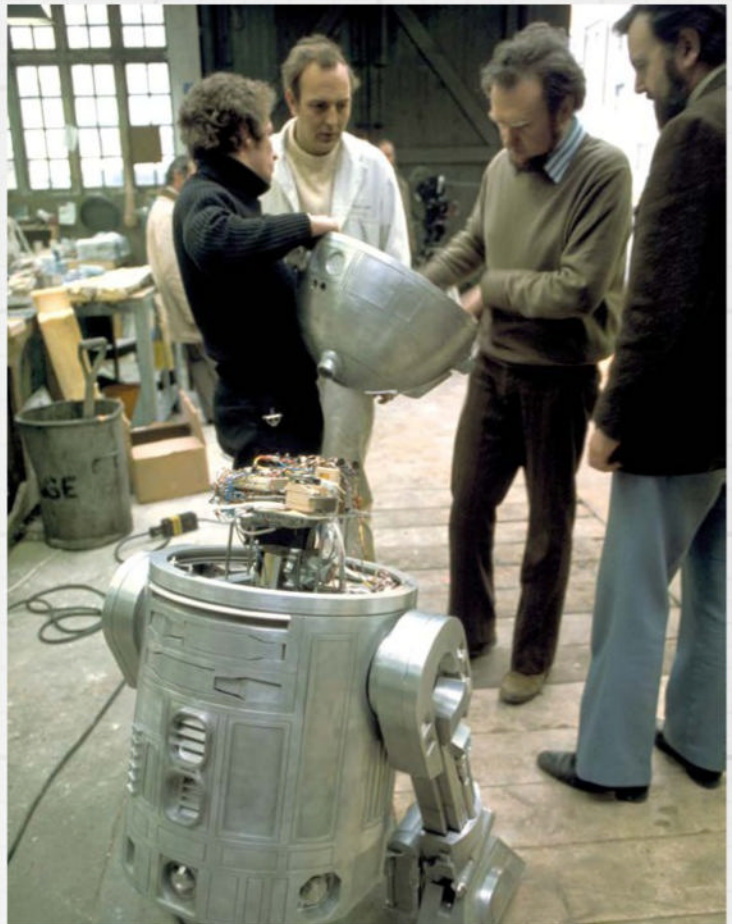
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► and Dilley soon found himself heavily involved in the development of the picture. “The only production people working on the movie at the beginning were John Barry, myself, and a guy named Roger Christian, who went on to become a film director himself,” Dilley says of the film’s humble beginnings. “There was nobody else—just George Lucas, [producer] Gary Kurtz, and the three of us, and we delivered it all from scratch!”

Lucas and his band of filmmakers settled on North West London as their base of operations from which to bring their epic vision to the big screen, and it saw Dilley return to the stomping ground of his youth. “We were trying to get [the project] off the ground in a place called Lee International Film Studios on Kensal Road, London,” he recalls. “That’s where we developed R2-D2, C-3PO, and Luke Skywalker’s landspeeder. We were also joined by Norman Reynolds, who was doing C-3PO. Norman and I were co-art directors on *Star Wars*.”

Reminiscing on how Luke’s iconic vehicle came together, Dilley recalls that, “The

“Artoo was developed straight from the drawing board.”



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"I said, 'You've got this job on *Star Wars*, Kenny, and you've got to do it!' To which he replied, 'But we're on *Opportunity Knocks*!'"

landspeeder was a joint effort between all of us. We made this full-size mock-up of it, which George said was much too big. So we cut it down by a third, and that's the lovely little thing you see in the movie."

But Luke's memorable hot rod wasn't the only iconic mode of *Star Wars* transport that Dilley had a hand in creating. "I drafted the plans for the Jawa sandcrawler that you see on Tatooine, and went out to Tunisia with a construction crew to put it up," he reveals. "We put it together in this dried-up salt lake there. The sandcrawler was a really huge set: 120 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 40 feet high."

01 Leslie Dilley (left) with production designer John Barry (right).

02 Dilley's team working on the remote control R2-D2 prop.

03 Actor Kenny Baker enjoying lunch in his R2-D2 costume.

Droid Detail

Perhaps Dilley's biggest challenge was realizing the plucky little astromech droid who would go on to become one of the best-loved characters in the entire saga. "I ended up building R2-D2, which was essentially based on Ralph McQuarrie's illustrations. Artoo was developed straight from the drawing board," says Dilley. "We started out with a cardboard drum, added cardboard arms, and then tried to walk it. It took months to make the whole thing, and we actually came up with different versions of him."

Eventually, Dilley and the team came to the conclusion that the little droid would work most efficiently if he was being operated by someone inside the prop. Of the different versions created during the design and building process, Dilley explains that, "One Artoo-Detoo was built so that a small man could stand inside, and another so that he could waddle, but we could never get one where he could simply walk around in it, because there was never enough room for leg movement! The legs of the person we needed to pilot it would have to be very short."

Dilley realized he needed to find an appropriately sized actor to play the droid. "To find our Artoo-Detoo, we searched everywhere in England for little people," he says. "We brought in some actors who we thought would work, but many of them just weren't strong enough." To operate the prop manually would require an actor with a lot of stamina, as Dilley elaborates. "They had to get inside this thing and walk in it enough to make it waddle around."

After much searching, the team finally discovered their perfect R2-D2 in the form of British actor, Kenny Baker. "We eventually found Kenny, who really did a great job. Kenny had a performing partner named Jack Purvis, who was also in the movie—at that time they were working as a musical double act, playing the xylophone and drums."

For a worrying time, however, it looked as though the production team were in danger of losing their dream droid. "Kenny and Jack were on a show called *Opportunity Knocks*, which was a popular TV talent show in the U.K. at the time," remembers Dilley. "They were going through the rounds of the competition, and were really close to getting somewhere in it, and I sensed Kenny was wavering on *Star Wars*."

"I said, 'You've got this job on *Star Wars*, Kenny, and you've got to do it!' To which he replied, 'But we're on *Opportunity Knocks*!' It took a lot of persuading, but I finally got him to do this Artoo-Detoo thing." ▶

► Dagobah Days

As technology progressed and advances enabled the R2-D2 props to be remotely controlled more reliably, by the time *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) rolled around Dilley found himself working with Baker less and less often. But, as he explains, the actor was still a pivotal part of the team, and essential in imbuing the droid with individuality. “Kenny wasn’t in every single shot—like he pretty much was on the first film—but he was very important to the character.

“For example, he did all of the stuff on the bog planet of Dagobah, where Yoda was teaching Luke Skywalker the power of the Force. In one scene, Artoo was standing on the side of the swamp, and we wanted him to be reacting to what was going on in a big way. We wanted personality in that reaction shot from this droid—this machine—and the way to do that was to put Kenny Baker inside, bringing his personal movements into it. Kenny was great for stuff like that.”

Speaking of Dagobah, if there’s one place in the galaxy to which Dilley would happily never return, it’s Yoda’s swamp planet home.

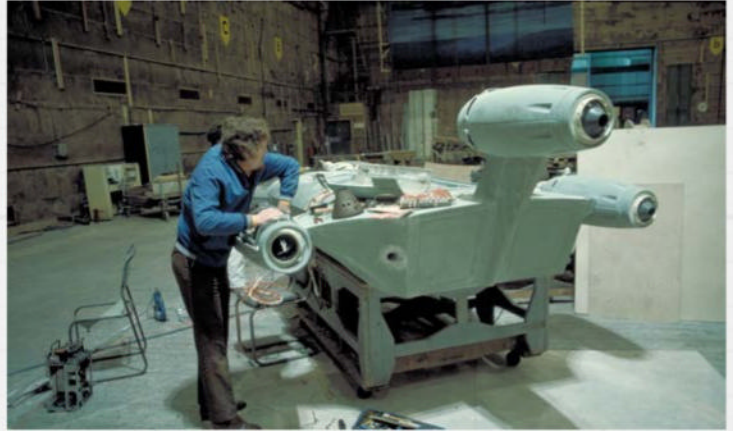
“I remember that place well, because it played host to one of my most embarrassing moments ever in the motion-picture business,” he confesses with a sheepish grin. “I was putting Artoo’s head on Kenny Baker, and polishing it up. I finished what I was doing and said, ‘You’re okay, Kenny!’, took one step backwards—and fell up to my waist into the slimy water! It was all set and ready for filming, beautiful, and so the whole crew wanted to shoot me! I have to admit, it was pretty embarrassing.”

Dilley’s time on *The Empire Strikes Back* was a bittersweet experience to some extent, as the film’s original production designer (and Dilley’s mentor) John Barry tragically passed away during filming. Norman Reynolds took over as production designer, and Dilley became

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04 Building Luke’s landspeeder at Lee International Film Studios in London.

05 The landspeeder takes shape.

06 The art department: (L-R) Roger Christian, Leslie Dilley, John Barry, Bill Welch, and Norman Reynolds.



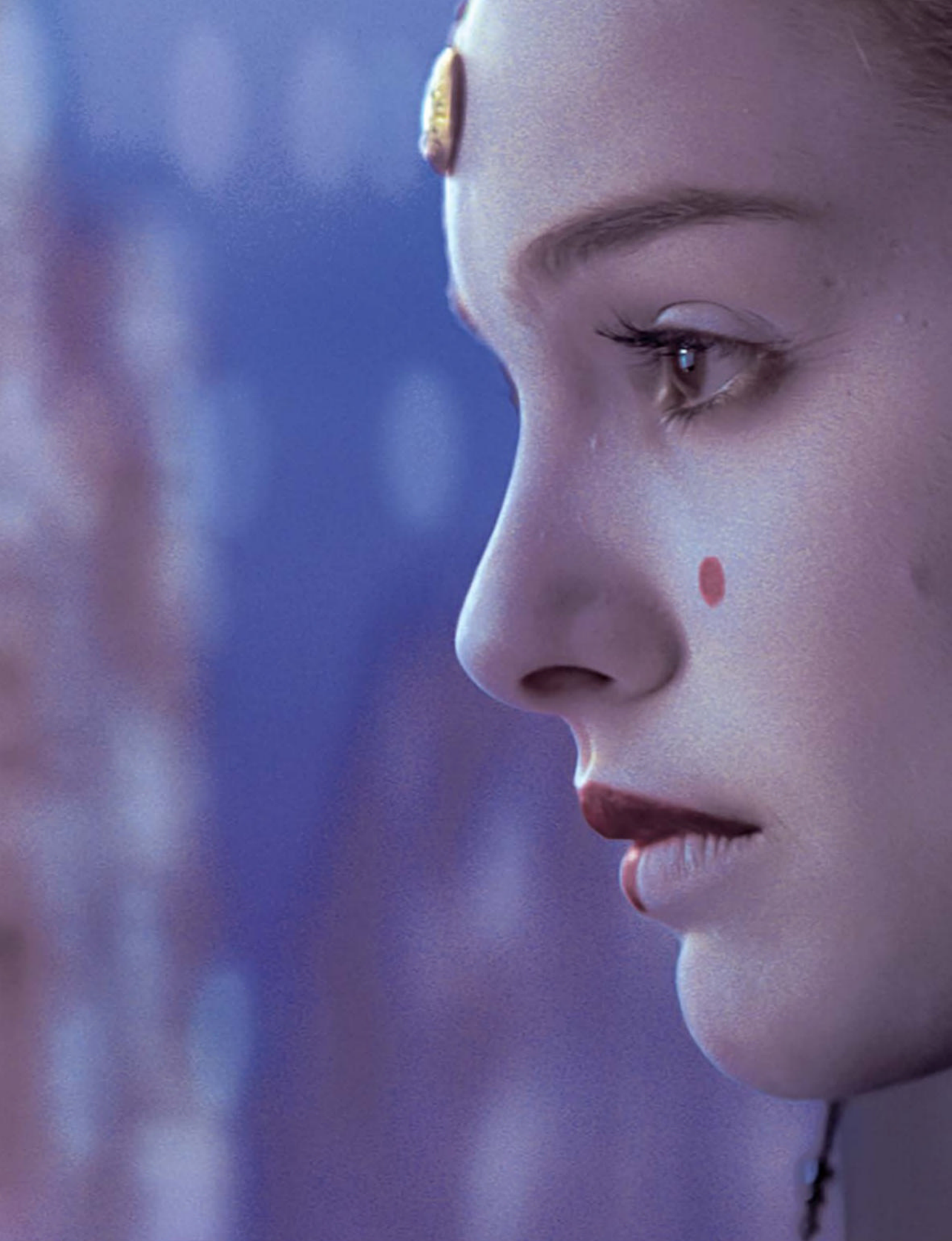
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“The whole crew wanted to shoot me!”

his art director. The shoot wasn’t without its challenges—but this time, it was nothing to do with budgets or uncooperative droids. “I was going to Norway to start preparing the sets for the Hoth sequences, but when they came to take me to the airport, I was so ill, I couldn’t go,” says Dilley. “I was really sick with a bad throat, and I was choking and could hardly breathe. When I finally got well, Norman said, ‘I can’t send you out there to Norway, Les. If anything happened to you, I would be in real trouble!’ So I stayed back and helped Norman out.”

Having worked with many stellar directors including James Cameron and Steven Spielberg, Dilley—who still works as a production designer and art director in the industry at age 78—has fond memories of his involvement with the *Star Wars* saga, and of its creator. “I worked with George Lucas closely on the shooting of that movie,” he says in conclusion, “and I found him to be a terrific, friendly guy with a great eye for filming.” 🌌





The Perils of Padmé

For E.K. Johnston, relating the adventures of Padmé Amidala in two smash hit novels has been a dream come true. *Star Wars Insider* asks how the author combined galactic and teenage drama through the lens of a galaxy far, far away....

WORDS: JAMES FLOYD

What do we really know of Padmé Amidala? She became the Queen of Naboo at 14 years old.

She grew to become a capable and dedicated Republic senator, standing up for its values against those wanting to see it torn apart during the Clone Wars. Before becoming Anakin Skywalker's wife and mother to Luke and Leia, Padmé was an inspiration to an entire galaxy—and to countless fans on planet Earth. But did we ever *really* know her?

Over the course of two novels—2019's *Star Wars: Queen's Shadow* and the 2020 follow-up *Star Wars: Queen's Peril*—author E.K. Johnston sought to explore

every facet of the character while adding greater depth to those who surrounded and supported her. While *Queen's Shadow* revolved around events between *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999) and *Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Queen's Peril* went back in time to reveal an earlier chapter in Padmé's life as she stepped into the role of queen. We also learned more about the girls who became her bodyguards, spies, confidants, and wardrobe attendants—the queen's brave handmaidens.

Star Wars Insider spoke to Johnston, who also wrote the *New York Times* bestseller *Star Wars: Ahsoka*, shortly before the new novel was published to find out how *Queen's Peril* adds new layers to Padmé's complex life story. ►

► “The story picks up the morning of Padmé’s election, and she hasn’t even met the girls who will become her handmaidens yet,” the author explains. “The ‘team’ is in a very, very early form. Captain Panaka has a vague plan of what he wants to do to ensure the new queen’s safety, but even he has no idea what’s going to happen once the girls take matters into their own hands. There are definitely some egos in play, as the handmaidens are all pretty self-assured to start off with. It was super fun for me to write each of them as they try to figure each other out,” adds Johnston with a smile.

In *The Phantom Menace*, Sabé was the trusted handmaiden who took on the guise of the queen

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“Every now and then, someone’s inner teen girl came out, that’s for sure.”



THE QUEEN'S HANDS

Writing about Padmé, both in *Queen's Peril* and earlier in *Queen's Shadow*, were dream projects for Johnston. “It’s no secret that I really, really like these characters,” she shares. Even before she wrote *Ahsoka*, she had Amidala on her mind. “When I put together my shot-in-the-dark proposal for a *Star Wars* Project, it was a trilogy called *The Queen's Hands*. That was in December of 2014, so obviously a few of the plot points have moved around, but I was happy to get most of the highlights into *Queen's Peril*, plus a few extras that I came up with for *Queen's Shadow*.”

to protect Padmé when the Trade Federation mounted their invasion of Naboo, but in *Queen's Peril* Sabé is a character less willing to take center stage. “Sabé was so used to playing second fiddle that she’d stopped seeking the spotlight,” says Johnston, who laid in backstory for each of the handmaidens to further define them as individuals. “Rabé’s general plan was to scam her way through school and then see what happened afterward. Eirtaé had being misunderstood down to a fine art, while Yané was perfectly happy to never be noticed. Saché had given up on waiting for someone to notice her altogether. When the chance to work for the planetary government came along, they all jumped at the opportunity before having quite thought through the landing.”

At various points in the narrative, Johnston took the opportunity to show how Panaka recruited each of the teens, showing up wherever they happened to be to tell them they had useful and unique skills, before offering each of them a job that he couldn’t tell them anything about until they agreed to take it! Despite their varied motivations, they all answered the call. “Honestly, it never occurred

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01 Padmé abandoned her disguise to win the trust of the Gungans in *The Phantom Menace* (1999).

02 The simple handmaidens' attire rendered them all-but invisible beside the majesty of the queen.

03 The decoy "Queen" with Padmé (Natalie Portman) in disguise.

04 The young queen's loyal handmaidens were her constant companions.

to them that they couldn't," Johnston confides. "Every one of the girls is exceptional, at least a little bit unconventional, and looking for a challenge. They were used to pushing themselves, and this opportunity was irresistible to them, even if they were reluctant to admit it to themselves."

More than Decoys

While Captain Panaka was the one who brought the team together, it was up to Padmé to decide how to utilize the newly formed unit, and what she had in mind was quite different from what her security chief had envisioned. More than simply decoys and bodyguards, the group of young women became a Swiss Army knife of talents and skills in service to the queen. But like any team, their personalities had to be balanced. "When it came to getting the girls to work together, I had to walk a fine line between not making everything too full of drama but not making their relationships too easy," says



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Johnston. "Fortunately, teen girls basically live on that line, 24/7."

While wrestling with personality clashes, Johnston's characters also had to work against a political backdrop, which was a mix she enjoyed playing with. "They're all professionals, so the fun part was keeping the political stuff low key while the personal stuff was all way too much. For better and for worse, Padmé was the perfect model for that. She's great at doing her job, but as soon as her personal life comes

into play? Well, we've all seen those movies," Johnston laughs.

The handmaidens weren't the only ones whose differences had a bearing on the story, as Johnston explains. "Padmé was much, much more flexible than Panaka. She was willing to fiddle with the group dynamics and see who shakes out where. Panaka would be infinitely more comfortable if everyone could just be nice and predictable all the time. Their biggest challenge was each other, and their compromise was, eventually, that Padmé would tell him when she was going to try something off-book. By the time the Trade Federation showed up, Padmé trusted the girls with her life, and Panaka trusted them with her life, too." ▶

"Every one of the girls is exceptional, at least a little bit unconventional, and looking for a challenge."



QUEEN'S PERIL

DISNEY LUCASFILM PRESS, 2020

When fourteen-year-old Padmé Naberrie wins the election for Queen of Naboo, she takes the name Amidala and leaves her family to rule from the Royal Palace in the capital of Theed. At a time of brewing uncertainty for Naboo and the Galactic Republic, she and her security advisor, Captain Panaka, devise a plan for the queen's safety: the recruitment of multiple handmaidens. These handmaidens will be her aides, confidants, protectors, and even decoys. Each young woman is selected by Panaka for her particular talents, but it is up to Padmé to unite them as a group. Different though they may be, the handmaidens learn to work together in service of the one goal they all share: to protect the queen at all costs. But when their peaceful world is invaded by the ambitious Trade Federation, Queen Amidala and her brave handmaidens will face their greatest test—of themselves and of each other.



QUEEN'S SHADOW

DISNEY LUCASFILM PRESS, 2019

When Padmé Amidala steps down from her position as Queen of Naboo, she is ready to set aside her title and return to life out of the spotlight. But to her surprise, the new queen asks Padmé to continue serving their people, this time in the Galactic Senate. Padmé is unsure about the new role but cannot turn down the request, especially since, thanks to her dearest friend—and decoy—Sabé, she can be in two places at once. So while Padmé plunges into politics, Sabé sets off on a mission dear to Padmé's heart.

On the glistening capital planet Coruscant, Padmé's new Senate colleagues regard her with curiosity—and with suspicion for her role in ousting the previous chancellor. Posing as a merchant on Tatooine, Sabé has fewer resources than she thought and fewer options than she needs. Together with Padmé's loyal handmaidens, Padmé and Sabé must navigate treacherous politics, adapt to constantly changing landscapes, and forge a new identity beyond the queen's shadow.

► The Trade Federation invasion leads to the queen's adventures on Tatooine and Coruscant, as told in *The Phantom Menace*, but *Queen's Peril* allowed Johnston the opportunity to reveal what was happening on Naboo while she was gone, only hinted at in the movie. In fact, the author was itching to write an off-screen scene with Governor Sio Bibble that would add additional meaning to a key sequence in the film.

"That was so much fun," Johnston enthuses. "The Battle of Naboo is probably one of my favorite parts of *Star Wars* ever, and getting to write about and round out the occupation was a real gift. I love it when the good guys stand up to evil, and I got to do so much of that in this book. As you can imagine, I spent quite a bit of time re-watching *The Phantom Menace* to get details right. I live for those kinds of shenanigans. Ask me about the handmaidens' deployment during the battle sometime, I dare you!" she laughs.

The Origin Story

When it came to hitting on the right concept for her new Padmé adventure, Johnston struck gold with what seems like an unlikely source of inspiration, coming up with the idea while on a panel at *Star Wars* Celebration Chicago in 2019. "I said I really wanted to send them to a Backstreet Boys concert," laughs the author. "That might sound like a weird reason to write a *Star Wars* book, but there was something about these smart,

talented girls getting thrown into some awkward social situations where they have to balance their responsibilities, their interpersonal relationships, and hormones. It was just too good an idea to pass up."

Setting the new story prior to the events of *The Phantom Menace* meant that Johnston would have to take the characters she'd fleshed out in *Queen's Shadow* and dial their clocks back several years. How hard was it to dig into the past for each of her handmaidens? Johnston describes the process as, "A little intimidating! I knew where they were all going to end up, once they had decided what they were going



05

06





to be, so I had targets that I needed each of them to hit. Then I just had to convince them to do it. Delving into what made each girl unique and what made her special to the queen's service was a lot of fun."

Besides Padmé's initially difficult working relationship with Captain Panaka, there were new relationship dynamics going on between the queen and her handmaidens, all of whom were new to their roles. They had to get along with each other in close quarters and do their jobs, but "every now and then, someone's inner teen girl came out, that's for sure," says Johnston. "It's a study of contrasts, because on the one hand everyone is highly competent, but on the other it's a disaster waiting to happen. And sometimes actively happening. For Sabé particularly, the decision to be selfless was constant, difficult, but something she'd do in a heartbeat, every time."

No Ordinary Teen

There are many Young Adult novels with teenage protagonists, but Padmé's situation was quite different from that of an ordinary teen,

"By the time the Trade Federation showed up, Padmé trusted the girls with her life, and Panaka trusted them with her life, too."

going through a tumultuous period in life while taking on the responsibilities of becoming the queen of an entire planet. "On the bright side, no one was going to tell her she had to eat her vegetables," jokes Johnston. "Young Adult fiction is quite tongue-in-cheek about getting the parents out of the way and allowing the kids to 'Get Up To Things' unsupervised. Being able to do it without orphaning anyone was great."

Talking of parental figures, Padmé had to learn to rely on the judgment of her security chief, Captain Panaka—but she was also the elected queen, ready to lead her planet's government, and this led to a minor power tussle between the two.

"The hard part was pitting Padmé and Panaka against one another without shortchanging

either of them," says Johnston.

"They have drastically different approaches to problem solving, but in having them learn to work together I had the opportunity to show natural character growth."

Writing within this period of the *Star Wars* galaxy's history was also a big draw for Johnston, as Episode I holds a very special place in her heart. "The first time I saw *The Phantom Menace*, I was completely overwhelmed," Johnston enthuses. "I thought we were never going to get another *Star Wars*, and then we got it, and it was beautiful. The sets, the costumes, the effects, everything! I've never stopped loving it. I think that's part of what made writing this book so much fun. *The Phantom Menace* was the first *Star Wars* movie that felt like it was mine. And I got to write around it!" 🤖

05 The queen's handmaidens were involved in pivotal moments in galactic affairs.

06 Queen Padmé Amidala considers her options on the eve of invasion.

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Resistance Revisited

*Insider's episode-by-episode guide to **Star Wars Resistance** Season One.*

WORDS: KRISTIN BAVER

O

n the *Colossus*, a forgotten refueling platform on Castilon—a watery planet perched on the edge of the Outer Rim—there are no Jedi Knights or Galactic Senates, no Sith Lords to challenge or Force-wielders to

maintain peace, just regular people like the simple shell-folk keeping the engines running, and mechanics who dare to dream of becoming racers.

Star Wars Resistance, the latest in a more than 10-year run of *Star Wars* animated series, shines a light on a different kind of hero, telling the story of Kazuda Xiono, a former pilot in the New Republic Navy who gives it all up to become a spy for the Resistance cause. Set 30 years after *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983), and six months before the events of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), Season One reveals a glimpse of how the First Order gets a foothold on Castilon and takes us to the brink of the devastation reaped by Starkiller Base.

Whether you're just discovering the series for the first time or planning to rewatch it ahead of the premiere of Season Two later this year, here's everything you need to know about the story of *Star Wars Resistance* so far!

EPISODES 1-2

The Recruit

DIRECTED BY STEWARD LEE AND SAUL RUIZ
 STORY BY DAVE FILONI | TELEPLAY BY BRANDON AUMAN

■ When we first meet Kazuda Xiono, he's a cocky New Republic pilot on a mission to deliver important intel to Poe Dameron. But because this is *Star Wars*, that mission quickly goes awry, and young Kaz ends up aboard a Resistance ship where he's given the chance to spy for the cause led by General Leia Organa. The information he's delivered confirms the worst fears of the Resistance leaders—the First Order is planning a devastating attack on the New Republic, and it's up to Kaz to help discover the truth.

Stationed on the *Colossus* platform, a refueling station protected by the wily racers known as the Aces, Kaz is on his own for the first time in his life, trying to prove himself as both a pilot and a spy, with some help from BB-8 and his new friends: Jarek Yeager, the grizzled owner of the garage where Kaz is posing as a hapless mechanic; Neeku Vozo, an excitable Nikto who is trusting, kind-hearted, and takes people a little too literally at their word; and Tam Ryvora, a tough and hardworking technician who has dreams of becoming a pilot in her own right.



EPISODE 3

The Triple Dark

DIRECTED BY SERGIO PAEZ
 WRITTEN BY KEVIN BURKE AND CHRIS "DOC" WYATT

■ As he settles into his new life, Kaz tries to prove himself as an asset to Yeager's team. But while his new friend Neeku seems to accept him as he is, Tam is quite vocal about her skepticism.

When a Triple Dark storm brings the pirate Kragan Gorr and his gang to their door, Kaz and BB-8 work together to save the platform. But upon retreating, Kragan reports back to a familiar First Order leader—Captain Phasma.

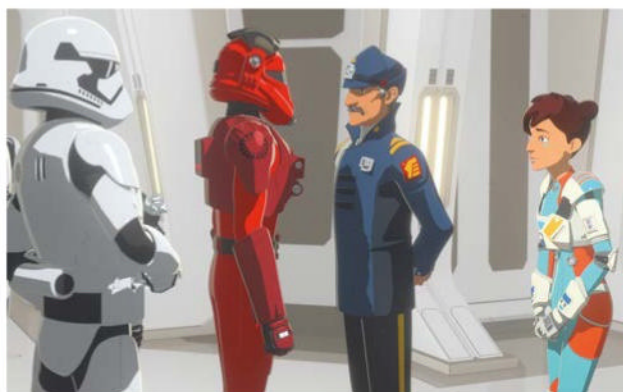
EPISODE 4

Fuel for the Fire

DIRECTED BY BOSCO NG WRITTEN BY EUGENE SON

■ Kaz makes a new friend in aspiring pilot Jace Rucklin, a troublesome young man who idolizes Yeager from his days as a hot-shot Rebel Alliance pilot.

After a friendly speeder bike race ends in disaster, Rucklin pressures Kaz into letting him into Yeager's garage to see his racer. But once inside, Rucklin pockets some rare and volatile hyperfuel from Yeager's stash, with plans to use it to win the next race. The results are more than a little explosive.



EPISODE 5

The High Tower

DIRECTED BY STEWARD LEE WRITTEN BY STEPHANY FOLSOM

■ The First Order threat becomes more pervasive, as does the class disparity between the average inhabitants of the platform and the elite living in Doza Tower. When the power cuts out, a freighter carrying fuel brings the First Order's Major Vonreg to Captain Doza's door.

Elsewhere, when the famed Rodian racer Hype Fazon invites Tam and Kaz to visit the prestigious Aces' Lounge, it leads to Kaz's first spy mission inside the secure area. He barely escapes getting caught sneaking around Doza Tower, where the Aces enjoy the best foods and other amenities while relaxing between competitions and security details.

Kaz still hasn't quite gotten the hang of spying, and it's only through the kindness of precocious racer Torra Doza, the daughter of the platform's captain, that he escapes First Order detection.

NEW RECRUITS

Meet the heroes of *Star Wars Resistance*, in the words of the actors who portray them:

Kazuda Xiono

VOICED BY CHRISTOPHER SEAN

Former ace New Republic pilot turned Resistance spy, this son of a wealthy Hosnian Prime senator goes undercover on the *Colossus*, posing as a hapless mechanic. "Kaz is just living out those simple mistakes that we make in life," reveals Christopher Sean, of his character's attempts to fit into his new career. "He's so much fun. He's good at flying, but he's not really good at spying."

Neeku Vozo

VOICED BY JOSH BRENER

A brilliant mechanic, this kind-hearted and trustworthy Nikto soon becomes firm friends with Kaz. "Neeku is this unbelievably positive, happy, wonderful, sweet character," says Josh Brener. "I love that he is infectiously positive. No matter what kind of day you're having, Neeku is having a great day. No matter how bad things are going, he is going to cheer everybody up and make you smile."

Jarek Yeager

VOICED BY SCOTT LAWRENCE

The owner of the *Fireball* and a grizzled former Rebel Alliance pilot, Yeager now lives a quiet life as a mechanic on the *Colossus* platform—until Kaz shows up. "Yeager's a strong guy," says Scott Lawrence, who voices the father figure Tam and Kaz look up to. "He's been through the wars, he's been through the fights. He's been a pilot, and now he wants to rest. There's a lot Yeager wants to forget."

Tam Ryvora

VOICED BY SUZIE MCGRATH

A brave and gifted mechanic and wannabe pilot striving to make her way in the world, Tam isn't Kaz's biggest fan when he first arrives on the platform. "She doesn't see Kaz as a threat, but more of a pain," Suzie McGrath says of the pair's sibling rivalry. "She's a young woman who wants to have a better life. She has dreams, but it's a tough road to achieve those dreams."

Torra Doza

VOICED BY MYRNA VELASCO

Daring Ace pilot and daughter of station operator Captain Doza, the energetic and optimistic Torra is a key personality on the *Colossus*. "[Kaz and Torra] are both trying to figure out the world, so they relate to each other," says Myrna Velasco of her character. "She keeps everyone positive. She's the little sister everyone loves."



EPISODE 6

The Children from Tehar

DIRECTED BY SAUL RUIZ WRITTEN BY PAUL GIACOPPO

■ We begin to understand the destruction caused by Kylo Ren and his First Order forces when Kaz stumbles upon Kel and Eila, two children with a sizable bounty on their heads. Captain Phasma claims she is trying to return the pair to their family, but Kaz soon learns the chilling truth: They have no home to return to because everyone and everything in their village on Tehar was destroyed by the First Order, leaving them as the only survivors. Through a clever deception, and with the help of the slow-moving but quite brilliant Chelidae shell-folk on the engineering level, the children escape the First Order's grasp.

EPISODE 8

Synara's Score

DIRECTED BY BOSCO NG WRITTEN BY GAVIN HIGHLIGHT

■ Still loyal to pirate and Warbird gang leader, Kragan Gorr, when Synara discovers that the *Colossus'* air-defense weapons are inoperable, she leaks the information to Gorr so he and his crew can launch a full-scale attack on the platform. When Synara meets Tam, the two young women realize they're not so different from one another. Tam had hopes of being a racer like her father, but instead she's stuck trying to make the accident-prone *Fireball* flightworthy.

When the pirates attack, Tam rushes to Synara's side while Kaz and Yeager team up to finish repairs that will make the platform's weapons system fully operational once more. But the gap in their defenses has weakened Captain Doza's arguments against agreeing to First Order protection of the *Colossus*, which results in Commander Pyre arriving to oversee negotiations.



EPISODE 7

Signal from Sector Six

DIRECTED BY SERGIO PAEZ
WRITTEN BY BRANDON AUMAN

■ A rendezvous between Kaz and Poe Dameron is interrupted by a distress call emanating from a freighter recently decimated by a pirate attack. When they investigate, the pair is set upon by a gaggle of loose Kowakian monkey-lizards and a terrifying, muscle-bound Kowakian ape, but they manage to escape and rescue a lone survivor, a Mirialan named Synara San, who they bring back to the *Colossus*.

Synara, however, isn't what she seems. Far from an innocent victim, she is merely the luckiest of the pirate gang sent to ransack the freighter.



EPISODE 9

The Platform Classic

DIRECTED BY STEWARD LEE WRITTEN BY KEVIN BURKE AND CHRIS "DOC" WYATT

■ Despite Yeager's best efforts to forget his former life, the Platform Classic race brings his past screaming back with the arrival of his estranged brother, Marcus Speedstar. The two siblings once raced for a living, until Marcus' lust for glory led to him cheating with a hyperfuel boost, which damaged Yeager's ship in the process. Soon, we discover the wounds run much deeper. Yeager once had a family, and because of Marcus he lost them, too.

Through the competition, the garage owner learns to forgive past wrongs, help his brother to settle a debt that's endangered the life of his friend and mechanic Oplock, and begins to mend old wounds.



EPISODE 11

Station Theta Black

DIRECTED BY SERGIO PAEZ WRITTEN BY BRANDON AUMAN

■ In the mid-season finale, Kaz tags along on Poe's recon mission through the Unknown Regions on course for an abandoned First Order outpost. Once there, they encounter Captain Phasma, who has come to Station Theta Black to personally oversee a scheduled demolition and hide all evidence of the First Order's mining operation for dedlanite, a material used to make blasters. Lots of them.



EPISODE 12

Bibo

DIRECTED BY BOSCO NG WRITTEN BY PAUL GIACOPPO

■ Neeku takes center stage when he adopts a small and smelly stowaway creature he calls Bibo, much to the chagrin of Yeager and pretty much everyone else on the *Colossus*. Then, when a massive, tentacled beast rises from the surrounding waters, Eila has a premonition that the threatening creature has come for Neeku's new friend, but luckily for the Nikto, it turns out it's just a mother looking for her young.

EPISODE 10

Secrets and Holograms

DIRECTED BY SAUL RUIZ WRITTEN BY STEPHANY FOLSOM

■ While Captain Doza meets with the First Order to begin negotiating protection for the platform, he orders his daughter Torra to stay safely in her room. Naturally, Torra sneaks out and, upon literally bumping into Kaz, confides in her friend about what a First Order proposal really means—a stormtrooper presence on the platform with no end in sight. After sneaking back into Doza Tower to play holo games, Kaz uses the opportunity for another spy adventure, which ends with him briefly trapped in Captain Doza's closet next to what is apparently an old Imperial uniform.

Fortunately for the hapless spy, Torra helps him to escape the tower after he promises to explain why he was snooping in her father's office, leading them on a wild misadventure through the trash incinerator to freedom.



EPISODE 13

Dangerous Business

DIRECTED BY SAUL RUIZ WRITTEN BY EUGENE SON

■ While Flix and Orka are away visiting Flix's mother, Kaz agrees to watch their shop (and their pet gorg, Bitey) in exchange for some badly needed parts for the *Fireball*. During the assignment, Teroj Kee, a no-good swindler in league with the First Order, locks Kaz in a shipping crate and tries to steal a valuable phase connector, a device used to crack open planetoids and asteroids for mining.



AREN'T YOU A LITTLE SHORT FOR AN EPISODE?

■ The Aces, Flix, Orka, the adorable droids, and beloved pets inhabiting the world of *Star Wars Resistance* had their chance to shine in a series of short animations—a dozen brief vignettes that recounted further adventures, showed more of the Aces' competitive spirit, Flix and Orka's partnership, and even inside the circuits of BB-8, Bucket, and G-LN. Plus, Buggles got to fly the *Fireball*!

The Search for Kaz

Fans get a different point of view on the *Colossus* platform in a short focused on BB-8's hunt for Kaz.

Dart and Cover

Kaz and Bucket play a friendly game at Aunt Z's Tavern, with hilarious results.

Neeku's Reward

Neeku's hard work is rewarded with a juicy lunch from the gorg vendor. That is, until his food slips away.

Bucket's Quest

Bucket launches a full-scale search for his missing helmet before finding a small, round friend has just borrowed it.

When Thieves Drop By

Flix and Orka make a great team, whether they're dealing with customers looking for rare parts or thwarting a would-be robber.

Treasure Chest

Flix and Orka love a good surprise. When Synara finds a mystery crate on a salvage mission, they can't wait to crack it open and discover its secrets.

G-LN

G-LN, the pit droid taken on by Acquisitions, gets into some mischief while Flix, Orka, and Aunt Z are immersed in conversation.

Unmotivated

Does Hype's droid have a bad motivator? It's certainly a feisty little one when Flix and Orka try to take a closer look.

The Need for Speed

The Aces race to unseat Hype Fazon from the top spot among them.

The Rematch

Kaz and Torra stage a friendly competition in order to test out the latest upgrades to the *Fireball*.

Sixty Seconds to Destruction

The Aces work together on an important mission to stop a fuel tanker from smashing into the *Colossus*.

Buggles' Day Out

Kaz watches Torra's beloved pet Buggles while she's away, with disastrous results.



EPISODE 14

The Doza Dilemma

DIRECTED BY SERGIO PAEZ WRITTEN BY GAVIN HIGHLIGHT

■ In a last-ditch effort to force Captain Doza to agree to First Order protections, Commander Pyre enlists the pirate Kragan Gorr and his gang to abduct Torra, hoping to use her as a bargaining chip. After Synara helps the pirates get into Doza Tower using Torra's own security code, she finds out her friend is the target and she and Kaz rush to rescue the captain's daughter, with assistance from the rest of the Aces.



EPISODE 15

The First Order Occupation

DIRECTED BY BOSCO NG WRITTEN BY KEVIN BURKE AND CHRIS "DOC" WYATT

■ As the First Order establishes a firmer hold on the *Colossus* and launches an intensive search for a spy in their midst, times become increasingly dangerous for both Kaz and Synara. Despite her allegiance to the pirates who have menaced the citizens of the platform, Kaz decides to assist his friend's getaway by helping her reach an escape pod.



EPISODE 16

The New Trooper

DIRECTED BY STEWARD LEE WRITTEN BY PAUL GIACOPPO

■ An altercation with a stormtrooper asking for Kel and Eila's identification leads to an opportunity for Kaz to go undercover among the First Order ranks, disguised in the trooper's armor. Here, we begin to see the fissures forming among the citizens on the platform. While Kaz and Yeager are incensed by the presence of more and more stormtroopers, Tam sees them as security forces, there to maintain order and keep everyone safe. A clever maneuver gets Kaz quickly—but awkwardly—out of harm's way, when his behavior raises suspicions that there's something amiss with the trooper he's pretending to be.



EPISODE 17

The Core Problem

DIRECTED BY SAUL RUIZ

WRITTEN BY KEVIN BURKE AND CHRIS "DOC" WYATT

■ As the story on Castilon inches closer to the events of *The Force Awakens*, Poe arrives with CB-23 to collect BB-8 for a special mission to Jakku on the orders of General Leia Organa herself. But first, Poe and Kaz pay a visit to the Dassal system in the Unknown Regions and make a chilling discovery about the might of the First Order. There, they find entire planets cored and a sun that's been extinguished, wiping out all signs of life in the process.



EPISODE 18

The Disappeared

DIRECTED BY SERGIO PAEZ WRITTEN BY STEVEN MELCHING

■ Outspoken critics of the First Order begin to go missing under suspicious circumstances. After stormtroopers try to pressure Aunt Z into posting their propaganda, she mysteriously disappears. Captain Doza is forced to ground the racers, and amid his own criticism of events, Hype also vanishes while his beloved ship remains locked down. After Torra, Kaz, and CB-23 discover where the outlaws are being hidden, they help them escape before rushing back to Yeager's garage, only to find stormtroopers waiting for them.



EPISODE 19

Descent

DIRECTED BY BOSCONG WRITTEN BY PAUL GIACOPPO

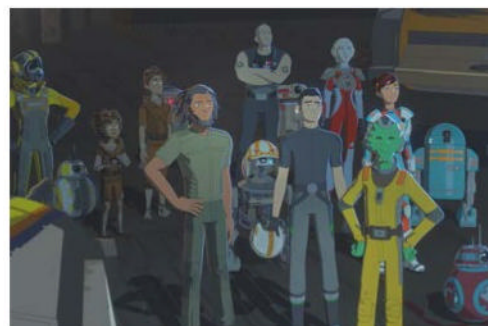
■ Commander Pyre and his troopers try to place Kaz and Yeager under arrest, but with some help from Bucket they manage to get away with Neeku and Kaz's new droid CB-23. However, Tam, confused by the accusations and torn by her duty to follow the rules, doesn't run. As her friends try to evade capture whilst launching a scheme to sink the platform and deactivate a communications jammer, Tam is taken into custody by Agent Tierny, whose gentle manipulations begin to leave the mechanic questioning if she really knows Kaz at all.

EPISODES 20-21

No Escape

DIRECTED BY STEWARD LEE (21) SAUL RUIZ (22)
WRITTEN BY BRANDON AUMAN (21 & 22)

■ Watching a devastating transmission showcasing the power of Starkiller Base, Kaz witnesses the last day of the Republic when his home planet, Hosnian Prime (the New Republic capital) is destroyed. Meanwhile, Agent Tierny convinces Tam that she will only reach her full potential as a pilot by joining the First Order. Kaz and his friends reactivate the forgotten engines of the *Colossus*, and the ship jumps to hyperspace.





THE GRIEVOUS GROWL

Matthew Wood reveals his incredible double life as supervising sound editor and sound designer at Skywalker Sound—and the Separatist droid army's fiendish cyborg leader with a hacking cough.

WORDS: AMY RATCLIFFE

It's fall 2002. George Lucas, producer Rick McCallum, concept artists, and other key production members are meeting each Friday to review the latest designs for *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* (2005). On November 22, Lucas tells the assembly that the Episode III villain could be a Separatist droid general. "I won't limit it at this point to a droid. It could be an alien of some kind. I'm not sure if I want him to be human. It's the Darth Maul. It's the Jango Fett. Darth Vader..." he's recorded explaining in *The Making of Return of the Sith*. He tells the artists the villain is not a Sith, that it has to be able to do dialogue scenes, and that it has to be iconic.

And so General Grievous, the Supreme Commander of the Separatist droid army, was born. Two weeks after Lucas' instruction to design the foe, concept artist Warren Fu presented illustrations for the character that caught the director's eye. Fellow concept artist Ian McCaig had advised them to think of their worst nightmares, and Fu imagined a scary masked enemy. His designs became the foundation for the fearsome cyborg who would stalk across the big screen in the final *Star Wars* prequel.

Bela Lugosi

A combination of robotic technology with an organic base, General Grievous' voice is grating and loud, part mechanical and part biological. That voice is provided by Matthew Wood, supervising sound editor and sound designer at Skywalker Sound, and it came to be rather late in the process. "My ►

► first look at what fully rendered Grievous was going to look like was actually in *Star Wars Insider*,” Wood tells us. “It was on the cover, and I remember thinking, ‘Whoa, that’s cool. Who’s gonna voice that?’ Because the character has no mouth, we could wait a certain amount of time before Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) needed our final voice-overs.”

Busy working on audio effects for *Revenge of the Sith*, Wood knew that Lucas wanted the voice to sound as if it was synthesized through the circuitry of a voice box, with computerized, cybernetic qualities, and he and co-sound editor Christopher Scarabosio developed a distinctive resonance for Grievous. “We ran it through some processing, including ring modulation, to give it that synthesized timbre. We put every audition we got through that same process, as an egalitarian method for every actor’s performance. I would play those for George to get his feedback on what things he did or didn’t like. And I had the ability to sit in on all those auditions and also process them,” Wood explains.

Having that perspective put Wood in a very unique position. McCallum was getting nervous because they needed to cast the role of Grievous and time was running out, so Scarabosio encouraged Wood to audition. Wood, a trained actor, had performed voices for *Star Wars* before, so he anonymously submitted his file to Lucas with the other auditions. He approached Grievous with a gruff, harsh voice, something to convey the character’s militaristic sense. And he also added a little old-school villain style, in the vein of 1930s horror movie actor Bela Lugosi. Wood recalls, “I’d coincidentally come back from

“I remember thinking, ‘Whoa, that’s cool. Who’s gonna voice that?’”

visiting a friend in Prague, so it was fresh in my mind, and that’s what I went with: yelling in a classic villain voice with an Eastern European accent. As that hit the processor, I could hear there was this nice gravelly quality. Then I got the surprising call that George had picked my audition.”

Wood’s performance of General Grievous’ biting metallic voice cuts through the Battle of Coruscant in Episode III’s opening scenes, as Anakin Skywalker (Hayden Christensen) and Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor) confront the metal general after his kidnapping of Chancellor Palpatine, but McGregor never knew who voiced Grievous until some years after the movie’s release. Grievous battled with Kenobi more than once in *Revenge of the Sith*, and during filming McGregor was most often sparring with stunt double Kyle Rowling, who stood in for the CG cyborg, with Grievous’ lines being read in from off-camera. “I worked with Ewan in my sound capacity on all the prequels,” Wood says. “I’d record him all the time for the post-production dialogue recording we had to do. It wasn’t until I worked with him years later, when I brought him in to do a whispery voice for *The Force Awakens*, that I actually got to tell him, ‘Hey, did you know what ended up happening with that voice? It was me.’ And he was like, ‘No way!’”

Catching Breath

After Dooku’s death, Grievous took over his position and moved the Separatist Council from Utapau to Mustafar at Darth Sidious’ behest. The over-confident cyborg engaged with Kenobi for what would be the final time, as the duel ended with Grievous’ demise. To his last, Grievous barked out orders and taunts punctuated by a phlegmy cough. Lucas wanted Grievous to have breathing troubles because he was essentially a testing ground for the technology that would

01 The fearsome Grievous, as voiced by Matthew Wood.

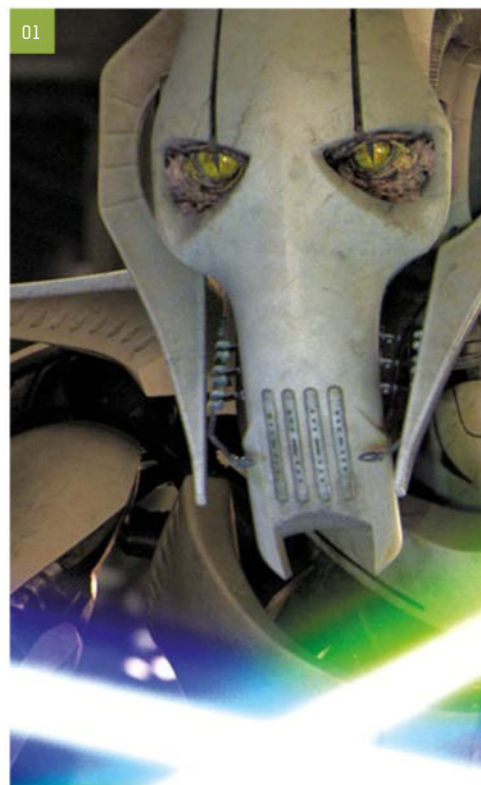
02 Wood again played the general in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008).

03 Grievous played a big part in *The Clone Wars* animated series.

04 General Grievous in *Revenge of the Sith*.

05 Matthew Wood in a recording booth at Skywalker Sound.

06 Grievous versus Obi-Wan.





“We captured a lot of George’s really bad coughs from the day, and ended up rolling some of them into Grievous’ performance.”

start coughing. We captured a lot of George’s really bad coughs from the day, and ended up rolling some of them into Grievous’ performance.”

Wood thinks of Grievous’ voice as comprising of two-parts: the dramatic element and the processing layer. “I pitch him down about a semi-tone to give him that lower pitch register, and in a way that his voice has an artifacting quality to it where it doesn’t sound perfect,” he explains. “I’m going for imperfection, so when he’s yelling, I want to make it almost like he’s so angry that his vocal processor is unable to translate his emotion into voice perfectly.”

Wood had to perform with a hyper-enunciated yell in order to get Grievous’ words and emotion across through the gravelly, scratchy qualities in his voice. The delay ▶

eventually create Darth Vader. By luck, both Wood and Lucas were in a state to provide the required rattles and hacks.

“For a lot of those lines, you really have to use the diaphragm big time and yell this guttural performance,” Wood recalls. “I would run out of breath and cough, and George himself had a really bad cough that day. I remember telling Chris Scarabosio to keep the tape rolling, because George would come up to direct me and he would

► and ring-modulation Wood applied is not unlike the standard procedure he uses for droid processing, but Grievous got a little something extra. “It’s a mix and match of a few different things, because George wanted to communicate that Grievous had a biological component to illustrate that he had a weakness,” says Wood. “The cough was to illustrate that, too. It’s such an odd and creepy character. It’s a part I’ve really loved and respected all these years.”

The Grievous Gig

Wood had the opportunity to reprise the role in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. Set in the years between *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *Revenge of the Sith*, the animated series takes an on-the-ground look at the galactic conflict between the Republic and the Separatists, with Grievous and his droid army at the center of numerous key struggles. *The Art of Star Wars: The Clone Wars* explains how they adjusted General Grievous’ grim countenance to match the style of the show. Designer Atsushi Takeuchi used simpler shapes for Grievous’ complex head and limbs to maintain the look of the character, while exaggerating the chest and shoulders to make him more menacing. Grievous strode

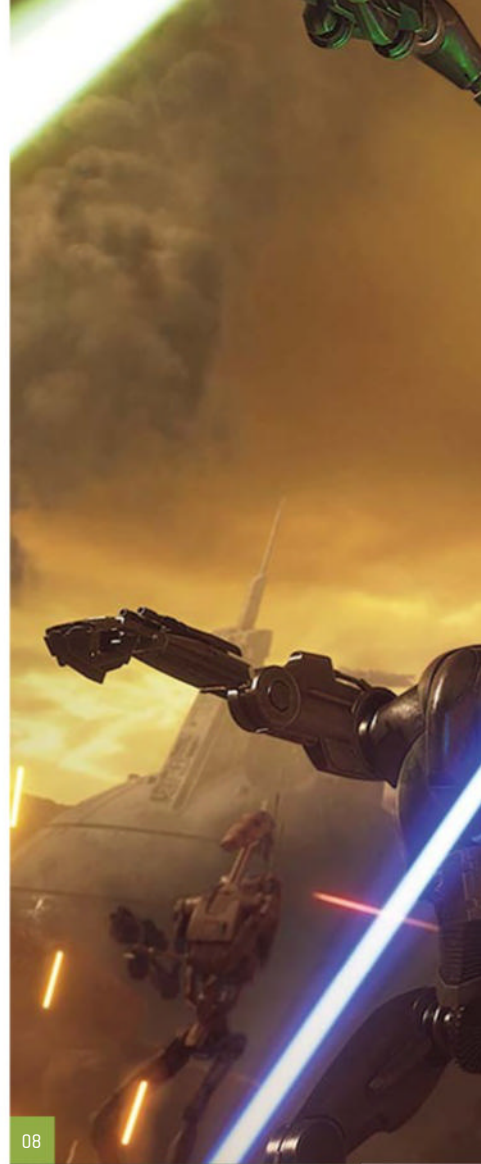
into battle with an intimidating lumber, while attempting to pair his excellent planning with commanding an army of inept battle droids.

“My main performance goals were frustration,” Wood says. “I think the guy was always frustrated. He was trying to be something more than he was, and making a name for himself by going up against the Jedi is the ultimate thing he could do. Feeling like he technically knew the ways of the Force and knew how to wield the lightsaber was just enough for him to try and take on the Jedi. Of course, it wasn’t. Ultimately, the combination of his cowardice and going up against the Force is never going to work. And then his battle droids really are quite dumb, and their processors are not very high-end because the factory stamps out thousands of these things.”

So this clever, nearly indestructible, and bold-yet-craven leader was stuck with commanding an endless supply of incompetent soldiers. Grievous found a way to work with the battle droids, even if it meant using them as fodder while seeking a Jedi to fight, or taking a risky move, such as abducting Senator Amidala in the episode, “Destroy Malevolence.” Dooku found

07 Grievous’ sharp golden eyes are some of his few remaining organic parts.

08 Woods reprised his Grievous role for the video game *Star Wars: Battlefront II*.



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GENERAL GRIEVOUS

A sharp military strategist and dangerous fighter trained by Count Dooku in the ways of Jedi combat, Grievous is all the more formidable because of his cybernetic enhancements. He’s not Force-sensitive, but with his multiple claw-like limbs and graceful articulation, he’s more than agile enough to wield lightsabers with precision. A Kaleesh warrior who was critically wounded, Grievous voluntarily gave himself over to mechanical modifications; his brain, heart, lungs, spinal cord, and haunting golden eyes are the only organic remnants of his body.



“I try to look for the empathy in the character that way, and perform him as a lesson as to what you don’t want to be.”

Grievous to be a successful leader because the cyborg looked at the big picture; the general executed high-handed plans like using hidden listening posts to ambush Republic fleets and attempting to invade Kamino to stop clone production. As Wood said, he was always trying to make a name for himself and his every appearance during *The Clone Wars* certainly emphasizes that.

The Allure of Grievous

General Grievous has also gone on to appear elsewhere in the *Star*

Wars galaxy. Notably, he appeared in Dark Horse Comics’ *Darth Maul: Son of Dathomir* (in which he killed Mother Talzin), and two Marvel Comics series, *Jedi of the Republic: Mace Windu* and *Kanan*. Most recently, Wood voiced the villain again in downloadable content for the video game *Star Wars: Battlefront II*. He had to break his recording sessions up over multiple days so that he didn’t destroy his voice. “You can’t really be subtle. Grievous having a fireside chat with somebody is not something we’ve seen before or are likely to,” Wood jokes. “Most of his lines have to be super-projected. In order to hit the plug-in processor that I use, the way that I want it to, the voice definitely has to be pushed.”

In performing a character that presents such physical and technical obstacles, what is it

that keeps Wood coming back to the role? “I like his struggle,” he answers. “It’s nice to have a character as a juxtaposition to the heroes. Grievous is somebody in whom you can see all his bad points. He’s cowardly, and he doesn’t really have many friends—in *The Clone Wars* we went to his lair, and there’s a droid that’s his bickering friend, but it’s pretty stark. He lives alone, he’s always boastful about all the things he’s going to do to you or how he’s going to rule you, and it’s obvious his ego gets the best of him. So, I try to look for the empathy in the character that way, and perform him as a lesson as to what you don’t want to be. That’s how it is for me, showcasing that you can’t have light without dark; my performance in this dark world exists to give the light something to shine on.” 🗡️

DEVELOPING THE DYKSTRAFLEX

The motion-control camera system designed and built for *A New Hope* made the film's groundbreaking effects shots possible. Jon D. Witmer charts its evolution and speaks to its Oscar-winning developer, John Dykstra.

WORDS BY JON D. WITMER

A

TIE fighter shoots its lasers as it chases an X-wing.

Both ships bank as they skim over the surface of the Death Star, space stretching to infinity in the background.

A shot like this from *A New Hope* might be on screen for only a second, but its execution would have spanned days or even weeks. Separate pieces of film needed to be created for each of the elements—the TIE, the X-wing, the Death Star, the background starfield, the lasers—which would then need to be successfully combined using a device called an optical printer.

As well as those elements, there was something else that writer-director George Lucas was determined to see in his film's effects: movement. When *A New Hope* was made, the standard method of producing special effects scenes involved using a "locked-off" camera that couldn't change position. This ensured that overlaid

elements would all line up, but made the finished effect look static, and obviously a piece of carefully staged camera trickery. Lucas' innovation was to demand effects imbued with energy and motion. He wanted *A New Hope's* battle scenes to look like they had actually been filmed from inside the fighting, by a combat camera operator following the action wherever it took him.

To realize this vision, Lucas and producer Gary Kurtz opted to start from scratch, setting up an effects facility all their own. They found a willing and enthusiastic collaborator in the 27-year-old John Dykstra, who pulled together the team that Lucas would soon name Industrial Light & Magic (ILM). Among the team's first tasks was the development of a motion-control camera system for the model photography: a machine that could be programmed to carry out precise movements in seven axes—track, traverse, boom, swing, pan, tilt, and roll—and to repeat those moves exactly, again and again.

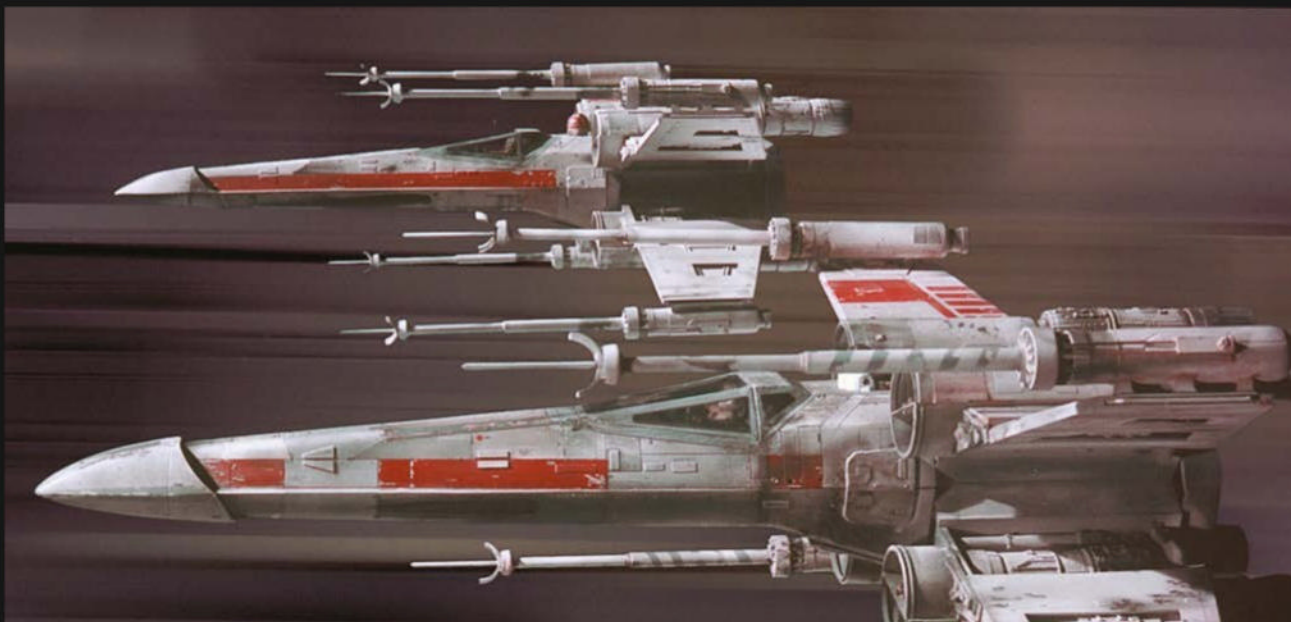
Inspired by existing systems at other facilities, but combining functions in ways never done before, the camera that would become known as the "Dykstraflex" helped to usher in a bold new era of visual effects.

TEAM BUILDING

In April 1975, Lucas and Kurtz found Dykstra working at Future General, an effects company headed by Douglas Trumbull—a man celebrated for his visual effects work on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). With a background in industrial design, Dykstra had joined Trumbull's previous company, Trumbull Film Effects.

"I was a designer, so I did design work for *Silent Running*," explains Dykstra, referring to the 1972 sci-fi thriller directed by Trumbull. "I was also a photographer, and I did some miniature photography for *The Andromeda Strain* (1971). I had gone to Long Beach State [University], which didn't have a film program, but I took some still-photography classes.

"In those classes, we did



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a lot of different things: posterization; solarization; extracting elements from complete images and bringing those elements back together in new configurations; using high-contrast film; overdevelopment; underdevelopment; controlling contrast; controlling color by creating masks... It was kind of the essence of optical printing. So I was well suited for doing optical elements when I went to work for Doug. I also did some model building. We all did a lot of everything—and it was great.”

Within a few weeks of meeting Lucas and Kurtz, Dykstra had officially signed on to *A New Hope*. He was well qualified to be the film’s special photographic effects supervisor, but there was a whole other business side to the job: building an all-new effects facility from the ground up, and sourcing the tools and staff for all of its departments. Was he confident that he was up to the task? He laughs. “Of course I was! What was I, 27? I knew everything!”

Youthful enthusiasm aside, Dykstra was certainly well

placed to oversee development of a cutting-edge new camera. Dykstra soon found and rented a disused warehouse in Van Nuys, Los Angeles (just north of Hollywood), that would house all of ILM’s departments. “For better or worse,” he says, “the facility was patterned after Doug’s, which meant that it wasn’t particularly corporate.” With an eye toward streamlined communications and workflow, Dykstra brought together collaborators who “knew one another and had worked together before. We had a shorthand that allowed us to present fairly complex hypotheses and prove or disprove them without having to go through a whole lot of research and development.”

As Dykstra assembled his team, he enlisted the services of Trumbull’s father, Don, who, along with Richard Alexander

01 X-wings
attack the
Death Star in
A New Hope.

(Dick), Alvah J. Miller, and William Shourt, would focus specifically on the development of the motion-control camera system. When Richard Edlund joined the fledgling facility soon after as the production’s effects director of photography, his input was solicited, too.

“Don Trumbull had a background in mechanical effects,” says Dykstra. “He’d been building things for Doug for years. He was a genius in mechanics and he understood optics. He was a really brilliant guy. Dick Alexander is a precision machinist, and he and Don collaborated on the best way to design and build the camera. Bill Shourt was involved in the mechanics of the boom that we constructed. And then Al Miller was the electronics guy. Making a camera run was small potatoes for Al, but he had to figure ▶

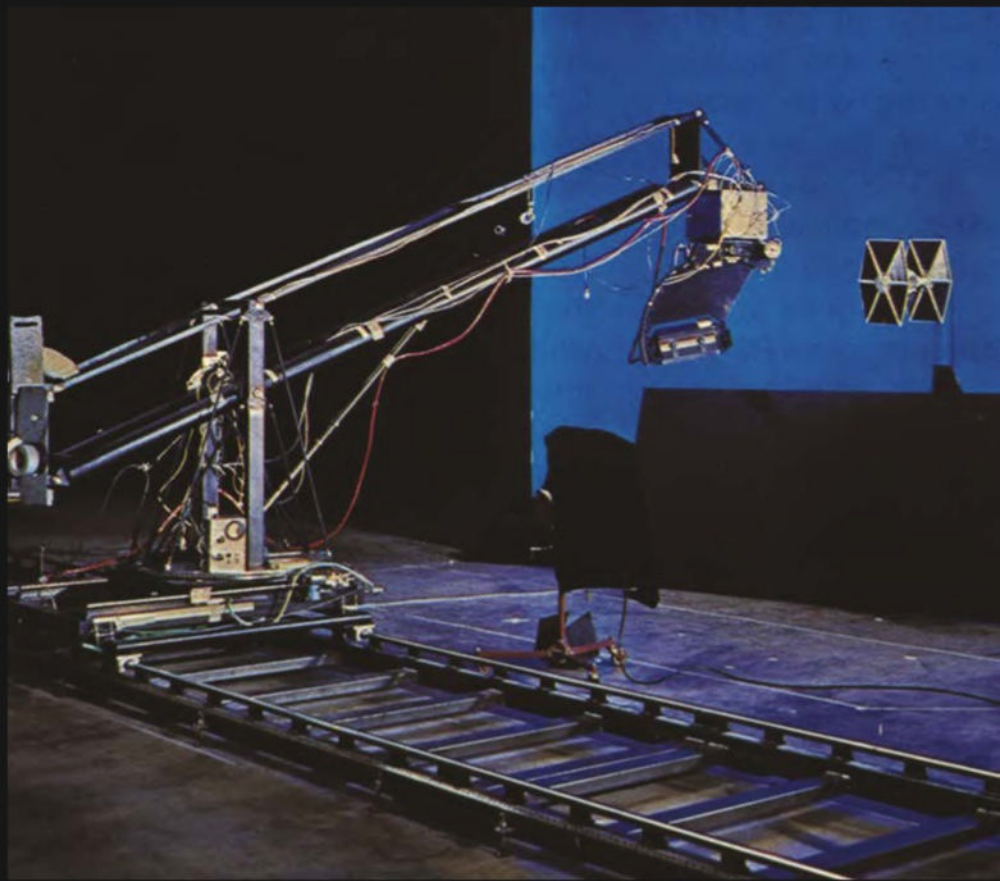
“THE PURPOSE BEHIND IT WAS TO SIMULATE THE REALITY OF [LIVE-ACTION] CINEMATOGRAPHY AS OPPOSED TO STOP-MOTION ANIMATION...”

“THE AMOUNT OF POWER THAT THE SYSTEM DREW WAS ENORMOUS COMPARED TO TODAY’S DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.”

- out how to make the camera interface with the motion-control system, and he had to coordinate with Don and Dick with regards to motor placements, heat issues, all of that stuff.”

EARLY INSPIRATIONS

Lucas’ decision to form a new effects company did not necessarily mean that everything about the company had to be new. Much of the impetus to establish custom tools and workflows came from Dykstra himself. “If there was anything that my youth afforded me,” he reflects, “it was the naïveté to go to the producers and say, ‘We’re going to build it all from scratch.’” With the Dykstraflex



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specifically, he adds, “The idea was, if you didn’t have to use an existing camera, this is the camera you would make.”

Dykstra’s inspirations for the Dykstraflex were several. One of its forebears had existed at Trumbull’s facility, while another had been developed by Alvah Miller and Jerry Jeffress at the University of California at Berkeley. Dykstra had met the pair while working on a 16mm film project for the National Science Foundation.

“They had created what essentially amounted to a motion-control camera,” he recalls. “The Dykstraflex was really an extension of the system that Al and Jerry had been designing.”

Many of the ideas that went into the camera were completely new, however, and the finished article was

certainly more than the sum of its myriad inspirations. “There was a huge amount of stuff that we had to borrow from other environments,” explains Dykstra. “Medical, military... It was eclectic. We didn’t have a lot of time, and we harvested from a variety of fields and combined it all for our unique applications.

“The concept of seven axes of motion that are continuously variable but still synchronizable at a variety of speeds didn’t exist, as far as I knew. If you want to talk about it in terms of patentability, it would be a design patent, not necessarily an origination patent.”

As for the name, “Dykstraflex” was in keeping with the nomenclature of motion-picture film cameras. Prior to ILM’s system, there was a camera at Trumbull’s facility

WINNING BID

Lucasfilm’s Pete Vilmur explains how he came to own Don Trumbull’s original mechanical drawings for the Dykstraflex, as seen in this article.

“Back in 2008, I picked these drawings up from a poorly publicized auction on eBay. The seller, who has a long career in visual effects, but never at ILM, said the drawings were originally transferred to [John Dykstra’s company] Apogee in 1977 or ’78. When Apogee was acquired by Sony around 1992, they transferred again. Sony shut their visual effects department around 2000, at which time the seller bought some equipment from their fire sale. Don Trumbull’s drawings were in one of the boxes, and eight years later, he decided to give them a new home via eBay.”



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that had been nicknamed the “Trumbullflex,” and that camera’s predecessors included Panavision’s Panaflex and, before that, ARRI’s Arriflex. The Arriflex got its name from the fact that it was the first motion-picture camera to incorporate a reflex-viewing system, allowing its operators to see through the lens while the camera was rolling.

DESIGN DETAILS

The Dykstraflex system comprised three main elements: the camera; a mechanical drive system that could track, boom, pan, tilt, and roll the camera; and the electronic control device for programming the drive system’s sequence of movements.

“The purpose behind it was to simulate the reality of [live-action] cinematography as opposed to stop-motion animation,” Dykstra explains. “The system could operate with mechanical accuracy independent of the speed at

which you ran the camera. We chose to move the camera relative to the model—rather than move the model relative to the camera—because otherwise the lighting would have had to travel with the model, which would have been a nightmare.

“Al Miller had to build all the microprocessors that ran the motion-control system. This was all custom-designed, purpose-built, and custom-programmed. Pins were inserted through blank circuit boards according to Al’s design, and then wire-wrapped for connections. It was TTL [transistor-transistor logic], which required a huge current draw. The amount of power that the system drew was enormous compared to today’s digital technology.”

Principal photography on *A New Hope* was done in the anamorphic 35mm format, which squeezes a widescreen image into an almost-square film frame measuring four perforations on a film reel. For

the effects shots, however, ILM opted for the all-but-forgotten VistaVision format, which runs standard 35mm film horizontally through the camera’s gate to create a widescreen frame that is eight perforations across.

“VistaVision was something that Doug had lodged in my mind,” Dykstra recalls. “Optical printing gives you an inherent degradation: an increase in contrast and reduction in resolution. But by using the larger negative and reducing it in optical printing to the four-perf negative that would be cut into the movie, you ended up with an image that was comparable to original photography.”

VistaVision’s sideways orientation also meant that the film magazine would sit flat at the back of the camera. This was an important consideration when filming dynamic space scenes, as it gave the camera a lower profile, and allowed it to get very close to the starship miniatures.

“Another critical component in making the miniatures look big,” says Dykstra, “was swinging and tilting the lens to tailor the depth of field. If you put a spherically ground lens too close to an object, the foreground’s going to be out of focus and the background’s going to be sharp. But with swings and tilts, you can tip the lens to offset the focus plane and end up with the entire thing in complete focus.” With the Dykstraflex, this complex process was built-in, with a follow-focus system offering programmable control of the focus ring on the lens and the position of the tilting lens board.

The VistaVision format was also compatible with a wide array of 35mm-format still-photography lenses. “I’d been using still-camera lenses with Doug,” says Dykstra. “But with *A New Hope* we were

02 (Left) The Dykstraflex system is set up to film a TIE fighter model against a bluescreen.

03 Don Trumbull was essential to the camera’s development.



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► photographing the miniatures at deep f-stops [focal lengths] for depth of field, so we needed sharp optics that had a deep stop.” Dykstra opted to use off-the-shelf Nikon optics, some of which Edlund customized with even deeper f-stops.

The Dykstraflex camera ran on a modular track that could be rearranged for different shots. At its longest, the track could carry the camera 40 feet—as required for some of the Death Star trench shots. Motors controlled the camera’s tracking and booming for frame-accurate positioning in relation to the subject. “The motors gave us precision and repeatability,” Dykstra says. “All of the motion-control stuff was based on numeric control that was being done at the time for the nascent robotics industry.”

ROLL CAMERA

The team completed the design for the Dykstraflex in July 1975. Over the next six months, they assembled the system on-site at ILM, and in December it was ready to roll.

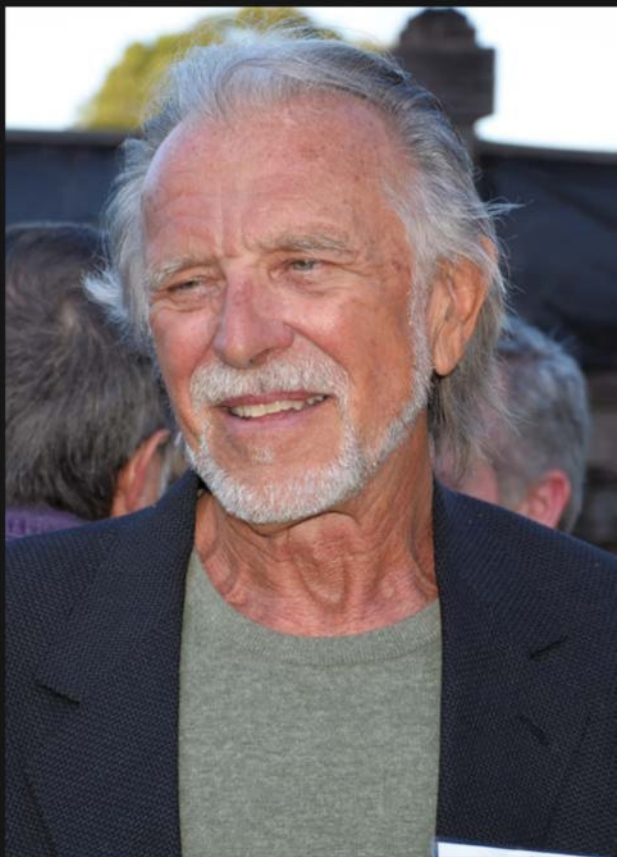
As a shot was programmed, the operator could view the scene through the lens via the camera’s viewfinder. A joystick offered control over multiple axes, while a potentiometer

could control a single-axis move. The joystick helped give shots a sense of having been operated by a human hand—rather than mathematically programmed—bolstering the sense that these shots were actually filmed by a combat pilot, at the controls in the midst of the action.

The movements for each axis were recorded on cassette, creating a “map” of distances, speeds, accelerations, and the corresponding frame on which each would occur. After a shot’s completion, the cassette would be filed in case any of the elements might need to be re-created for any reason down the line.

Dykstra estimates that the Dykstraflex system could have gotten up to 12 frames a second, but in order to maximize the depth of field it was most often set for much longer exposures, in the region of one frame every three seconds.

For the Dykstraflex’s operators, including Edlund, Dennis Muren, and Douglas Smith, the trick was remembering that each camera move was making the miniature spacecraft appear to fly. “It was almost Cartesian coordinates,” Dykstra says. “There was a lot of mental calculation required to



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04 John Dykstra inspects X-wing props.

05 Dykstra’s most recent credit was as visual effects Supervisor on *Ghost In The Shell* (2017).

06 (Left to right) John Dykstra, Richard Edlund, Rose Duignan, George Lucas, and Joe Johnston discuss the storyboard layout for an effects sequence.

separate camera motion from object motion. But they did it!”

Not every element of a shot called for the Dykstraflex’s full array of capabilities, of course. Background starfields were meant to exist at a distance that wouldn’t register whether the camera tracked in or out, so these were shot on another stage to save time. For these shots, a less complex sister camera to the Dykstraflex was used, working from the cassette maps to match most of the axes on another custom-built system.

40-YEAR LEGACY

The Dykstraflex cannot be claimed as the progenitor of motion-control photography or even complex, multiple-element and multiple-axis visual effects. What it should be celebrated for, however, is making such shots significantly easier to execute and repeat



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within a tight production schedule and budget. Without the Dykstraflex, it's safe to say that *A New Hope's* 365 visual effects shots (comprising some 3,838 different elements) would have been vastly different.

"I'd like to believe," says Dykstra, "that if we hadn't built the stuff from scratch, and had allowed ourselves to be limited to what was currently available, we would not have achieved the same dynamics in the final product."

The Dykstraflex, he adds, "was quite a capable machine, probably with a broader range of capabilities than it needed to do the movie. We were trying to make a device that would do everything rather than just the specific thing we needed it to do. It's that kind of desire and drive that causes you to find and break through boundaries. You overcome physical or technological limitations in order to meet some new challenge, and then it has other applications."

ILM's effects work on *A New Hope* universally wowed

audiences and was met with an Oscar for Best Special Effects, shared between Dykstra, Edlund, mechanical-effects supervisor John Stears, chief model maker Grant McCune, and optical-photography supervisor Robert Blalack. The Dykstraflex itself earned Dykstra, Miller, and Jeffress an Academy Award for Technical Achievement.

In 1978, the year those Oscars were awarded, Lucas moved ILM from Van Nuys to the California Bay Area city of San Rafael. Dykstra remained in Los Angeles and formed the effects company Apogee, but the motion-control system that bore his name went north with ILM. There, it was further modified, remaining a vibrant part of the company's workflow for years. ILM artists continued to find uses for the camera, even as it inspired subsequent motion-control systems with still more sophisticated controls.

In the 40 years since *A New Hope*, Dykstra has lent his visual effects skills to an array of features, most recently

Ghost in the Shell (2017).

Within that vast body of work, though, one job stands apart. "*A New Hope* was by far my best experience, and the most satisfying," Dykstra reflects. "It was brilliant and it was fun. I was working with my friends; with like-minded people who were geniuses in their own rights. We were inventing. We were taking on a challenge and creating something that hadn't been seen before. How much better can it get? 🙄"

Special thanks to John Dykstra for participating in this article. Thanks also to Lucasfilm's Pete Vilmur for providing the technical drawings and the photo of Don Trumbull, and to Lucas Seastrom for additional research support. The author is further indebted to J.W. Rinzler's The Making of Star Wars, as well as the July 1977 and June 1980 issues of American Cinematographer magazine.



THRAWN

A VILLAIN'S PURPOSE

Grand Admiral Thrawn was the primary thorn in the side of the fledgling rebellion during Seasons Three and Four of *Star Wars Rebels*, with the Chiss mastermind playing an integral part in Ezra Bridger's Hero's Journey. *Insider* explores how the character became the catalyst that propelled the series to its dramatic conclusion.

WORDS: TRICIA BARR

By the time Celebration Europe rolled around in 2016, the *Star Wars Rebels* Season Two finale "Twilight of the Apprentice" had taken the *Ghost* crew to Malachor, site of an ancient Sith Temple, for an epic showdown involving *Star Wars* notables Darth Vader, Darth Maul, and Ahsoka Tano. Worthy of the weight of these established characters, the events that unfolded were spectacular.

Fans eagerly anticipated the *Star Wars Rebels* Celebration panel to see where the show would go next. As the Season Three trailer premiered in a darkened room, a growing excitement rippled across the arena at the sight of some familiar iconography: the shape of an alien lizard known as the ysalamiri, a white uniform, a blue-skinned alien with red eyes who talked about art and history. By the time Grand Admiral Thrawn's name was spoken by Hera Syndulla, the crowd had been whipped into a frenzy. A fan-favorite from the novels was making his debut in the animated series.

For fans of *Rebels* not familiar with the character, the trailer made sure to lay out the dynamics that made Thrawn a unique *Star Wars* villain and the impact he could potentially have on the fate of the *Ghost* crew. Grand Moff Tarkin asks Governor Pryce how she intends to deal with the rebels who have proven "particularly stubborn." When Pryce replies that she needs "someone who sees the bigger picture," Thrawn stands in the background, in a room more like a museum than an office. The first words from

the Grand Admiral paint a clear picture of who he is: "To defeat an enemy you must first know them, not simply their battle tactics, but their history, philosophy, art." The trailer concludes with an ominous prediction from Thrawn: "I will tear the rebels apart piece by piece. They'll be the architects of their own destruction."

Origin Story

Every hero, or band of heroes, requires a villain who will create obstacles that seem insurmountable. *Star Wars Rebels* introduces the key themes and conceits of *Star*

Wars to a new generation of fans. For Luke Skywalker in the original trilogy and Anakin Skywalker in the prequel trilogy, the principal peril was their potential for self-destruction. After Vader's revelation in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*, the question on everyone's mind was "Will Luke Skywalker follow his father and turn to the dark side?" Anakin's failure to resist the darkness was a known quantity, but fans still pondered on how the fateful temptation would occur.

For the 16 years between the first two trilogies, *Star Wars* experienced a period referred to by some fans as the dark times. Eight years after *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, and with no more movies on the horizon, Lucasfilm turned to

**"IF VADER
CONTROLLED
BY FEAR,
WHAT ABOUT
A VILLAIN WHO
LEADS THROUGH
LOYALTY? AND
WHO RESPECTS
OPPONENTS?"**

TIMOTHY ZAHN

► publishing to reinvigorate the franchise in 1991, and hired author Timothy Zahn to write a series of novels in which he would introduce a new kind of villain to the *Star Wars* pantheon of evil. In an interview with the *Chicago Tribune* in 2017, Zahn broke down the impetus for his bad guy, explaining that: "I wanted to make another kind of villain. If Vader controlled by fear, what about a villain who leads through loyalty? And who respects opponents?"

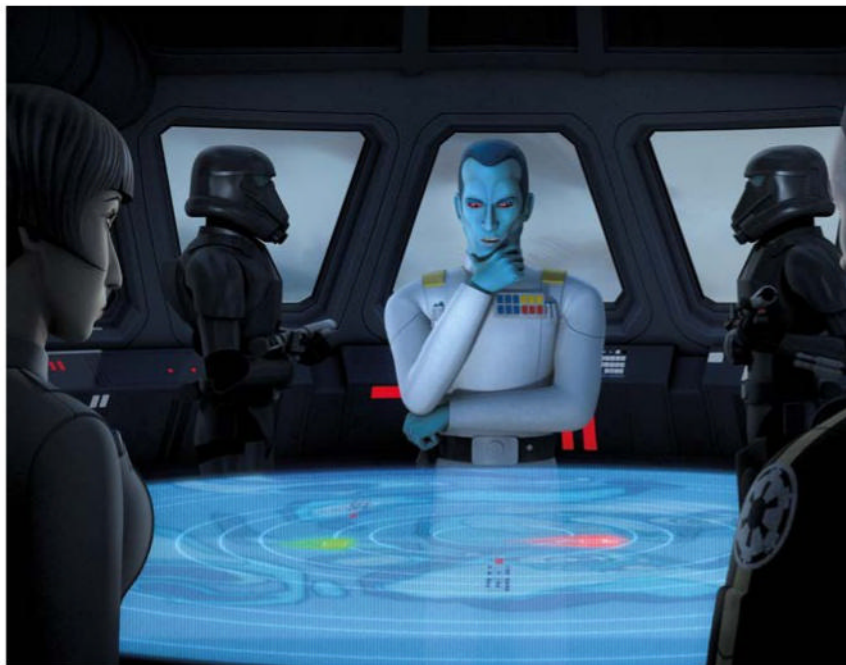
Fans hungry for new *Star Wars* adventures after the end of the original trilogy sent Zahn's first Thrawn book, *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire*, to #1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. The book's success helped promote other endeavors including role-playing games, comics, new toy lines, and other merchandise.

Almost 30 years after *Heir to the Empire's* release, it continues to be revered, along with the sequels that followed: *Dark Force Rising* (1992), and *The Last Command* (1993). The books not only kept mythic heroes Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, and Han Solo (collectively known as the Big Three) in the public consciousness, but also created new fan favorites Mara Jade, Talon Karrde, Grand Admiral Thrawn, and Imperial Captain Gilad Pellaeon (who received a namedrop in the series finale of *Star Wars Rebels*, making him another old character to be introduced to new fans). Though the books primarily tell the ongoing adventures of the Big Three, they are often referred to as the Thrawn Trilogy, such was the impact of their main antagonist. Considering the impact of Darth Vader in mythic storytelling, the Sith Lord himself might offer the compliment: "Impressive. Most impressive."

As well as envisioning Thrawn, Zahn also imagined a force similar to the First Order in the new films. Prior to 2015, the Battle of Endor didn't mark the complete defeat of the Empire, and some of its commanders retreated when the second Death Star was destroyed, regrouping and rearming before striking back. While this resurgent military is integral to Thrawn's Imperial ambitions, his reasons for wanting to unify the galaxy under the might of the Empire are very different from those of the Emperor, who is driven by his dark side impulses. Where the original trilogy is very much a fable about humanity, its villains reflecting the darker desires of the human psyche, Thrawn's motivations are rooted in his otherness. As an alien (specifically, a Chiss), his aspirations and ideology remain mysterious throughout

**IN SOME WAYS,
THRAWN'S "LONG
GAME" APPROACH
IS SIMILAR TO
PALPATINE'S IN THE
PREQUEL TRILOGY.**

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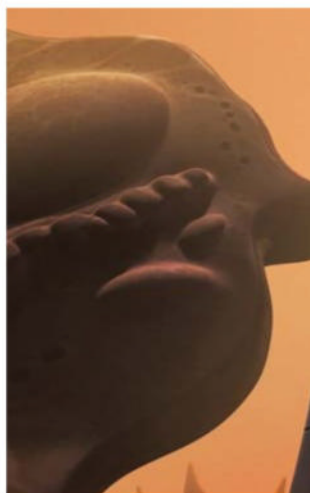
Zahn's trilogy and *Star Wars Rebels*. Even in *Rebels'* final confrontation between Ezra and Thrawn, the young Jedi struggles to understand why Thrawn does the things he does.

Different Perspectives

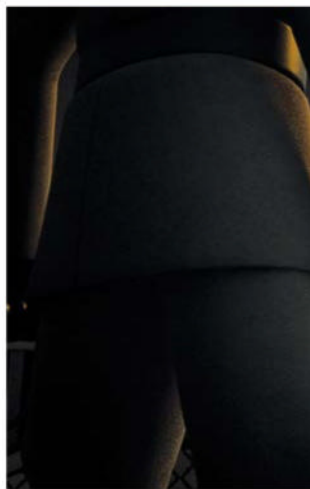
In science-fiction and fantasy, aliens often serve as a lens for reflecting differences in human cultures. The Bendu in *Star Wars Rebels* is a massive ancient Force-sensitive creature living on the remote planet Atollon. Between Bendu and Thrawn, two powerful characters with unique perspectives help challenge the show's heroes. Much of the Bendu's arc involves the ancient entity crossing paths with struggling Jedi Kanan Jarrus and Ezra, his apprentice, in order to confront their perspectives on the Force. At the same time, Thrawn puts pressure on the rebel heroes through his relentless pursuit of Phoenix Squadron, forcing them to reassess their priorities and question their various approaches. In effect, both act as catalysts in the heroic journeys of the series' main protagonists.

Thrawn is introduced in *Rebels* as part of a command-level conversation that includes Grand Moff Tarkin, Governor Pryce, Admiral Konstantine, and Agent Kallus. Their united focus is the potential danger of the rebel band, but only Thrawn is able to deduce that the rescue of Hondo Ohnaka was

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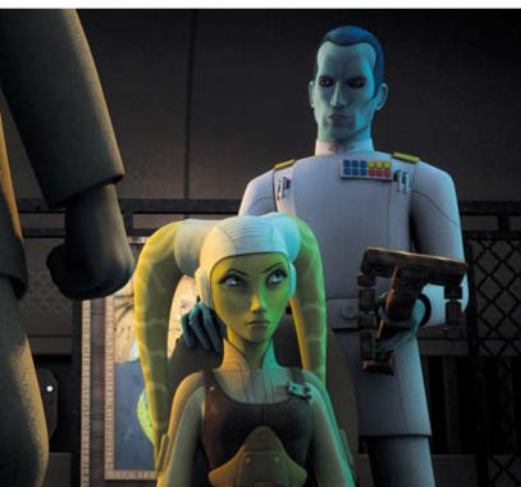
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01 The master tactician plots his next move in the battle against the rebels.

02 Grand Admiral Thrawn, voiced in *Star Wars Rebels* by Lars Mikkelsen.

03 On Atollon, Thrawn hesitates before shooting the Bendu.

04 Art-appreciator Thrawn recognizes the importance of Hera's Kalikori, in "Hera's Heroes."



THE THRAWN SAGA CONTINUES

Grand Admiral Thrawn's background and rise through the Imperial ranks was further explored by the character's creator, Timothy Zahn, in his 2017 novel *Thrawn*. The story takes readers back to the origins of the character, tracing Thrawn's journey from exiled member of the Chiss Ascendancy to becoming one of Emperor Palpatine's most indispensable servants, facing both military and political battles along the way.

The tale has been adapted by Marvel Comics as a six-issue mini-series, beginning back in February 2018, with the final installment in comic stores now. A trade paperback collecting the series will be published in September this year.

Timothy Zahn's follow-up novel, *Thrawn: Alliances*, finds Thrawn paired with Darth Vader on a mission to thwart a new threat against the Empire's dominance, set during the period of *Star Wars Rebels*. The hardback novel from Del Rey is released on July 24, 2018.

tied to Phoenix Squadron's attack on the Mining Guild. When Thrawn realizes Hondo's cellmate has a connection to Reklam Station, Pryce, Konstantine, and Kallus take a Star Destroyer to defend the facility, where Y-wings are being recycled by the Empire, against a probable incursion. When Pryce informs Thrawn that events have unfolded as he had expected, and that three rebel cruisers had come to the rescue of Phoenix Squadron, the Chiss admiral surprises his fellow Imperials by ordering they be allowed to escape. In his mind, the loss of a few obsolete Y-wings isn't a defeat, but rather an opportunity to gain knowledge about his opponent, to be exploited later. His goal isn't to capture one rebel cell that day, but rather to defeat a larger menace at a later date.

The methodical way in which Thrawn analyzes his enemies mirrors his iteration in Zahn's 1990s novels. Everything he does—his values, methods, and biases—are well considered and coolly alien, providing twists that the audience isn't expecting, such as Thrawn allowing a small loss in the hopes of a larger and more decisive win in the future. In some ways, Thrawn's "long game" approach is similar to Palpatine's in the prequel trilogy, which makes it believable that he could rise above his peers in the chain of command.

The Art of Observation

Though Darth Vader made a big impression during the second season of *Rebels*, the show's creative team did not consider making him

► a recurring villain in the series at large. The crew of the *Ghost* needed to have some wins on their heroic path, but if each of these was a loss for Vader, then a vital part of his potency would be undermined. Introducing Thrawn kept the show's stakes high, while also providing the heroes with a foil they could sometimes reasonably escape and defeat. Even more importantly, though, Thrawn's extreme observational, analytical style allowed for additional character detail to be revealed about the rebels themselves.

In Season Three's "Hera's Heroes," the resistance cell led by Hera's father, Cham Syndulla, calls for the *Ghost*'s assistance when Thrawn makes his base on Ryloth, the Syndullas' home planet. Thrawn has chosen Hera's family home as his headquarters and carefully studies a family heirloom known as the Kalikori in order to better understand his foe. The Kalikori is a piece of evolving Twi'lek art, where important family events are memorialized with a unique carving and passed down through generations. But Thrawn is not only there to study artifacts. He is well aware that his presence and possession of the Kalikori creates a situation that will keenly test the emotional limits of one of Phoenix Squadron's leaders.

Hera sneaks into her old home to liberate the Kalikori, but is caught and tries to pass herself off as a servant who stole the object to sell it. While this lie seems reasonable enough to Captain Slavin, Thrawn knows better. He understands what the Kalikori is and what it means to a Twi'lek, and that rebel leader Hera Syndulla would have come in person to retrieve it. As portrayed by voice actor Lars Mikkelsen, Thrawn is in most instances restrained, but Slavin's offer to destroy the Kalikori brings out a rare show of rage. The Kalikori remains in Thrawn's possession, and Hera, in a heartbreaking move, destroys her family home in her escape. Although an Imperial cruiser is in position to fire on the escaping rebels, Thrawn lets them go free once again. It's an alien methodology to his colleagues, but Thrawn perceives his interaction with Hera as just a small part of a much larger plan.

Later on in Season Three, Phoenix Squadron convinces the newly formed Rebel Alliance to

mount an attack to destroy the TIE fighter factory on Lothal. Thrawn predicts this move, heading to the planet to report his suspicions to Tarkin, Pryce, and Konstantine. His meeting with the Imperial leaders flushes out a traitor in their midst, and when Agent Kallus tries to report this news to the Rebel Alliance, Thrawn confronts him. Thrawn defeats Kallus in a fight, having studied the combat training of the Empire in order to understand its weaknesses. Not only does Thrawn evaluate his enemies, but also the strengths and frailties of his peers. Kallus' desperate transmission gives Thrawn the one piece of the puzzle he lacked: the location of the rebel base. Thrawn's plan to crush more than simply the *Ghost* crew, but the entire Phoenix Squadron, almost succeeds. Only a bold move by Phoenix Squadron commander

Sato saves the day, when he pilots his ship out of formation and catches the attention of Interdictor commander Konstantine, who ignores Thrawn's orders to hold position. Sato pilots his ship into the interdictor, allowing Ezra to escape the system to send for help.

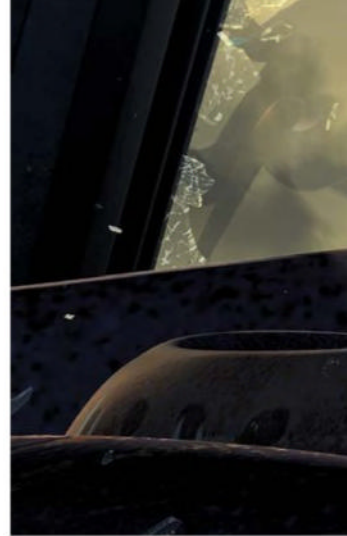
Unfortunately for those rebels still at the base on Atollon, Mon Mothma isn't yet ready to engage the Empire in open warfare and refuses to send military aid. Ezra convinces Sabine's Mandalorian clan to dispatch reinforcements, while Kanan pleads with Bendu to reconsider his neutral position. The ancient being refuses, but before Kanan leaves he calls Bendu a

coward. While Thrawn is focused on Hera's actions as a commander, both Jedi have made unexpected moves. Thrawn's perception of the *Ghost* crew as a hierarchy, rather than as a team that places trust in individuals to make independent decisions, is an uncharacteristic error of judgment on his part, upon which there are consequences.

By the time Thrawn's troops reach the surface of Atollon, Bendu has whipped up a raging Force storm. The creature doesn't necessarily take sides, shooting down rebels and Imperials alike. Thrawn dismisses the attack as Jedi trickery and orders his troops to shoot at the eye of the storm. The rebels escape as Bendu falls from the sky, and Thrawn finds the enormous creature wounded yet still defiant. Bendu claims that the

THRAWN'S PERCEPTION OF THE *GHOST* CREW AS A HIERARCHY, RATHER THAN AS A TEAM THAT PLACES TRUST IN INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE INDEPENDENT DECISIONS, IS AN UNCHARACTERISTIC ERROR OF JUDGMENT

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ability to destroy him is beyond Thrawn's power, and—more ominously—predicts Thrawn's defeat with "many arms surrounding you in a cold embrace." Thrawn attempts to shoot Bendu, but the enigmatic being simply disappears.

The ramifications of the defeat at Atollon have a significant impact on the *Ghost* crew. The Rebel Alliance under Mon Mothma's leadership balks at saving Lothal, knowing that Thrawn had deduced their intentions. Ezra, after struggling with his own convictions about how to fight the Empire, believes he is needed on Lothal, and the crew follows his lead. Sabine and Ezra manage to steal a TIE defender from under Thrawn's nose and, this time, Loth-wolves assist them in their aims. Much like the Force storm of the Bendu, this is another mystical intervention far too unlikely to have factored in Thrawn's analytical evaluation of the planet. The seized TIE defender convinces Mon Mothma to act before greater numbers of the ships, which are built on Lothal,

05 In the *Star Wars Rebels* series finale, purrgil tentacles surround Thrawn in "a cold embrace."

06 Fans whole-heartedly welcomed Timothy Zahn's creation to *Star Wars Rebels*.

07 Thrawn matches his intellectual might with ruthless skill in battle.

08 Have we seen the last of Thrawn? Bendu foresaw his defeat, not his death...

can give the Empire starfighter superiority. But the Rebellion's assault on the planet does not go as planned. Thrawn's blockade is ready for their attack, and the entire force is shot down, with Hera captured and interrogated by Thrawn. The *Ghost* crew mounts a rescue—and Kanan even manages to recover her Kalikori—before the Jedi perishes saving his friends.

Although Thrawn had been dismissive of Jedi powers on Atollon, Kanan has now become part of the Emperor's plan to recover the Jedi temple on Lothal—perhaps a lesson learned from Thrawn's failure to kill Bendu. Thrawn outwits the rebels when they try to infiltrate the Imperial Complex and, like he did back on Ryloth, offers a trade: the lives of the civilians of Lothal's Capital City in exchange for Ezra. Of all the *Ghost* crew, Ezra is the least known to Thrawn. He doesn't have a history of command to study like Hera, or a body of art like Sabine. Thrawn's interest in him now comes from a desire to curry favor with the Emperor, who wants to manipulate the young Jedi.

It is the mysteries of the Force combined with the determination of a child stepping into adolescence—perhaps the most unpredictable moment in a person's life—that are the undoing of Thrawn. His villainous fate in the series finale is just as Bendu had predicted. Ezra summons the spacefaring creatures called purrgil, whose numerous tentacles crush into Thrawn's Star Destroyer, *Chimaera*, and wrap around him before they jump into hyperspace.

Thrawn may have vanished along with Ezra Bridger, but it should be noted that Bendu did not predict this death, only his defeat—and we have seen that the Chiss mastermind has a way of turning initial losses into future victories. 🌌

Parallel Lives

Insider examines the not-so-different lives of a mother and daughter torn apart by tragedy, but forever bound by their shared and unwavering quest for peace and justice throughout the galaxy.

WORDS: JAY STOBIE



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admé Amidala and Leia Organa both established themselves as ardent defenders of peace and

justice throughout the *Star Wars* saga, frequently employing their ingenuity and courage to save their friends and protect the galaxy's citizens from oppressive regimes. The two characters shared much more than a familial relationship though, as both mother and daughter traveled parallel paths centered upon public service, outspoken wisdom, self-reliance, dedication to duty, and insightful reflection. Dealing with everything from personal sacrifices to interplanetary conflicts, Padmé and Leia prevailed as heroic figures whose larger-than-life exploits stemmed from their reliance on noble traits that we can all aspire to attain.

For the People

As the elected Queen of Naboo, Padmé Amidala's service to her people began at a young age, and she provided steadfast leadership during an invasion that left her homeworld in the Trade Federation's clutches. In cahoots with her decoy Sabé, a troubled Padmé made the difficult decision to leave Naboo and travel to Coruscant to seek assistance from the Galactic Republic in

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace (1999). Realizing that outside aid would not swiftly materialize, the queen boldly ventured back to her besieged planet and valiantly organized a resistance that freed those under her protection from the Trade Federation's occupation. She was held in such high esteem by her people that even after her term as queen had come to an end, the request was made that she continue to represent the planet in the Galactic Senate. It was a position which Amidala gladly accepted.

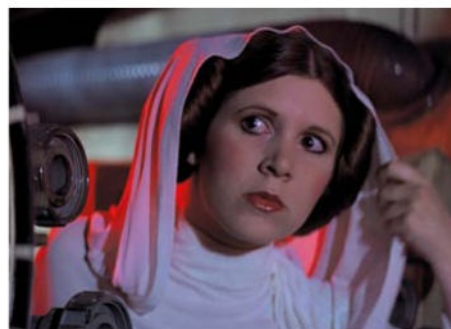
Adopted by the Royal Family of Alderaan, Princess Leia Organa's lineage did not spare her from growing up in the Galactic Empire's shadow. Leia grew up to become Alderaan's representative in the Imperial Senate, but her loyalty remained bound to democratic ideals and led her to sympathize with the fledgling Rebel Alliance. She refused to simply stand by and enable the Empire to crush those battling against its tyrannical rule. Just as Padmé had done a generation before, Leia chose to risk her own safety and jumped to Scarif aboard the *Tantive IV* in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016), only evacuating the warzone once she safely

Padmé and Leia prevailed as heroic figures whose larger-than-life exploits stemmed from their reliance on noble traits that we can all aspire to attain.

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01 Padmé Amidala (Natalie Portman).

02 Princess Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher).

03 Queen Amidala of Naboo.

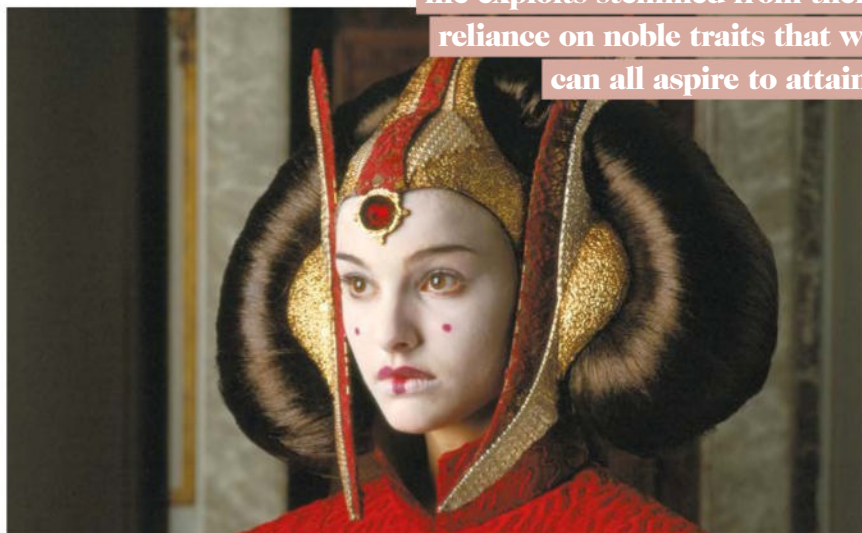
held in her hands the Death Star schematics that had been acquired at such cost by Jyn Erso's team. Steadfast in her beliefs, the princess' allegiance to Alderaan's population and her friends in the Rebellion continued even as the Death Star targeted her home. Unwilling to risk Alderaan's destruction or betray the rebels' location on Yavin 4, Leia unsuccessfully attempted to divert the superweapon's ire by claiming the clandestine base was on Dantooine.

Whether facing a blockade by the Trade Federation or an Imperial war machine, both Padmé and Leia refused to abandon the citizens in their care. Only the strongest leaders know when the time to ask for help arrives, and the two women showed off this fearless quality as their individual situations worsened. Padmé revealed her true identity to Boss Nass and sought the Gungans' participation in their planet's defense, while Leia dispatched R2-D2 with a message that requested Obi-Wan Kenobi finish the mission that she could no longer carry out. The ability to set aside their pride to benefit the masses substantiated the esteem that so many people held for these two remarkable women.

Speaking Truth to Power

Maintaining a headstrong attitude can be difficult, especially when ▶

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► a deadly Trade Federation fleet surrounds your world, or the most hated person in the galaxy towers menacingly above you. However, Padmé and Leia proceeded unphased during their respective encounters with Viceroy Nute Gunray in *The Phantom Menace* and Darth Vader in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977). The queen's confidence proved well-founded, and she defied all odds to eventually apprehend Gunray. Nor did she shy away from reprimanding her allies when necessary, including her evaluation of Qui-Gon Jinn's plan to enter a young Anakin into a podrace as "reckless," and disagreeing with Mace Windu's assessment that Count Dooku's Jedi origins prevented him from assassinating anyone. Likewise, Leia's verbal jabs extended beyond Vader and included stinging remarks about Grand Moff Tarkin's body odor, and even the stature of an armor-clad Luke Skywalker.

The mother and daughter also flouted danger by retaining their humor in trying moments. After two failed attempts on her life, Padmé preserved her capacity to laugh and joke when she and Anakin went into hiding on Naboo in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002), and in the battle arena on Geonosis, the senator took a brief moment to tease Anakin about her decision to engage in "aggressive negotiations." As the First Order bore down on the Resistance, Leia issued a jovial statement about Han Solo's jacket in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), and relieved tension by making Luke laugh with a quip about her hair in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017). Eliciting smirks from a future Sith Lord, a skeptical smuggler, and a Jedi recluse? Now that's impressive!

Despite their prominent roles in galactic conflicts, the two women often called upon their pacifist backgrounds to seek non-violent resolutions to events. Naboo's tranquil hills and small security force instilled a distaste for bloodshed in Padmé, who worked to defeat the Senate's Military Creation

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**Padmé and Leia's
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consistently sent
them into perilous
environments, but
neither character
needed to wait for
a rescue.**

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04 Queen Amidala defending Naboo.

05 Leia aboard the *Millennium Falcon*.

06 Leia remains a force for good in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

07 Padmé on the front line at the Battle of Geonosis.



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BAIL'S BOLDNESS

Senators Bail Organa and Padmé Amidala formed a loyal friendship based upon their mutual ideals, making the Alderaanian a natural choice to pass on those values as he and his wife raised Padmé's daughter.

Bail shared numerous attributes with Padmé and Leia, such as his inclination to endanger his own well-being for the greater good. It was the daring senator who smuggled Yoda and Obi-Wan Kenobi to Coruscant in the dying days of the Republic, who risked his safety to harbor Leia, and organized the Rebellion without concern for the perils lurking in every shadow. And, in a way, Bail's similarities to Padmé allowed the former queen to help nurture her daughter from beyond the grave.

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Act in the belief that it would push the Separatists into a corner and instigate a full-scale civil war. Leia's upbringing on Alderaan's serene (and defenseless) surface produced a corresponding effect, from her eagerness to halt the Death Star's cataclysmic ways to her desire to defeat the First Order before it could challenge the New Republic.

Resourceful Allies

Padmé and Leia's righteous efforts consistently sent them into perilous environments, but neither character needed to wait for a rescue. The two protagonists possessed the virtue of self-reliance and, while they could count on their friends for support,

regularly solved their own problems. By the time Anakin and Obi-Wan Kenobi began discussing their options for escape in the Geonosian battle arena, Amidala had already formulated her own method to sever the chains that imprisoned her. And although Luke, Han, and Chewbacca kicked off the assault on the Death Star's detention center, it was the princess who asserted control over their predicament, blasted a hole in some grating, and shouted the immortal line, "Into the garbage chute, flyboy!"

Correspondingly, both Padmé and Leia preferred to lead from the frontlines whenever a battle broke out, as exhibited by the queen's endeavor to recapture the Theed Royal Palace in *The Phantom Menace*, and the princess' last-minute stewardship of the Rebellion's evacuation from Hoth in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). But no matter how perilous situations became, the mother and daughter pair never permitted

their circumstances to hamper their spirits. During the struggle on Geonosis, when a turbulent flight sent Padmé falling from her transport into the sand below, the moment she was back on her feet the senator ordered a clone trooper to find another gunship, regroup with more soldiers, and continued with her pursuit of Count Dooku. Wounded by a stormtrooper on the forest moon of Endor, Leia kept her composure and took out the additional troopers lurking behind Han in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (2003). And as if that wasn't enough, years later she stood at the forefront of the battle and was

A dedication to duty clearly ran in the family, as Padmé and Leia tempered their powerful positions with kindness and compassion for the people they served.

► ready to open fire alongside Poe Dameron when a seemingly hostile First Order shuttle crashed into the Crait base—until Finn, Rose Tico, and BB-8 emerged, of course!

When necessary, these heroic women willingly placed themselves in harm's way to protect others. Padmé used herself as bait for her own assassin on Coruscant and charged to Geonosis after receiving a distress call sent by Obi-Wan. Leia demonstrated the same selfless behavior when infiltrating Jabba the Hutt's palace to save Han Solo, then by volunteering to join his command crew destined for Endor. Their gallant actions inspired their comrades and fostered hope when victory seemed elusive. The queen's capability to forge an alliance between the Naboo and the Gungans against the mighty Trade Federation paralleled General Organa's faith that the Resistance could be rebuilt in the Battle of Crait's aftermath. Grasping Rey's hand, Leia calmly assured the young woman, "We have everything we need."

Relentless Resolve

A dedication to duty clearly ran in the family, as Padmé and Leia tempered their powerful positions with kindness and compassion for the people they served and the strangers they encountered along the way. Both were also committed to equality for all sentient beings, as was showcased in their treatment of such races as the Gungans and the Ewoks. This devotion surfaced in the relationships of both women with their loved ones, as well. In a twist of fate, it was during life-and-death situations that both declared their love for the men in their lives, as Padmé divulged her affection for Anakin in the moments before their scheduled execution on Geonosis, while Leia proclaimed her feelings for Han as the Corellian prepared to be frozen in carbonite.

And yet, unlike some of those around them, love would dissuade neither of these headstrong women from performing their duty. When Anakin aimed to cease the hunt for



AMIDALA'S UPRISING?

Padmé Amidala's devotion to democracy and distaste for Sheev Palpatine's new Galactic Empire could lead one to wonder whether she might have helped Mon Mothma and Bail Organa build the Rebel Alliance, had she survived the events of *Revenge of the Sith*. Given the way she questioned the Republic's actions in the final days of the Clone War, it seems likely that involvement in the Rebellion would have been her future path. As it transpired, her daughter Leia would devote her life to following it.

Count Dooku and retreat to check on Padmé after she was knocked from their transport, Obi-Wan convinced his Padawan to focus on their mission by asking him what the senator would do if their roles were reversed. "She would do her duty," acknowledged Anakin. More than two decades later, Leia encouraged Luke to run away rather than confront Darth Vader, and claimed she wished she could leave with him. But Luke knew his sister would never abandon the rebels and gave voice to her resolve. "You've always been strong," he noted.

A Vision for the Future

Padmé and Leia treasured their personal relationships, but they also displayed uncanny foresight and a talent for seeing the bigger picture. As the Clone Wars wore on and Supreme Chancellor Palpatine continued to accumulate more political might, the Naboo senator prophetically questioned whether or not the Republic had

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Common principles and parallel experiences wove an unbreakable thread between Padmé Amidala and her daughter Leia Organa.



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transformed into the very evil it vowed to defeat. When Palpatine announced the birth of the Galactic Empire, Padmé ranked among the few senators who realized that the Emperor's corruption threatened peace and democracy. "So this is how liberty dies—with thunderous applause," she observed.

Leia's own foresight manifested through her involvement in the Rebel Alliance and the Resistance. General Organa's familiarity with the Empire's tactics during the Galactic Civil War helped guide her actions as Supreme Leader Snoke bolstered his military aspirations, and she cast off the New Republic's comforts to form the Resistance as a preemptive defense against the First Order's

08 Leia tells Luke all she remembers about her mother.

09 A princess turned general was an inspiration to the galaxy.

10 General Organa rebukes hot-head pilot Poe Dameron.

11 Padmé on her wedding day.

rising tide. The general sought to impart her wisdom upon Poe Dameron when she admonished him for proceeding without considering his deeds' broader impacts. Poe's relentless attack on the Dreadnought *Fulminatrix* severely depleted their forces, while his insurrection against Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo aboard the *Raddus* almost ruined the Resistance's chance to escape. Referring to her protégé, Holdo, Leia spelled out the lesson for Dameron in no uncertain terms: "She was more interested in protecting the light than she was seeming like a hero."

Common principles and parallel experiences wove an unbreakable thread between Padmé Amidala and her daughter Leia Organa. Their immeasurable contributions

to equality and freedom granted them honorable accolades, but both lost so much in their struggle against the dark side. The Emperor's influence stole Anakin from Padmé, while Snoke manipulated Leia's son, Ben Solo, with his grandfather's legacy. For all of their accomplishments, they unfairly blamed themselves for the creation of Darth Vader and Kylo Ren. Interestingly, Leia summarized numerous similarities between her mother and herself when she related the few memories she retained of Padmé to Luke: "She was very beautiful. Kind, but... sad." Nevertheless, Padmé Amidala and Leia Organa's perseverance through personal suffering brought inspiration and hope to the galaxy. 🌟

Cut To The Chase

Insider's favorite deleted scenes of the Skywalker saga, movie by movie.

WORDS: MICHAEL KOGGE

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s George Lucas has often admitted, his talents as a filmmaker lie primarily in his skills as an editor. He sticks to his preferred running length for a picture, at around two hours, with a narrative that is constantly moving forwards.

It was this editorial philosophy he adhered to when cutting the first two *Star Wars* trilogies, where he and his editors played no favorites, willing to remove any moment that didn't significantly advance the story. J.J. Abrams and Rian Johnson continued that practice in their sequels, wishing to echo the rhythm and pace of Lucas' previous *Star Wars* films.

"The whole process of editing is about paring the film down and keeping all that is relevant, and getting rid of the material that doesn't work, for one reason or another," Lucas said in a documentary on deleted scenes that featured on the DVD home entertainment release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999). It is a process that made for tighter films, but inadvertently created *Star Wars* myths from cut sequences and subplots that, in truth, were superfluous to the story. But myths they have become, even though they found their destiny on the cutting room floor.

Unlike Lucas, however, *Star Wars Insider* has played favorites, screening all of the available deleted scenes from the eight Skywalker saga films and selecting one from each that stands out. As in all matters of art and opinion, no doubt this will spark discussion—so let the debate begin!



01 Anakin's Fight

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace

First seen: DVD home entertainment release, 2001

■ After Anakin wins the podrace in Episode I, Lucas' shooting script describes young Anakin "rolling around on the floor, fighting," with a tyke-sized Rodian. A group of slave children stand around them, cheering them on. Anakin seems to have the upper hand, pounding a fist into his opponent's pea-green head, until Qui-Gon Jinn arrives. The sweaty boy explains that the Rodian says Anakin cheated in the podrace, but Qui-Gon tells the boy that he knows the truth and that fighting won't change the Rodian's opinion. Anakin listens to the Jedi Master and follows him away, while the brawling Rodian is lectured by Wald, a wiser member of his species who reveals the antagonist's name in his dialogue: "You better watch it, Greedo, or you're going to come to a bad end." It is advice Greedo obviously doesn't heed, as he later takes up a life of crime and ends up on the business end of Han Solo's smoking blaster in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977).

Lucas conceived the scene as "an essay on the judicial use of power," but deemed that it didn't establish Anakin's character one way or the other. While this disappointed producer Rick McCallum, who thought that the scene revealed "a little bit of the dark side in Anakin," Lucas' decision was correct from the viewpoint of character. A tussle like this would probably be an ordinary occurrence in the hardscrabble life of a Tatooine slave boy, and therefore an unreliable indicator to Anakin's future. Anakin also doesn't



behave violently like this at any other point in the film, so the scene sticks out from the rest. Moreover, the prequel trilogy is about a good boy turning into an evil man, and the inclusion of this scene may have weakened the impact of Anakin's subsequent choices. By pledging himself to the Emperor in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* (2005), Anakin makes a conscious decision to follow a dark path. It is *his* decision that dominates his destiny, not some predetermined violent tendency from his youth. Same for poor Greedo.

03 Restoring Democracy

Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith

First seen: DVD home entertainment release, 2005

■ While Obi-Wan searches for General Grievous on Utapau, Padmé and a delegation of senators petition Chancellor Palpatine to halt any further amendment to the Republic's Constitution. Palpatine assures them that democracy will be restored when the war is over. Padmé asks if a diplomatic solution is being pursued to end the war, to which the chancellor, seemingly miffed, says that she must trust him to do the right thing. Padmé departs with her delegation, casting an irked glance at the chancellor's bodyguard, her secret husband Anakin Skywalker.

Palpatine acknowledges the delegation's sincerity, but plants seeds of doubt in Anakin's mind about Padmé's loyalty, saying she is hiding something. Anakin confesses he can't sense betrayal in her, which Palpatine swiftly inverts, saying that the young man does indeed sense it, but doesn't "seem to want to admit it." As Anakin considers Palpatine's words, he falls more and more under the master manipulator's spell.

As illuminating as this encounter is, Lucas maintained that everything that wasn't central to the plot of Anakin's fall had to be cut. This scene, and others showing the gestation of the Rebel Alliance, tended to stall the story in political talk. Padmé had shown herself strong-minded and independent time and again, so the scene's elimination didn't detract from her character.



02

Padmé's Family

Star Wars: Attack of the Clones

First seen: DVD home entertainment release, 2002

■ In *Attack of the Clones* (2002), Padmé's return to her home on Naboo is a welcome relief after two foiled assassination attempts on Coruscant. She introduces her escort, Anakin Skywalker, to her family at their house, where they share a meal. Anakin and Padmé's father go for a walk afterward, while Padmé cleans up with her older sister, Sola, and her mother. Sola comments that Anakin has obvious feelings for Padmé, but the senator defends their relationship as purely professional. Later, Padmé shows Anakin her bedroom, which is decorated with holographic pictures of her time as a young legislator. He is clearly impressed—and smitten.

Lucas himself was smitten with this scene. "It went a long way to establish what Padmé's problems were," Lucas has stated. Padmé's dogged devotion to a life in public service hindered her from developing intimate personal relationships, and admitting that she liked Anakin. "When again I got very hard-nosed about the length of the film," Lucas said, "I realized that those ideas were already conveyed in a lot of the other scenes." Thus, Lucas followed the age-old advice to "kill your darlings," and pulled the family reunion.



04 Tosche Station

Star Wars: A New Hope
First seen: Blu-ray home entertainment release, 2011

■ The most sought-after and talked-about cuts in *Star Wars* cinematic history are a sequence of scenes involving Luke and his friends on Tatooine. While working with a Treadwell droid on his uncle's moisture farm, Luke glimpses a space battle in the skies above. He speeds off to Tosche Station in Anchorhead to tell his friends, although everyone dismisses his claims—except for Biggs Darklighter, who's recently returned from the Imperial Academy. Luke and Biggs take a

walk, during which Biggs confesses he's joining the Rebellion. Biggs' revelation jolts Luke, who knows he'll be stuck on Tatooine for yet another season to help his uncle on the farm. Their parting is a bittersweet moment, with Luke telling Biggs to, "take care of yourself, you'll always be the best friend I've got."

In the edit, George Lucas agonized over whether to include these scenes. While developing the screenplay, his movie buddies had insisted he introduce the hero, Luke Skywalker, at the beginning of the film. "So I did it. I wrote it, and I shot it, and I looked at it. It worked but it wasn't great," he revealed in *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays*. "I could not get out of my mind that, poetically speaking, I really wanted to have this clean line of the robots taking you to Luke, Luke taking you to Ben, Ben taking you to Han, Han taking you to Princess Leia... I just decided to trust my heart, and I structured the story that way because of the way I felt about it, not because it was logical."

Audiences were gripped by the movie's action-packed opening, quashing any concerns over the timing of Luke's introduction, and the scenes found a more natural home in which to add backstory in the novelization and radio drama.



CUT...! BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Deleted scenes have long been part of *Star Wars* lore. Ever since the original film premiered in May 1977, fans have argued about scenes they saw—or thought they saw—during the initial theatrical run or one of the re-releases. These scenes might revolve around Biggs Darklighter and Luke Skywalker talking about their dreams, or Han encountering Jabba the Hutt, or Chief Bast updating Darth Vader on the search for the missing droids. None of these scenes appeared in any theatrical release of the film, though some fans swore they saw them, long, long ago.

Truth be told, the fans weren't fibbing, if only from a certain point of view. Before the advent of supplemental content on laser discs and DVDs, cut material from *Star Wars* popped up in other places. The much-maligned *Star Wars Holiday Special* (1978) re-purposed some of the footage from the 1977 film, while Luke's backstory with Biggs was explored in the novelization, the children's books, the comics, and the radio drama. In fact, the *Star Wars Storybook* even featured a still photograph from the Luke and Biggs scene, which undoubtedly made such an impression that many fans were convinced they had actually seen it in the theater.

05 Wampas in the Rebel Base

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back
First seen: Blu-ray home entertainment release, 2011



■ The wampas were originally set to play a much larger role in the narrative of *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) than the lone ice creature that took a swipe at Luke Skywalker. Director Irvin Kershner and his crew shot additional scenes of wampas attacking the rebel base on Hoth, one of which showed a wampa scraping its claw through an ice wall, while another scene pitted rebel soldiers and R2-D2 against another wampa rampaging through the base. A humorous third scene had C-3PO removing a caution sticker from a blast door, creating a trap for an unlucky pursuing snowtrooper who was

grabbed by the wampa on the other side as he unwittingly opened it.

In his book, *Once Upon a Galaxy: A Journal of the Making of The Empire Strikes Back*, unit publicist Alan Arnold shed light on why these scenes ultimately didn't make it into the movie. "The fact of the matter is that the concept didn't work. Wampas smashing through ice walls are not everyday events. Filmmakers contrive things that haven't happened before and are unlikely to happen again. It was a brave failure," he wrote. The wampa scenes didn't hold up to the other special effects in the film, and deflected attention away from the Imperial peril facing the rebels.

Also, as the set progress report noted for the wall-clawing scene, "the man inside the monster suit has been there three hours and is suffering from stomach cramps." It transpires that not even special effects could overcome some basic human frailties.



06 Luke's New Lightsaber

Star Wars: Return of the Jedi
First seen: Blu-ray home entertainment release, 2011

■ George Lucas, screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan, and director Richard Marquand had originally envisioned a slightly different opening to *Return of the Jedi* (1983) than made the final cut. After Darth Vader scolds Moff Jerjerrod for his lack of progress on the second Death Star, Vader moves into his meditation chamber, where he communes with Luke, imploring his son to "join him on the dark side of the Force." The scene cuts to a dark robed Luke inside a cave, adjusting a lightsaber. He presses the activator on the hilt and the blade ignites green. An interesting tidbit is that the lightsaber Luke holds appears to be the same prop used by actor Alec Guinness in *A New Hope*, albeit with a few alterations.

Inclusion of this scene would have diminished both the mystery of *Empire's* "I am your Father" cliffhanger, and additionally ruined the surprise and drama of Luke's entrance into Jabba the Hutt's palace. A modified version of this scene, written by John Whitman, opens the *Jedi* radio play, with Luke building his lightsaber in Obi-Wan Kenobi's hut.



07

Jakku Message

Star Wars: The Force Awakens

First seen: Blu-ray home entertainment release, 2016

■ Initially, General Leia Organa was slated to appear much earlier in *The Force Awakens* (2015)—soon after Kylo Ren captures Poe Dameron, in fact. In a scene set at the hidden Resistance base, Major Brance relays a message to the general that there's no sign of the map to Luke Skywalker, and that the Jakku village has been wiped out. He also tells Leia that Poe's X-wing was found destroyed, with blaster marks indicating it was the work of the First Order, and that Poe's droid is missing. Leia isn't convinced that BB-8 has been lost and orders that the spherical droid be found immediately.

J.J. Abrams heeded the advice of screenwriter Michael Arndt to excise this scene from the film. In effect, this delayed Leia's appearance until her reunion with Han Solo after the raid on Takodana. As Abrams noted in the 3D Blu-ray commentary track, Arndt told him, "It's a far more powerful thing to meet her through Han Solo's eyes, and also at this point in the movie, when you need a breath of fresh air, you need some uplift." The decision to delay her introduction followed Lucas' formula in *A New Hope* that one character led the story to the next, and gave Leia—like Han and Chewbacca before her—a spotlight moment so the audience could applaud the return of a beloved character from the original trilogy.



08 Defending the Caretakers

Star Wars: The Last Jedi

First seen: 4K/Blu-ray home entertainment release, 2018

■ Emerging from the mountain cave on Ahch-To, Rey sees ships landing in the Caretaker village, which Luke identifies as the inhabitants of a neighboring island on their monthly raid. He counsels Rey not to rush to save them, but that's exactly what she does, running into the village with her lightsaber raised. She quickly realizes that this isn't a violent raid, but a party. On a pier, she encounters Luke again, who chuckles at her recklessness. She berates him for not agreeing to help his friends in the Resistance when they need him most, then storms off. The scene shows how much Luke has changed since his training with Yoda, as he's actually admonishing Rey for an action that he himself would have taken as a younger man.

Writer-director Rian Johnson adored this scene, yet as the initial cut of *The Last Jedi* (2017) ran well over three hours, scenes needed to be chopped and—since Luke's conflict with Rey had already been well established—this one fell by the wayside. "This always happens in the edit. It's like suddenly you can see through the matrix and you're like, 'Oh my god, that big sequence that I love so much and I can't imagine the movie without, if we lift it out and put these two things together, it plays in a slightly different way, but it plays better,'" Johnson told an audience after a screening of the film. "You don't think about all the stuff we built on set to get the shots, you don't think about all the work the actors and the crew did, you just hit one button and it's gone and the movie's better." The scene remains in both the adult and junior novel adaptations. 🙌

“ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE... YOU, AND *STAR WARS* TOYS!”

Action Figures: A *Star Wars* Story

It was the toy range that set a new bar for playability, and continues to bring the *Star Wars* experience home for millions of fans worldwide. Collector and toy expert Gus Lopez takes *Insider* on a nostalgic look back in time, at Kenner's original line of *Star Wars* action figures, vehicles, and playsets.

WORDS: GUS LOPEZ

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASBRO, JAKE STEVENS,
AND CHRISTOPHER COOPER

01



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T

he release of *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) was a defining moment for many kids growing up in the 1970s, who

were blown away by the brilliant storytelling, the rich universe of characters and settings, and the groundbreaking special effects. But it was the toys made by Kenner, with their infinite playability and compulsive collectability, that had a profound impact on their day-to-day childhood experience.

Before *Star Wars*, Kenner Products was a comparatively small company with a number of moderately successful toy lines, including Play-Doh, Easy-Bake Oven, Spirograph, SSP Cars and Vans, and the *Six Million Dollar Man* and *Bionic Woman* lines.

Back then, toys based on movies were rarely seen as a good bet for manufacturers, and predicting which movies would become hits was both difficult and risky. While other companies passed on *Star Wars*, Kenner was so impressed by the early concept art and bold vision of George Lucas' space-fantasy epic that they gambled on acquiring exclusive rights to produce the film's toys. It was a gamble that paid off, although no one—not even the most enthusiastic fans within Kenner—had expected the global *Star Wars* phenomenon that followed.

In the Beginning

For many kids experiencing *Star Wars* in the summer of 1977, there was an irresistible craving for toys based on the movie. Everyone wanted to bring the adventure home and experience it

01 All 12 original *Star Wars* action figures released by Kenner in 1978.

02 Kenner licensed the U.K. and European distribution rights to British company Palitoy, whose logo replaced Kenner's on all toy packaging.

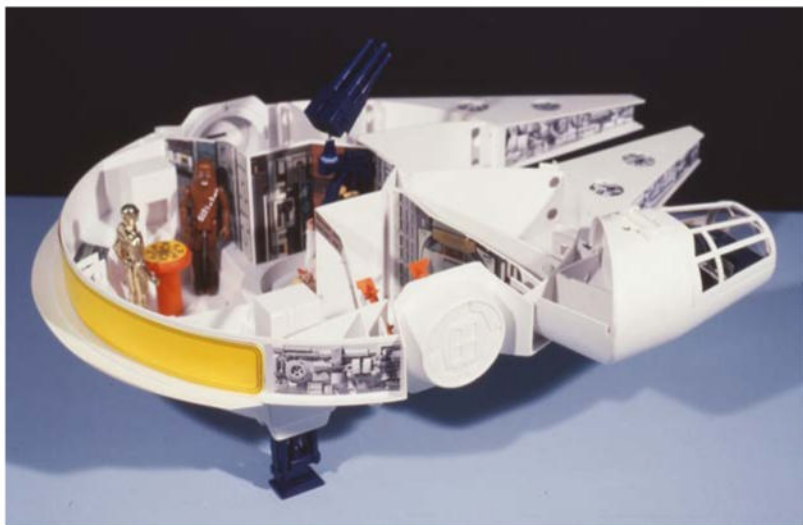
03 The impressive AT-AT vehicle.

again and again, but there were very few *Star Wars* toys available. Kenner scrambled to bring out products while the film was still playing in theaters, including jigsaw puzzles, Dip Dots art sets, and the *Star Wars: Escape from Death Star* board game, all of which were entertaining enough but lacking in true play value.

The following fall, rumors began to circulate that Kenner was creating a *Star Wars* action-figure line. Excitement was further amped when a television commercial for the first four Kenner figures aired. The toy line was not ready for release for the holiday season, but kids could obtain an Early Bird Certificate that allowed them to receive the first four figures (Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Chewbacca, and R2-D2) in the spring of 1978. It came with

Kenner was so impressed by the early concept art and bold vision of George Lucas' sci-fi epic that they gambled on acquiring exclusive rights to produce the film's toys.

04



05

► a cardboard playset to display the first 12 action figures, a small catalog of Kenner's *Star Wars* products, stickers, a membership card, and a couple of cut-out cardboard photos.

Kids received the four Early Bird figures at around the time the first wave of action figures appeared in stores, which included Darth Vader, Stormtrooper, Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi, Han Solo, and C-3PO. Several weeks later, the final three figures—Death Squad Commander, Sand People, and Jawa—arrived at retail, and the circle was complete.

This first release of highly coveted figures was unlike anything kids had ever seen before. The figures did not have as many points of articulation as G.I. Joe or Mego action figures, and they were also smaller and less posable. However, this was Kenner's masterstroke: they had the foresight to encourage kids to "Collect them all,"

and not just the figures, but also the various ships featured in the movie that the action figures could interact with. Known as '12 Backs' to collectors today, the first wave of figures pictured all 12 action figures in the range on the back of their card packaging, along with the Landspeeder, X-wing, and TIE Fighter vehicles, and instructions on how to order an action-figure display stand, all scaled to the action figures.

The Joy of Sets

Some of the more elaborate *Star Wars* toys were released by Kenner a year into the line, and were initially exclusive to retailer Sears. The Death Star Space Station playset featured a section of the weapon that contained the trash compactor, a control room, the chasm that Luke and Leia swing across, and a laser cannon. The Cantina Adventure Set—a yellow plastic base with a cardboard cantina backdrop—

introduced four new action figures to the line: Greedo, Hammerhead, Walrus Man, and Snaggletooth, which were initially only available with the Sears exclusive playset. Eventually, Kenner would release the four cantina figures on cards along with four additional characters, but Snaggletooth was somewhat reworked from the original Sears version, with shorter legs and a red outfit.

Kenner's most amazing toy vehicle—and the most coveted—was the *Millennium Falcon* Spaceship. This massive toy, scaled to fit multiple figures in its cockpit, gunner station, and main hold, featured a retractable ramp, holographic gaming table, and even an area for lightsaber practice. It was the toy that every kid wanted, and was so popular that Hasbro rereleased it in the mid 1990s using the same molds, until a larger, updated version was released in 2008.

For many kids experiencing *Star Wars* in the summer of 1977, there was an irresistible craving for toys based on the movie.

Ships in Ship-shape Shape

Despite the runaway success of *A New Hope*, Kenner was surprisingly uncertain whether the toys would perform as well for the 1980 sequel,



Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, and their initial wave of new figures included only 10 new characters. In fact, Kenner released so many toys for its action figures that there were more vehicles and playsets introduced for *The Empire Strikes Back* than actual figures. These included such delights as Darth Vader's Star Destroyer, the Hoth-based 'Imperial Attack Base' and 'Turret and Probot' playsets, a Snowspeeder, two versions of the Tauntaun—one with a belly-opening feature for those chilly Hoth nights, a Rebel Transport that doubled as a carrycase for your action-figure collection, and various small vehicles called mini-rigs—to name some of many!

The masterpiece this time was the AT-AT. Enabling kids to recreate the Battle of Hoth in the warmth of their own homes, this gigantic toy featured motorized, light-up cannons, an opening canopy for the pilot, and a door in the main bay revealing a large hold from which an army of snowtroopers could be deployed.

By the time *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983) rolled around, Kenner was ready. The first wave included

Kenner's most amazing toy vehicle—and the most coveted—was the Millennium Falcon Spaceship.

04 The preliminary model for the *Millennium Falcon* toy, designed by Mark Bourdreux.

05 The final retail *Millennium Falcon* Spaceship, desired by thousands of fans.

06 Featuring "Laser Battle Sounds," the Imperial Shuttle was the centerpiece of Kenner's *Return of the Jedi* range.



HARD TO FIND

Kenner has experimented with other *Star Wars* toy ranges besides small action figures, including a set of large 12-inch figures (see above) and die-cast metal vehicles released for *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Not all of them were hits, but that, conversely, has made them hot tickets for collectors today.

The Micro Collection line of toys based on *The Empire Strikes Back* consisted of small, interlocking plastic playsets with non-posable metal figures (see below). The toys were not popular during their time, and disappeared from shelves before *Return of the Jedi* was released in 1983. Today, they are extremely popular with collectors.

Following *Return of the Jedi*, Kenner issued a line of preschool toys based on the *Ewoks* animated series, including a Fire Cart, Family Hut, Woodland Wagon, Music Box Radio, Talking Telephone, and Teaching Clock. While the preschool *Ewoks* toys did not perform well at retail, collecting interest sometimes works inversely to a toy's popularity at the time, and there's now a growing number of niche collectors attempting to assemble the complete set.



07

“Action figures sold seperatley!”



KENNER'S TV COMMERCIALS

Kenner created numerous television commercials for its *Star Wars* toys, making sure to inform keen fans that “Action figures sold separately!” A more fondly remembered tagline promised that, “Only you can decide. You, and *Star Wars* toys!”

Many of the early commercials featured a musical soundtrack that was entirely of its own, and—unlike the effects-dominated toy commercials of today—actually showed kids playing with the toys while demonstrating their awesome play features.

Of the more memorable TV spots, a commercial promoting the large Wampa figure had a child repeating, “Wampa-wampa-wampa!” over and over again as he menaces our heroes with the Hoth monster. Advertising the Lando Calrissian Skiff Guard disguise figure from *Return of the Jedi*, another child ecstatically hollers the memorable phrase, “Surprise! Surprise! It’s Lando in disguise!”



07 “Battle Damaged” stickers added a new spin to existing toys for *The Empire Strikes Back*.

08 Numerous new action figures have been released as part of The Vintage Collection, on cardbacks inspired by the original Kenner toy line.

Kenner released so many toys for its action figures that there were more vehicles and playsets introduced for *The Empire Strikes Back* than actual figures.

► 17 new action figures, followed by 12 more in the second wave. By this point, Kenner had limited the number of new playsets to just two—Jabba the Hutt, and The Ewok Village Action Playsets—but they made up for it with a barrage of great vehicles, namely the B-wing, TIE Interceptor, Speeder Bike, Y-wing, and Battle Damaged TIE Fighter. The highlight was the Imperial Shuttle, a fantastic replica of the screen original that was so accurate it made for an excellent display piece, not forgetting the hours of play value offered by its retractable wings and many other unique features.

The Dark Times

With no new movies on the horizon after *Return of the Jedi*, interest in *Star Wars* toys began to fade as kids’ attention moved on to other franchises. Regardless, Kenner tried one last push for the movie line in 1985, with the creation of the Power of the Force series. This included some newly sculpted figures from across the trilogy, along with reissues of the most popular characters on all-new cardbacks. As an additional lure, each figure was packaged with a bonus coin that was part of a 62-coin set, but sadly the line languished on toy



store shelves and the series was short-lived. Ironically, the scarcity of this final set of vintage figures has made the Power of the Force line extremely popular among today's collectors, thanks in no small part to the strong likenesses to the characters, the coins, and the elegantly designed cards. Some characters from the line, such as Gamorrean Guard, AT-AT Driver, Nikto, and Yak Face, were only available beyond U.S. shores, as the dramatic drop in interest in *Star Wars* led to the inventory being sold overseas.

Kenner created action figures for the *Droids* and *Ewoks* animated series the following year but, as with the Power of the Force figures, they didn't

catch on and both series only survived for that initial wave. There would be no new *Star Wars* figures for another decade, but something interesting happened during those dark times. As the kids who had grown up with *Star Wars* reached adulthood, they became nostalgic about the toys of their childhood years, and many went back to rebuild or complete their sets.

Renaissance of the Jedi

By the mid-90s, *Star Wars* was experiencing a renaissance. Adult fans were networking with each other online over their love for their toys—the first generation to ever build a worldwide community devoted to

With no new movies on the horizon after *Return of the Jedi*, interest in *Star Wars* toys began to fade.

Star Wars collecting. The Timothy Zahn novels and Dark Horse Comics' *Star Wars: Dark Empire* renewed interest in original *Star Wars* stories, and with the release of the Special Editions and then the prequels, *Star Wars* was firmly back in the public eye.

Star Wars action figures made a comeback too, now branded under



► the Hasbro name, with numerous lines featuring old and new characters arriving in stores with each fresh cinematic episode. But there was something about Kenner's original run that left an insatiable desire in the hearts of collectors for silver borders and black cardbacks, and in 2004 Hasbro embraced that fan nostalgia with the Original Trilogy Collection, employing packaging reminiscent of the much-loved cardbacks from the early Kenner years. The Vintage Collection of super-articulated figures, launched in 2010, had a similarly retro Kenner packaging vibe, and proved so popular that by the time Hasbro ended that line in 2013, the series had actually outsold the entire eight-year run of the original 70s and 80s figures.

Hasbro announced it was reviving The Vintage Collection in 2018 with the launch of a crowd-funded initiative named HasLab, allowing them to create special products otherwise unrealistic for the company to produce for the general market. The first project—

At February's New York Toy Fare, Hasbro revealed The Star Wars Retro Collection.

again referencing the original Kenner line's packaging design—was the 3 3/4-action-figure-scale Jabba's Sail Barge, which at four-foot long became the largest *Star Wars* toy ever made. A whole new range of action figures based on characters from more recent movies joined the line too, but things got seriously retro in 2019.

At February's New York Toy Fair, Hasbro revealed The *Star Wars* Retro Collection—six 3.75-inch action figures inspired by the original 1970s sculpts, on cardbacks that could have believably been locked away and forgotten in a toy store warehouse for four decades. The line includes Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Princess Leia, Chewbacca, Han Solo, a Stormtrooper,



09 Hasbro's rerelease of the *Escape from the Death Star* board game includes an exclusive Grand Moff Tarkin action figure (above right).

10 The Vintage Collection's Jabba's Sail Barge toy, made possible through Hasbro's HasLabs crowdfunding initiative.

and one character who strangely never made the original run—Grand Moff Tarkin. It seems *Star Wars* action figures have truly come full circle, leaving collectors to decide whether to keep these new/old figures “mint in box,” or tear open those blister packs and invent all new space adventures, just as they did back in the day. So what will you do with yours?

Only you can decide. You, and *Star Wars* toys! 🙌

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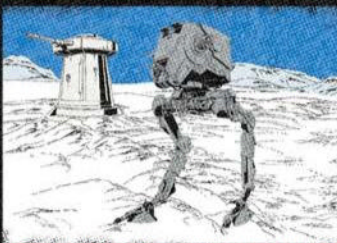
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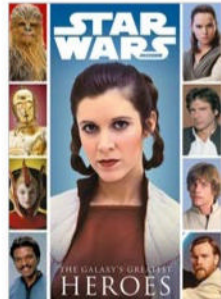
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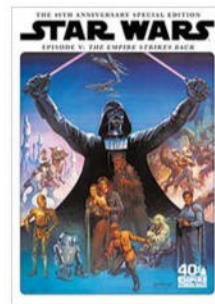
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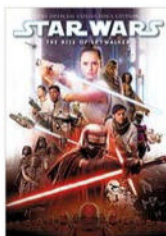


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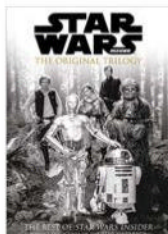


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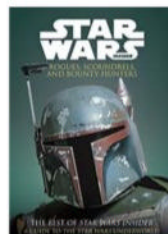
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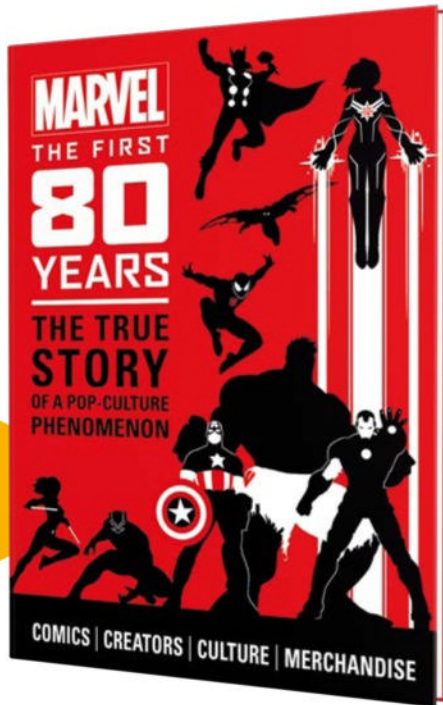
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