



FOR JAMES!

Soeh Wilkinson

STAR
JOURNEY
PLANET
WARS

Episode XL

JOURNEY PLANET

Brave fan writers, striking from hidden bases across the galaxy, have come together to create a fanzine dedicated to a beloved franchise.

In the following pages, you will find articles discussing THE LAST JEDI, anecdotes from people who worked at LUCASFILM, reviews of the LEGO sets people have created, interviews with creators like TIMOTHY ZAHN and TOM VEITCH, and much more.

So kick back, relax, get yourself a LOMALE or a BLUE MILK, and enjoy the Star Wars issue of JOURNEY PLANET....

Edited by John Coxon, James Bacon and Chris Garcia

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EDITORIAL

BY CHRIS GARCIA

I am writing this from a tiny nook in Santa Clara's Kaiser hospital. Vanessa, my loving wife, is having a ten hour surgery upstairs. I am downstairs. I've had my coffee, some tater-tots, a couple of pieces of bacon, and an orange juice. I'm listening to podcasts, specifically Last Podcast on the Left about the late, great Art Bell.

I am more scared at this moment than any other in my entire life.

And yet, I am thinking about the first time I watched Star Wars with the boys, JohnPaul entranced from the moment Vader came on the screen, and the moment he left the screen, turning to me and saying, "I want more Vader, Papa. Darth Vader, please, Papa."

I won't be seeing my boys until Sunday. It's Thursday. They're with Gramma, and I'm 100% certain she's going to show them Star Wars when they get fussy, wild, bitey.

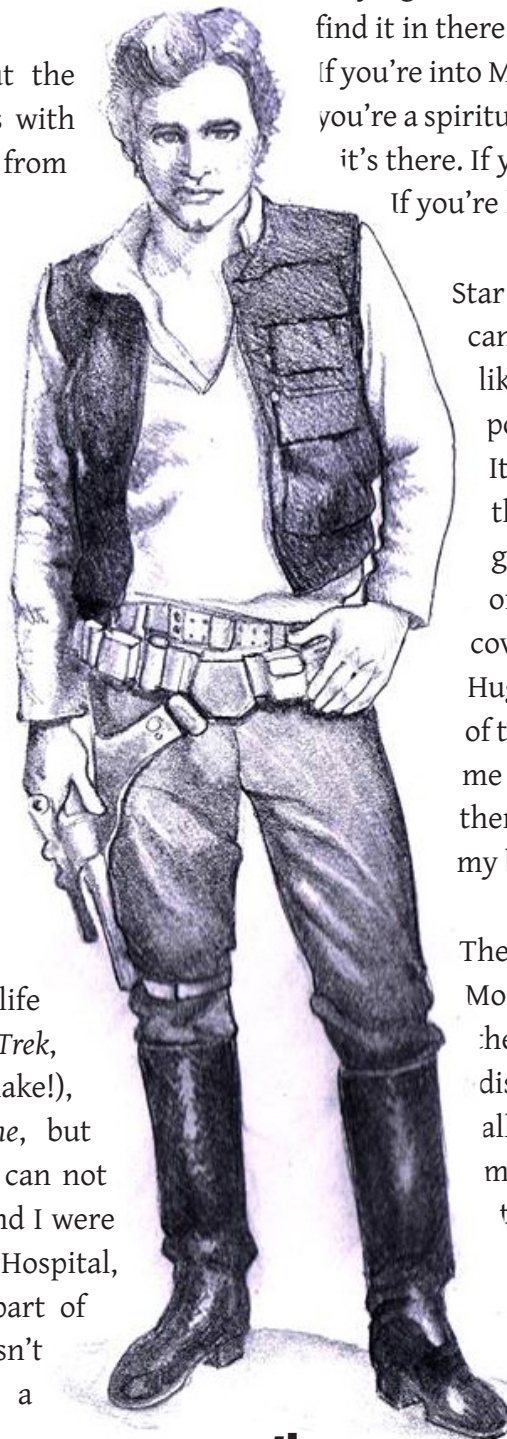
Just like she did with me when I was a kid. Smart lady.

Star Wars is a part of my life story. I watched a ton of *Star Trek*, *Battlestar Galactica* (not the remake!), *Buck Rogers*, and *Twilight Zone*, but Star Wars holds a place that I can not quite explain. When Vanessa and I were in Lucille Packard Children's Hospital, I watched *Jedi*, and I read a part of *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*. It wasn't quite a comfort viewing, or a

comfort reading, it was a way to find a centre of understanding. The world I was in at that moment was completely outside of my understanding. I had to regularly escape, into the hallways, into the hospital art that gave me so much more than I can ever explain, but Star Wars is always Star Wars. Star Wars is always what Star Wars is, and what it means might change, but it only changes within ourselves, within our views of the world that Star Wars exists in. If you're studying Marxist revolutionary thought, you can find it in there, especially in *The Empire Strikes Back*. If you're into Maker culture, it's all over the place. If you're a spiritualist, it's there. If you're an Occultist, it's there. If you're looking for comfort, it's there. If you're looking for a call to arms, it's there.

Star Wars is all of it, in a package that we can drink down like sweet wine, or sip like hot tea, or leave in the cup and read portends in the swirls of the liquid. It is, without question, something that shaped two, and now three-ish, generations of dreamers, of artists, of humans. I'm so glad we're finally covering it in *Journey Planet*, 2018 Hugo nominee for Best Fanzine and one of the things that keeps me going, keeps me sane, keeps me ready for what's out there. Both JP and Star Wars are among my baselines, what defines normal.

The surgery is planned for 604 minutes. More than enough time to watch the first trilogy. Enough times to re-discover C-3PO, the Ewoks, R2-D2, and all the rest of 'em. I wonder what the movies will be when I watch 'em in this moment. I wonder how it'll feel as I walk away, hopefully moments before Doctor Ho walks out and says everything went well.



ROGUE NINE, STANDING BY

BY JOHN COXON

When I was asked to write for – and later, edit! – this issue of *Journey Planet*, I couldn't think what to write about. I was vaguely tempted to cover *Star Wars: Secrets of the Empire*, which was a VR experience available in the US and London (if it's still running near you, you should definitely go!) and then I wondered about writing something about the new trilogy, but in both cases my heart wasn't really in it.

Enter Dave Filoni, who saved me from myself with the announcement of a new Star Wars television show – *Star Wars Resistance*. This show, which is set before the events of *The Force Awakens*, will focus on the fighter pilots which make up the burgeoning Resistance as they combat the First Order.

Dave Filoni said, “The idea for *Star Wars Resistance* came out of my interest in World War II aircraft and fighter pilots... There's a long history of high-speed racing in *Star Wars*, and I think we've captured that sense of excitement in an anime-inspired style, which is something the entire team has been wanting to do for a long time.” This show is everything I've been wanting from the new, Disney-sanctioned canon – and I should probably explain why.

Back in the distant past, I saw the three original *Star Wars* movies in the cinema in my hometown. I say the 'original' movies, but this was 1997, and so the versions I saw were actually the Special Editions – they marked my entry into the *Star Wars* universe, and remain my canonical version to this day. (Sorry, Han Shot First-ers!)

But the real path I took into *Star Wars* fandom wasn't so much the movies as it was everything around the movies. I vividly remember playing make-believe with my brothers when we got home from seeing *Return of the Jedi* for the first time, arguing over whether Luke calls his lightsaber with the Force before battling with Vader (sorry, James – you were right and I was wrong about that one).

But the books, they were the real secret. I read a lot as a kid, and the books were the reason I really, really got into *Star Wars* fandom. But not just any old books, oh no. The *Star Wars: X-Wing* novels.

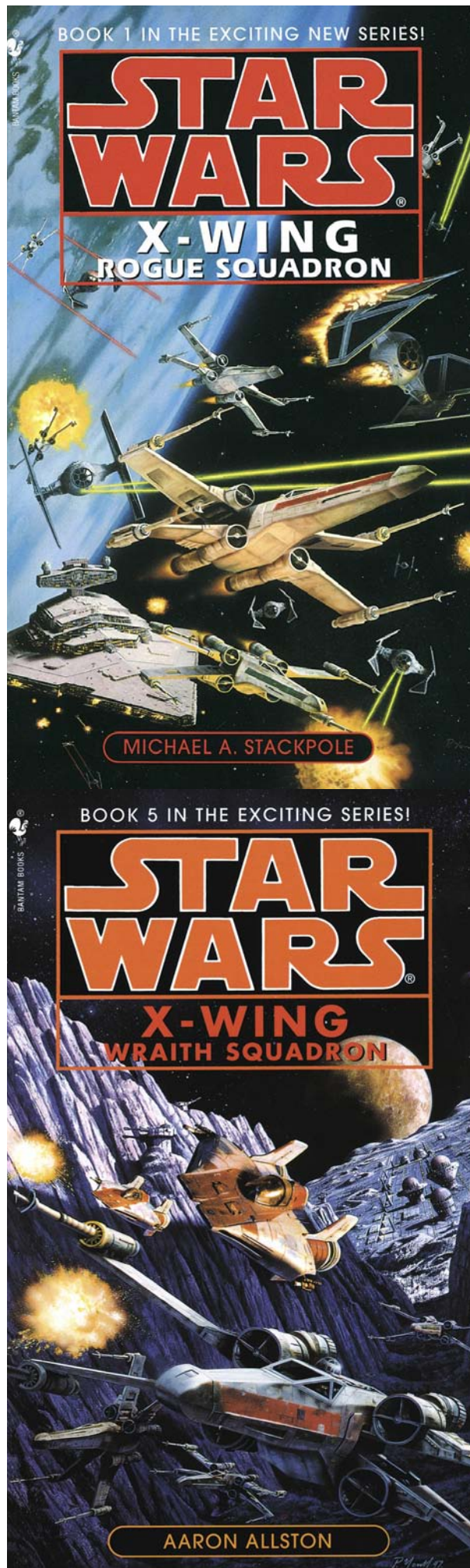
Some will tell you that Timothy Zahn is the greatest *Star Wars* writer ever to work in the canon, and that his contributions are partly why *Star Wars* is still relevant today. They're entirely right to say that –



Zahn is a legend and without him, Bantam may never have discovered the success they did with *Heir to the Empire*. The fact that Thrawn is one of vanishingly few characters to have been resurrected in the new canon is testament to his staying power.

But for me, it's not Zahn. It's Michael A. Stackpole and Aaron Allston. It's Rogue Squadron and Wraith Squadron. It's Corran Horn – and if you ever thought anyone in Star Wars was a Mary Sue, you'll like him – and Wedge Antilles and Wes Janson and Hobbie Klivan and Garik 'Face' Loran. It's the Star Wars: X-Wing series.

These books had everything, if by 'everything' you mean very little character development but a lot of great starfighter action setpieces, linked by wisecracks. They were rollicking, rip-roaring yarns that took me into the starfighter battles that made me fall in love with *Return of the Jedi* and are arguably, to this day, the reason I can still stomach watching *Revenge of the Sith*. They're the reason that I strongly considered inserting about 100 words into James' article about female pilots later in this issue, as he totally misses out all of the excellent characters that only appear in the novels, like Lara Notsil and Mirax Terrik and Erisi Dlarit, as opposed to those characters appearing in the comic, which preceded the novels and was also penned by Stackpole.



I loved the books so much that I actually adopted the online handle 'Rogue Nine' for many years, and I'm still on a small handful of sites under that name. Very occasionally someone else would get the reference, and even more rarely still, someone else would already have that handle. And I was thrilled when they put an X-Wing helmet generator online to celebrate the release of *Rogue One* – my result is at the bottom right!

But, as we are all very aware by now, Disney's acquisition of Lucasfilm meant that the Expanded Universe passed into Legends, and the ten book series which focused on Wedge Antilles and his two squadrons faded into the background of the Star Wars franchise. Since that happened, I've been waiting and hoping for a resurrection of the old fighter jock novels, set after the events of *Return of the Jedi*, telling the story of the fighter jocks that protected the New Republic.

Now, I will note here that the *Poe Dameron* comic for Marvel should, in theory, address a lot of my desire. However, for whatever reason, that comic doesn't hit me where I want it to. Whether it's because the comic is really more about Poe than the other members of the squadron, or whether it's because it's really not all that focused on flying, I'm not sure – but it doesn't scratch my itch the way I hoped it would.



Don't get me started on *Battlefront* and *Battlefront II* – where is my follow-up to the *Rogue Squadron* games, Lucasfilm?! Where's my good, solid Star Wars starfighter sim? Also, Chris, I loved your article on the best Star Wars games of all time, but dismissing those games is a travesty. We all know *Rogue Leader* was goddamn masterpiece! I have fond memories, before I got a GameCube, of going to the local electronics place in my hometown and playing *Rogue Leader* in my school uniform. I sometimes played up to an hour before the shop shut and I had to get the bus home. Those games are, by far, my favourite part of the Star Wars video game landscape.

In Dave Filoni's statement, he said, "there's a long history of high-speed racing in Star Wars". That's true, but there's a much longer history of awesome starfighter battles being waged in *X-Wings* and *TIE Fighters*. I'm not excited because this show looks like it'll recapture the excitement of pod racing. I'm excited because this show will recapture the excitement of all those games, comics and (most importantly) books that showed us the fighter jocks.

Enter *Star Wars Resistance*. In one blog post, the Star Wars franchise suddenly looks a lot more rosy for those of us who miss the period of the franchise where starfighter jocks ruled supreme. I cannot wait for the show, and I'm super excited to see where Filoni takes us next.



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

JAMES BACON

James Bacon is a Hugo Award-winning fanzine editor and the co-creator of a little fanzine called *Journey Planet*.

MICHAEL CARROLL

Michael Carroll is not yet dead (information correct at time of writing). Visit his marginally awesome comics blog at <http://michaelowencarroll.wordpress.com>. [As well as the article later in the issue, Michael provided the excellent logo that graces our cover — Ed]

JOHN COXON

John Coxon is an avid Star Wars fan whose love for the franchise was revived by *The Force Awakens*. He edits the fanzine *Procrastinations*, but hasn't pubbed an ish since 2014. In his spare time, he is a space plasma physicist at the University of Southampton. He is on Twitter as [@johncoxon](https://twitter.com/johncoxon).

DAVID FERGUSON

David Ferguson is editor-in-chief at *Irish Comic News*, which reviews and promotes books by Irish creators and those working in the Irish comic scene. It can be read at <http://www.irishcomicnews.com>.

WILL FRANK

Will Frank is an intellectual property lawyer and active fan based in New York City. He did a lot of work behind-the-scenes on this issue, and he can be found on Twitter at [@scifantasy](https://twitter.com/scifantasy).

CHRIS GARCIA

Chris Garcia has been editing zines since before he knew how to talk. He's a Hugo Award-winning editor of *The Drink Tank* as well as this very zine. He's on Twitter at [@johnnyeponymous](https://twitter.com/johnnyeponymous).

JAMES MASON

James Mason saw *A New Hope* in Leicester Square, a long, long time ago (1977) at a tender young age and nothing was ever the same after that screening. He also doesn't feel like *The Last Jedi* ruined his childhood and feels that JJ Abrams was robbed of an easy way of closing out the trilogy, which may be a problem for someone who doesn't have the best record of finishing things well.

CRAIG MILLER

Craig Miller was active in science fiction fandom when he was hired as Director of Fan Relations at Lucasfilm in 1977. He worked there as a publicist and special projects producer through the release of *The Empire Strikes Back*. He's currently finishing "Star Wars Memories", an anecdotal memoir of his time in the Death Star trenches, and remains active both in the entertainment industry and fandom.

HELENA NASH

Helena Nash is a professional games designer who also has been published in 2000AD. She blogs at <http://chocolate-ocelot.blogspot.co.uk/> and is on Twitter at [@nash_helenanash](https://twitter.com/nash_helenanash).

JEANNETTE NG

Jeannette Ng was introduced to the Star Wars franchise by *The Last Jedi*. She is also a Campbell Award-nominated author, and her debut novel, *Under the Pendulum Sun*, is published by Angry Robot books. She is on Twitter as [@jeannette_ng](https://twitter.com/jeannette_ng) and is on Medium as [@nettlefish](https://medium.com/@nettlefish).

AUTUN PURSER

Autun Purser is a deep sea ecologist, voracious fan of science fiction and occasional cover artist / illustrator. He can be found online at <https://www.apillustration.co.uk>.

ANTHONY ROCHE

Anthony Roche edited three issues of *Merry Marvel Fanzine* and seven of *Heroes Unlimited* from Dublin in the late 1960s. He retired after four decades as a teacher of English literature in 2016 and has been persuaded by James Bacon and Pádraig Ó Méaloid that the time is now ripe for *Heroes Unlimited* no. 8. This will be out via *Journey Planet* in the autumn and will feature an interview with Alan Moore.

IRFAN RYDHAN

Irfan Rydhan is an Architectural designer by profession but a passionate enthusiast in media arts and activism. Irfan is currently serving as the Public Relations Director for *Illume Magazine* and has his own featured blog about Architecture, Islamic Art, Media Activism and Halal Food called *Al Mihrab: The Place of War* which can be found at <http://almihrab.wordpress.com>. He is also on Twitter as [@IrfanRydhan](https://twitter.com/IrfanRydhan).

JUAN SANMIGUEL

Juan Sanmiguel is a Science Fiction fan in Central Florida and can usually be seen listening to his MP3 player when he is not reading. Long live the Alliance. He is on Twitter at [@RainbowWar71](https://twitter.com/RainbowWar71).

JAMES SHIELDS

James Shields was seven years old when he saw *A New Hope* (or as it was then called, *Star Wars*) in the cinema with his cousin, and his life changed forever. A year later LEGO Space was released and his life changed forever again. He spent much of the time that followed constructing fleets of tiny LEGO X-wings and TIE Fighters.

MO STARKEY

Mo Starkey is an illustrator, game art designer, winner of the Hugo award for Best Fan Artist, and of course longtime contributor and friend of the fanzine.

ANDREA SWINSCO

After a childhood of geekery Andrea discovered conventions back in '86, and her fan-fuelled hobby eventually developed into a business (via a detour working in the film industry and a stint in retail). She now runs large scale sci-fi events with her partner Jason. She is still a big geek.

TOM VEITCH

Tom Veitch is a writer. In addition to being a novelist and a poet, he is well-known for this work in the comic book industry, and was the writer of *Dark Empire*, one of the first comics to come out of Dark Horse. For more detail on Tom, there's an interview with him later in the zine!

SARAH WILKINSON

Our cover artist Sarah Wilkinson has been professionally working in the trading card/comic book industry for over 11 years. Her first job was for Topps and Lucasfilm, designing sketch cards for the *Revenge of the Sith* movie trading card set. She was one of the youngest artists to be an officially approved Lucasfilm artist. Since then, she has worked on many properties in the trading card world. Her art has been used on comic book covers (IDW Comics, Aspen Comics), as comic book pin-ups (IDW Comics, Red5 Comics). Her favourite property to illustrate continues to be Star Wars. While a Guest of Honour at this year's Capricon 38, Sarah drew the cover you see in front of a live audience of fans. She can be found online at <http://www.sarahwilkinson.net>.

CHARLOTTE 'CLEO' WOLF

Charlotte Wolf is a queer trans woman from Michigan. She has spent the last six years working as a policy writer, community builder, advocate, and health educator. She first fell in love with Star Wars as a young child, watching each film several times a month; ever since, a part of her has stayed behind a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....

A MATTER OF CHARACTER

BY DAVID FERGUSON

Growing up in the 1980s, the original Star Wars trilogy seemed to be on TV every Christmas so I have never really been without it. Even as a young child I noticed one thing about the series: the abundance of interesting “extra” characters. Every creature, be it a band member playing in a cantina or small hooded thief, seemed to have a personality. As I grew older, I noticed something else: fans seemed to have their own favourite “extra”. A cousin of mine, for reasons I could never fathom, latched on to Admiral Ackbar (the “It’s trap” guy).

My brother, however, settled on, a perennial fan favourite, Boba Fett. I had to go with my brother on this one. Now he may not seem like an “extra” but, in the original trilogy, he clocked up a total of 27 words and his screen time is 6 minutes 32 seconds (13 seconds of which was his ship only). Trust me. I looked it up on a Boba Fett fan site.

“As you wish.”

“What if he doesn’t survive? He’s worth a lot to me.”

“He’s no good to me dead.”

“Put Captain Solo in the cargo hold.”

So why do fans pick a character like Fett? I think you have to start with the cool design. Joe Johnston was responsible for the distinctive armour and equipment and worked with artist Ralph McQuarrie

to develop his design. The bounty hunter’s unique look was apparently derived from early concepts of one of the Star Wars franchise’s coolest designs: Darth Vader. I think the absence of a back story adds to the character’s mystique. He’s just an dangerous, no nonsense bounty hunter (his danger is sold by the scene in which Han Solo’s anxious reaction to his presence gives us the character’s real name).



JEREMY BULLOCH IS 'BOBA FETT'

The cool design/air of mystery approach to character design saw the emergence of, arguably, the best character to come out of the prequel trilogy: Darth Maul. The final design drawing was based on production designer Iain McCaig’s own face, with the skin removed, and some inkblot experiments similar to the Rorschach tests. Darth Maul’s head originally had feathers but the Creature Effects crew led by Nick Dudman interpreted those feathers as horns, modifying his features into those common in

popular depictions of the devil.

All this led to another cool design. What is interesting again is that the character seems more than an “extra”, right? Well he beats Boba by 4 words reaching 31 (in one conversation with Darth Sidious) but loses out in screen time by clocking up only 6 minutes. Also, he isn’t named. Like Fett, however, he does have an impact on the plot. Both characters were popular enough to have bigger roles in the “expanded universe” but I haven’t really looked into that yet. There is something to be said for less is more.

IRISH CONNECTIONS IN STAR WARS

BY JAMES BACON

I'd travelled over to the first Empire Day in 1994 in England, following meeting Jason Joiner and Andrea Swinsco at Incon 2. Getting to the Empire Day was an adventure in itself, getting the night ferry and bus to London, then travelling out, on a Remembrance Sunday, falling foul of security forces, then eventually finding the venue, which was across from the famed Elstree studios. I had a cracking day, there were about 300 people there. I even helped out a little. From then I got involved with the Empire Day conventions, that took place mostly in Wolsey Hall in Chesunt with a couple occurring at The Watford Coliseum and the Seymour Leisure Centre less than a mile from Paddington.

I hadn't imagined, and had not at that time done the research, to know what Irish people were involved with Star Wars. There just wasn't as much stuff available. In fairness, the rise had returned by this stage, but Star Wars and books about it, were just not as available. I got to meet Dermot Crowley from Cork at an Empire Day and then Jason told me I would love Declan Mulholland, and indeed, I did. He was an exceptionally nice gent. I felt that about all the actors actually, I was very fortunate to meet so many, and engage and they were very pleasant, but Mulholland was great. These fellas were from home, and just like the comic writers and artists from Ireland, it was always lovely to meet them.

Here, I have pulled together a list of Irish connections to Star Wars. I was impressed that *Rogue One* was strongly peppered with Irish, being for me the most rebellious of stories. I should note, some of the actors were born in places such as Croydon and Birmingham, but they identify or are identified as Irish, and so they are.

PHANTOM MENACE

Bronagh Gallagher born 1972 from Derry, is a singer and actress who portrayed Captain Maai Madakor. Immediately recognisable to me from *The Commitments*, she was also in *Pulp Fiction*.

Adrian Dunbar from Enniskillen, originally played Bail Organa. Well that was the plan. Lucas had said he would be in the next two films. He was set to appear in the Senate sequence, seconding Queen Amidala's Vote of No Confidence that toppled Valorum's Chancellorship. At some stage during production, references to "Bail Organa" in the script were changed to "Bail Antilles" and then the scenes were cut from the film. Bail Organa was played later by Jimmy Smits. A disappointing situation for Dunbar. The world of Star Wars, and its fans noticed. The likeness of Dunbar is used in the Star Wars Legends Universe, as Bail Antilles. Although some publications missed the change, and so confusion has existed. Star Wars put everyone straight, so Bail Antilles is the likeness of Adrian Dunbar.

Liam Neeson from Ballymena described Qui-Gon Jinn: 'He's almost like a monk, an old-time warrior who is wise and quite philosophical, yet very skilled in martial arts. He has incredible confidence, as well as a magical quality that enables him to see into the future. He's not really a rebel, but he has his own code' The man who played Gen. Michael Collins and Oscar Schindler so well, had a tough role, in a tough movie. I have always felt that amazing actors were slightly wasted because of a poor story.

REVENGE OF THE SITH

Genevieve O'Reilly from Dublin portrayed Mon Mothma, and returned to the role for *Rogue One* and two episodes of *Star Wars Rebels*.

ROGUE ONE

Ian McElhinney will be known to audiences for his role in *Game of Thrones* as Ser Barristan Selmy. In *Rogue One* he played General Dodonna, a character first played by Alex McCrindle (from Glasgow) in *A New Hope*. Francis Magee played Alliance Pathfinder Corporal Jav Mefran, quite noticeable with the square 'Ronnie Drew' style beard, participating in the battle of Scarif.

Valerie Kane from Newry, played Lyra Erso, Jyn's mother. Michael Smiley is a Northern Irish actor who portrayed Cornelius Evazan. Ned Dennehy is credited with being a prisoner, and was previously in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

Christopher Patrick Nolan portrayed the Alderaanian consular security guard Toshma Jefkin in the final scenes. 'That... thing in the hallway, while we were trying to get off the Profundity. It killed at least a dozen of my men, cut them down like they were nothing. Blasters had no effect, it just kept on coming, kept on killing. It was like... like a nightmare. I've never seen anything like it, like some kind of death angel.' — Second officer Toshma Jefkin to Captain Raymus Antilles.

A NEW HOPE

Declan Mulholland from Belfast played Jabba the Hutt (below). In the original scene of Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt meeting in Docking Bay 94, Declan has a clear Irish accent, and the same words were used later when a CGI Jabba was imposed by Lucas. Eddie Byrne played General Willard, the officer greeting Leia on Yavin 4.

RETURN OF THE JEDI

Dermot Crowley from Cork played General Crix Madine. In 1987, he was one of three actors who performed in a screen test to play the Seventh Doctor in *Doctor Who*. Gerald Home from Belfast played one of Admiral Ackbar's Mon Calamari officers but he also played the imaginatively-named Squid Head (his head looks like a squid), aka Tessek, in Jabba's palace in *A New Hope*.



THE LAST JEDI

Jonathan Harden from Northern Ireland voiced a Resistance monitor, and Patrick O'Kane portrayed Tritt Opan, from Belfast, he also played Jaqen H'ghar in *Game of Thrones*.

OTHER ACTORS

Ian Kenny and Ray Whelan have been mentioned as playing roles in *Solo*, which at the time of writing is not yet out.

Tony-nominated actor Fionnula Flanagan from Dublin portrayed Catarine Towani in *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure*. Flanagan was one of the few actors to be involved in both a Star Wars film and a Star Trek production. Flanagan played Juliana Tainer in the *Next Generation* episode "Inheritance", Enina Tandro in the *Deep Space Nine* episode "Dax", and Ambassador V'Lar in the *Enterprise* episode "Fallen Hero".

Ray Stevenson (born May 25, 1964) is an Northern Irish-English actor who voiced Gar Saxon in the third season of *Star Wars Rebels*.

ARTISTS

Kellie Strom was the penciller for the comic "Fortune, Fate, and the Natural History of the Sarlacc" that appeared in *Star Wars Tales* #6. John McCrea did the stories on 3 issues of *Star Wars Tales*. One of which were written by Garth Ennis. John was and is hugely popular with fans, and I continually see him asked for Star Wars sketches at cons. They were "Trooper" by Garth Ennis (#10), "The Duty" (#12) and "The Other" (#16).

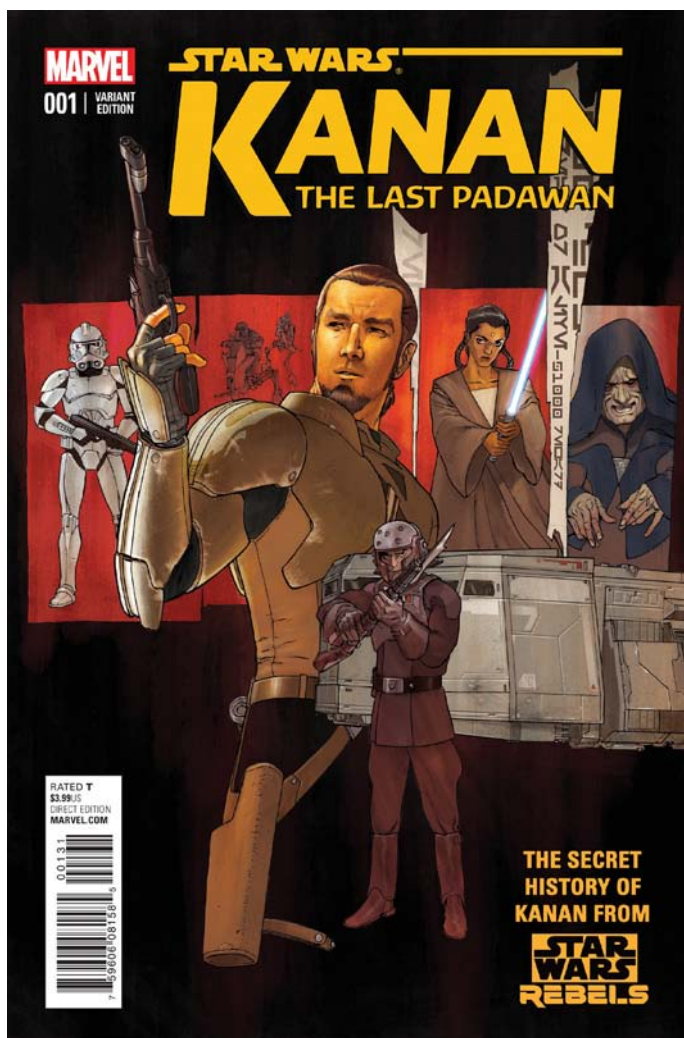
Stephen Thompson from Dublin, Ireland illustrated the story Jango's Legacy from the Dark Horse *Star Wars Republic* #50: The Defence of Kamino. He also drew three of the issues from the four part mini series from Dark Horse,

Darth Vader and the Ninth Assassin.

Dermot Power from Waterford was a comic artist who worked as a concept artist for Star Wars. Some of his unused early concept artwork for *Attack of the Clones*, was later used for *Clone Wars*. For *The Force Awakens*, his concept work on a chrome stormtrooper is featured, a character which eventually became Captain Phasma.

Will Sliney from Cork drew the two-parter “Dug Out”/”Outgunned” for the UK’s *Clone Wars* comic in 2011. We have some questions answered from Will elsewhere in the fanzine. Ruairí Coleman has drawn *Rebels* and an adaptation of *Weapon of a Jedi*, and again, we have an interview with him coming up later. Chris O’Halloran has done the colour art for *Rebels* and *Weapon of a Jedi*.

While the saga never seems to cease, I see Declan Shalvey did the variant cover in March this year with Matthew Wilson (colour art) for *Star Wars: Thrawn #2*. *Star Wars Adventures #7* has some line art by Philip Murphy also in March 2018.



Kilian Plunkett from just outside Dublin is an artist who has worked on numerous Star Wars projects. Starting with Dark Horse on four-part 1993 miniseries *Aliens: Labyrinth*, Kilian did the painted covers for the company’s series *Star Wars: Droids*, issues 2-6 in 1994. He went on to do the covers for all eight issues of the second *Droids* series, and the *Droids Special*. In 1995 he drew the covers of #8 and #9 of *Classic Star Wars*. In 1996 he drew the six-issue miniseries adaptation of *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* (which was an interesting project, and deserves a whole article). He also draw nine-issue mini series *Mara Jade, by The Emperor’s Hand* (written by Timothy Zahn) and the stand alone *The Jabba Tape*. He did the cover for the collected edition of *Dark Force Rising*.

In *Star Wars Tales* he wrote and drew *Sandblasted* in #4 and drew ‘Thank the Maker’ in #6 where he also drew the cover. He also did a Han Solo cover for issue #11, which was devoted to stories about Han Solo, in 2002. In 2002, Plunkett did the covers for two-part story “The Devaronian Version” in Dark Horse’s *Star Wars: Republic #40* and #41. He did the covers for seven issues of *Star Wars: Empire*, where the focus was Biggs Darklighter. Issues #8 to #12, #15 finally in 2004 the cover for issue #26 .

In 2005 he got work with the *The Clone Wars* with Dave Filoni. Initially assigned design work on Mace Windu and Palpatine he worked in many areas, up to the lead character designer on the show.

Plunkett illustrated the cover of issue #2 of Dark Horse’s *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* spin-off comic series in 2008. Plunkett’s first name was used to name a new character in *The Clone Wars* called Admiral Kilian, while the PLNK-series power droid which made a “plunk” sound, was named for him.

He then went on to be the Art Director of the four seasons of *Star Wars: Rebels* animated TV show, some 70 episodes. And it is an incredible series. There has been mention of the adoration and appreciation of what has come before, and one really sees that in *Rebels*. Especially in regard to Ralph McQuarrie and Joe Johnston. In 2016 he did a variant cover for *Kanan: The Last Padawan* issue #1.

INTERVIEWS WITH IRISH COMIC PROS

BY JAMES BACON

WILL SLINEY

Will Sliney is an incredibly busy comic artist, from Cork, I first saw his stunning work in Atomic Rocket Group 66 in 2007 and since then, he has drawn Star Wars to Spider-Man. He kindly answered our questions, just after the successful Cork Comic Expo.

Journey Planet: When did you first see Star Wars, and how was that experience?

Will Sliney: I saw them at home as rented videos. My first memory is my mum coming back from the video store with *The Empire Strikes Back*. I was upset as I thought I had already seen it as it was Star Wars again. It blew my mind!

JP: Have you always been a fan, and what do you like most about Star Wars?

WS: Yeah, as far as I remember. Little kid against the evil Empire. Good vs. Evil. Classic!

JP: How did you get professional work on the franchise?

WS: I guess I always let people know I was a fan, and my comic work led me there. I sent some clone wars samples in many many years ago and it went from there.

JP: Can you tell us a little about that work?

WS: It has varied over the years. I started off on *The Clone Wars* comics, then I did some original trilogy illustrations. The latest work was for Marvel for some of the movie tie-ins and the great new comic lines.

JP: How do you find the sequels?

WS: I enjoyed them. Ireland looked fantastic!

Will Sliney blogs at sliney.blogspot.co.uk.

RUAIRÍ COLEMAN

Ruairí Coleman drew the comic adaptation of *Weapon of the Jedi*, originally by Jason Fry. The adaptation was written by Alex Worley, and since then Ruairí has drawn *Rebels* comics for Panini.

JP: When did you first see Star Wars, and how was that experience?

Ruairí Coleman: My father introduced me to Star Wars when I was very young - I was maybe six or seven but I honestly can't be sure. My mother and older brother must have been off someplace that evening because I remember it was just me and my dad in the house and he took me to the local video store and rented *Return of the Jedi*. I had zero notion of Star Wars, like at all, so I remember him telling me about lightsabers and such as we walked to the shop to pick up the movie. I sat on his knee and watched enthralled the entire time. It's one of my fondest memories. That lightsaber duel between Vader and



Luke still kicks ass.

JP: Have you always been a fan, and what do you like about it?

RC: I've always been a casual fan of Star Wars, with sporadic bouts of intense fanboying. As a kid my brother and I loved the toys, we played the Super Star Wars games for Super Nintendo religiously, and when Dark Horse released their adaptation of *Shadows of the Empire* I went crazy for the artwork and drew my own Star Wars comics. That said, I was much more into superheroes as a kid, and while I'd get hyped for Star Wars at times (I loved being able to watch the remastered movies in the cinema back in the late 90s, I don't think I've had a cinematic experience like it since) I was more usually engrossed in X-Men, Spider-Man, Batman or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

There's so much I love about Star Wars: the concept of the Force with the traditional-looking Jedi and Sith juxtaposed with hi-tech lightsabers, blasters, and spaceships. It's pretty high concept stuff. I gag for the design work in the tech, starships et cetera. It's all so unique and timeless (but drawing it is a challenge)! I even love the funky names everyone has: it's like somebody threw a bunch of engineering terms into a fantasy character name generator.

Star Wars is a really well-realised universe that has so much potential for storytelling and adventure that I can never help but check out anything new to see what's going on.

JP: How did you get professional work on the franchise?

It's all thanks to Will Sliney, currently drawing Marvel's *Scarlet Spider* (among a million other things probably, the guy is always working), who recommended the team of Chris O'Halloran and I to Panini's Star Wars editor, Gunther. Chris and I worked together on two *Rebels* comics before taking on Alec Worley's adaptation of Jason Fry's novel, *Weapon of a Jedi*. That ran across four issues of Panini's Star Wars magazine in Germany and has since been collected in a trade also. I don't know if any of our work for Panini has been published outside Germany yet, but I'd love to see that happen. Since *Weapon of a Jedi* I did one more issue of *Rebels*, which just came out recently in Germany: it was written by Alec again but Chris couldn't colour my work this

time and instead I was coloured by Bob Molesworth.

From my work on Star Wars at Panini I've been able to move on to drawing some comics at Dynamite, where I'm currently working on *KISS/Army of Darkness* with issue 3 hitting shelves on April 25th. All of which is thanks to Will Sliney, a true gent!

JP: Can you tell us a little about that work?

RC: It's been a lot of fun and a lot of effort! Drawing droids, X-Wings and stormtroopers requires a lot of attention to detail so I put a lot of hours into those comics but I'm happy with the majority of them.

The *Rebels* comics were a lot of fun because they're more like anthologies stories: each one I've worked on has handled a different character. I started out drawing Sabine for a prison break story, then Ezra on a jungle adventure with some Wookiees (both written by Martin Fisher), and the last *Rebels* story I did was with Alec and we created our own character called Kay Karno who had a bit of a run in with Fenn Rau. If I held any sway at all with Panini I'd make so Alec and I could work on mini series featuring Sabine and Kay taking on the universe!

JP: What do you like about *Rebels*?

RC: I love how *Rebels* can be light and a lot of fun but also grim dark at times. Some of those episodes are better than what we've seen in the cinema. I'm still blown away thinking about the season 2 finale even!

As you might have inferred from my earlier comment, I'm a bit fan of Sabine also. The characters are a great mix: I only got to draw a few of them on the books I've worked on so far but I'd love to draw a story with all of them involved because they're so diverse and cool looking. It's a shame there's never been an on-going *Star Wars Rebels* comic like they're doing with other titles at Marvel. I loved the *Kanan: The Last Padawan* mini-series they released - Pepe Larraz killed it with the art on that book. I was just gutted that we were only able to see snippets of the *Rebels* team in between Kanan's adventures in flashback. If they'd followed that miniseries up with a *Star Wars Rebels* book and Pepe Larraz drew it, I'd have been a happy man.

Ruairí Coleman is on Twitter at @ruairicoleman. He also sells his art though Geoff M. Art Sales: you can email them at gmasorders@gmail.com.

INTERVIEW WITH SEAN WILLIAMS

BY JAMES SHIELDS

Journey Planet: What's your earliest Star Wars memory?

Sean Williams: Answering that question is surprisingly difficult. You'd think an event that had such an impact on me would be burned in my brain, but alas, I can't remember the first time I saw *A New Hope* in the cinema, and I don't know if I read the novelization first or went in cold. Either way, though, I loved it. My second viewing is perfectly vivid, as are the many other times I saw it back then. I was ten years old - the perfect age - and my resources were limited, so although I would've gone more often, I was limited to just ten repeats. The book, on the other hand, I could read obsessively. I still have the very edition I owned back then, and it's literally in pieces, worn out by those grubby little hands turning the pages with excitement god knows how many times . . .

JP: How much of a Star Wars fan were you prior to writing in the Star Wars universe, and were any of your earlier novels inspired by Star Wars?

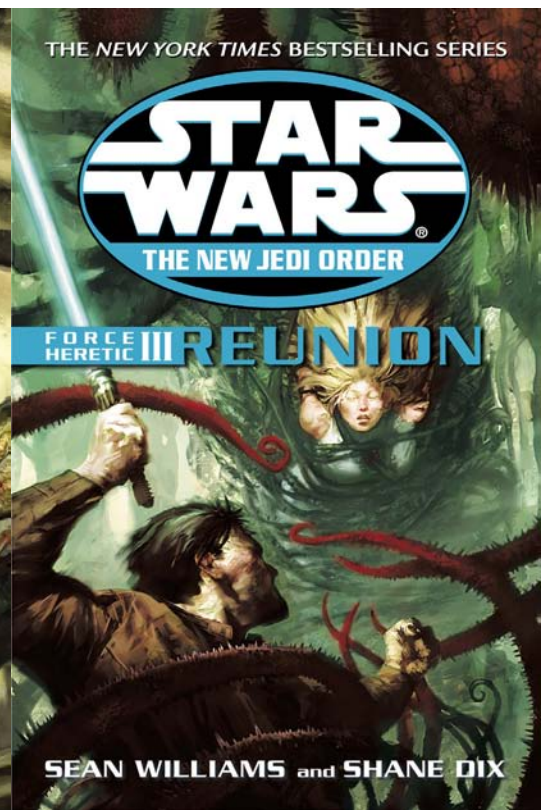
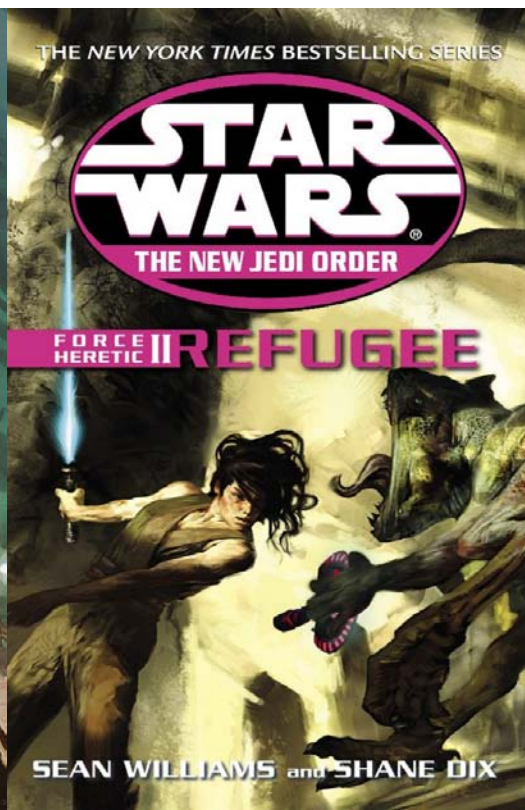
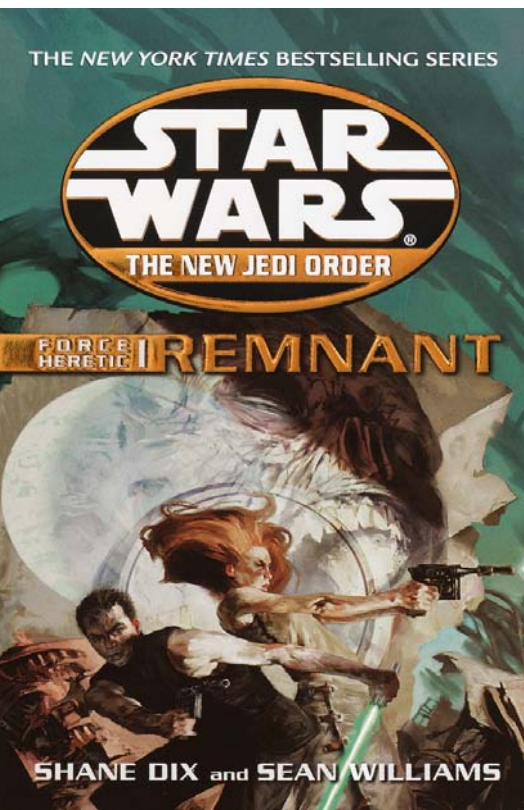
SW: Oh, I was a huge fan growing up, absolutely massive, but drifted away a bit when I got into my own writing in the late 1980s, so beyond reading the Han Solo novels and *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, I largely

missed the novel revival. That's not to say I wasn't interested; I just didn't have time. But that kind of story was still very much on my mind. The space opera series I co-wrote with Shane Dix, *Evergence*, we describe as "Star Wars meets *Blake's 7*": you can see the influences write large.

JP: How did your New Jedi Order novels come about? Had you been reading the series prior to writing for it?

SW: *Evergence* led more or less directly to the New Jedi Order. My agent at the time knew that authors were needed to write for the franchise, and as soon as an opening came up, he pushed our books at them. It sounds simple, but there was a lot of excited waiting for word to come. Writing for Star Wars brought everything back to where it started, for me. Once the deal was signed, I had a lot of catching up to do, reading-wise. It was an absolute pleasure to read Star Wars for work!

JP: The *Force Unleashed* novels are perhaps unusual because you are not just slotting into the Star Wars universe, but also the plot of the video game. How early was your involvement, and how much creativity were you allowed?



SW: As touched on above, I grew up reading novelizations of my favourite TV shows and movies (a complete collection of Target *Doctor Who* books remains one of my prized possessions). It was only natural, then, to want to write something similar, and when my editor at Del Rey approached me with the possibility of writing the novelization of the first *Force Unleashed* game, the only question I had was: what's it about? The one paragraph summary she sent back - that it concerned Darth Vader's secret apprentice and his role in creating the Rebellion - was enough to convince me that I simply had to be involved. Even if the game was crap (which it wasn't ever going to be), I knew I could make something amazing out of this.

I came into the project rather late. The script was more or less wrapped up, so all I had to do was step in and write the novel around it. Which proved to be a more challenging, and therefore more interesting job, than I'd expected. What works for a game won't always work for a book, and people who know the game will see the lengths I went to in order to incorporate every possible aspect of the game experience into the novel, and then some. For instance, I got to use Force powers, which players of the game did not, so that was a bonus. And I got to see the events through the point of view of the main character's pilot, which gave me the opportunity to show everything in a very different light.

For the second novel, I had even more room to play with because the pilot was largely absent from the game but needed to be part of the book in order to

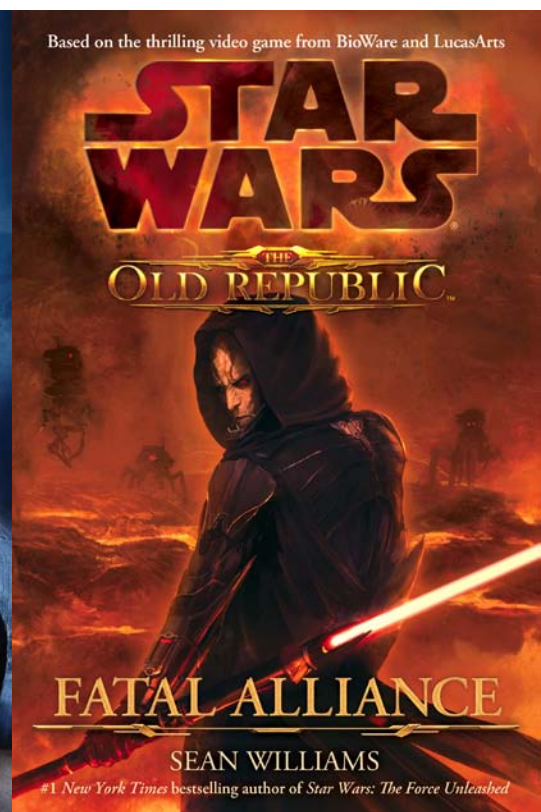
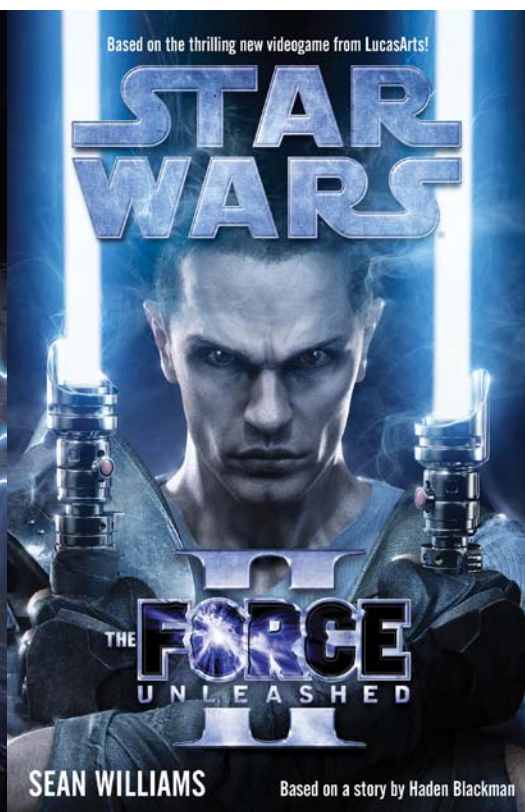
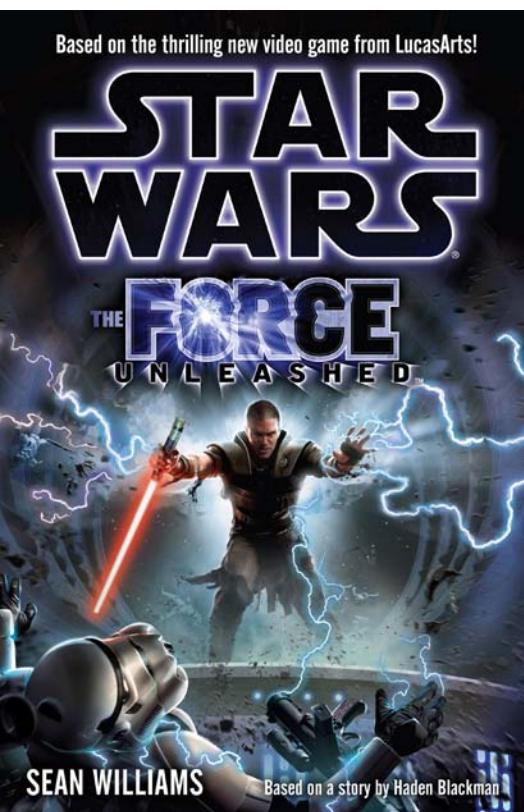
maintain consistency across the series. Also, the cutscene scripts didn't carry enough weight to sustain an entire novel on their own. I loved writing that book, that series, and will be forever regretful that I didn't get to write the third and concluding volume.

For my Old Republic novel, I had only to operate within the world, using the featured character classes, and not give away any of the arcs of the game. All the characters, therefore, plus the larger story are my creation. I regard this book as the closest thing to an "original" Sean Williams Star Wars novel, and I'm pleased that so many fans have loved it.

JP: How do you feel about the Expanded Universe not being canon? Do you want to write for Star Wars in the future?

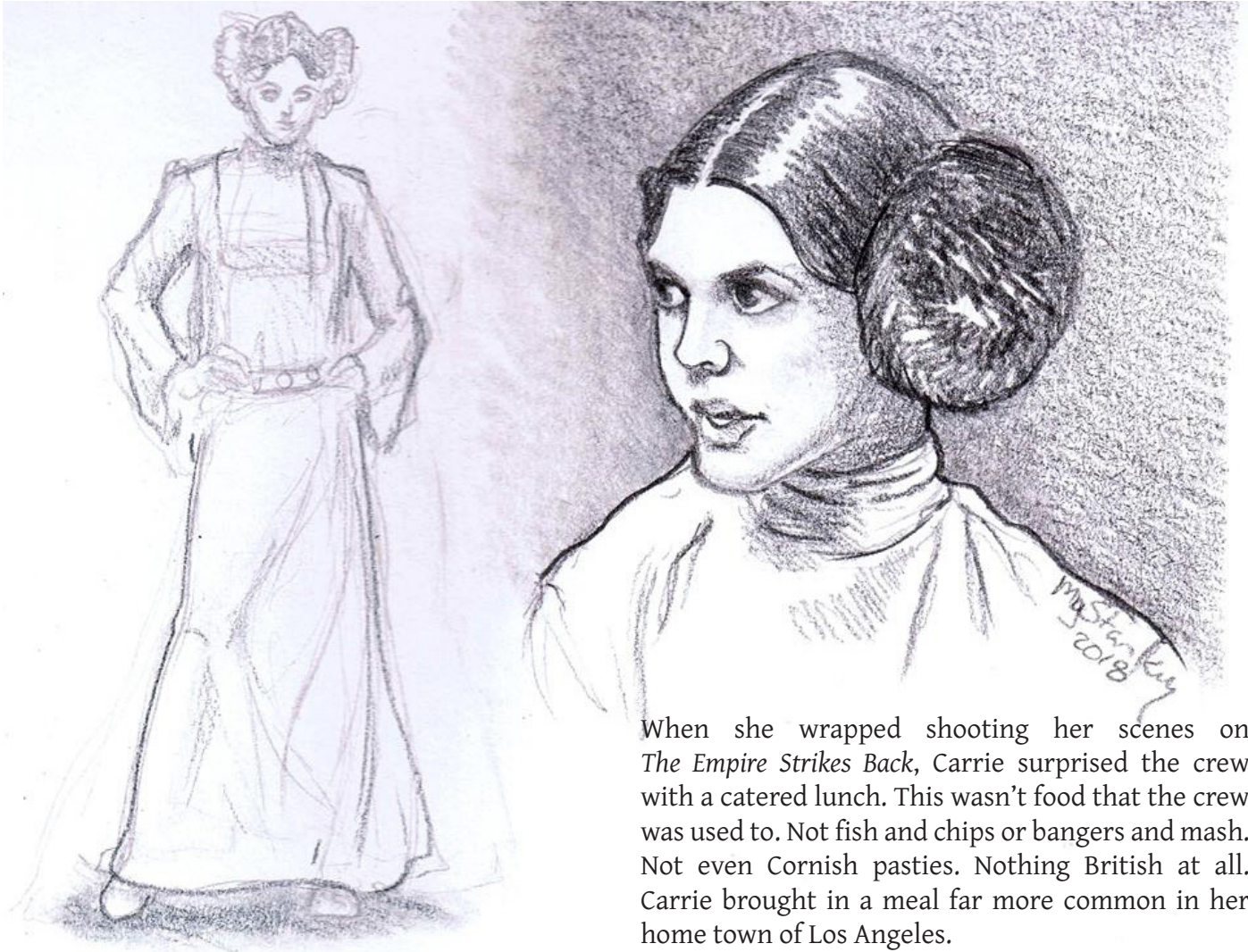
I'd definitely like to write for Star Wars again. My inner ten-year-old wouldn't let me say no! But I do feel a pang of sadness for all the work that so many people put into the EU down the years. It's an amazing achievement, full of weird dead-ends, absurd contradictions, and utterly preposterous creations - but at the same time the stories are glorious and full of love for everything Star Wars. I'm so glad these novels, including my own, are still available. Even if they're no longer canon, they're still enormous fun.

Sean Williams is an author with several credits in the Expanded Universe (now Legends).



REMEMBERING CARRIE FISHER

BY CRAIG MILLER



fiction fan, familiar with movies and TV shows in the genre. And with conventions like Comic Con, which he'd attended as a fan. Carrie's personal interests lay elsewhere when she was cast as Princess Leia.

Even though the subject matter didn't excite her, she brought George Lucas's outer space princess to life with a feisty energy that wasn't in the script pages. She brought a 1930s femme fatale's sarcastic wit worthy of Barbara Stanwyck to her delivery of lines that were notoriously hard to get through. (Harrison Ford once said of Star Wars' dialogue "You can type this shit, George, but you can't say it.") Carrie's copy of the script was full of notations, changing and improving her lines.

Carrie loved the crews who worked on the Star Wars films and she was a favourite of theirs.

When she wrapped shooting her scenes on *The Empire Strikes Back*, Carrie surprised the crew with a catered lunch. This wasn't food that the crew was used to. Not fish and chips or bangers and mash. Not even Cornish pasties. Nothing British at all. Carrie brought in a meal far more common in her home town of Los Angeles.

Mexican food.

Tacos. Enchiladas. Refried Beans. The all-British crew was stupefied. They'd never seen – or tasted – anything like it. This was 1979. England didn't really have hamburgers yet (at least not served on a bun; their burgers tended more to a patty on a plate or in a bowl, served in a sauce). A single Mexican restaurant existed in London. It had opened earlier that year and was more a curiosity than a destination in an England that was not then known for adventurous eating. I remember crew members asking each other (and any Americans who were around) "What's a taco?" Pronouncing it "tack-oh".

And though the Mexican food wasn't up to the standards you'd find in the States (and certainly not

what you'd find in Mexico), it was good. And the crew was justifiably charmed and delighted by the gesture from the film's female lead.

Over the 40 years since the release of Star Wars, Carrie went through periods where she sort of resented that Princess Leia had overwhelmed her life and reputation. And the enthusiasm of her fans could, at times, be frightening. She didn't want that single film role to be the only thing people thought

of when her name came up. But she came to accept and, eventually, be delighted by what she realized was love. Love for Princess Leia. And love for Carrie Fisher. She started attending conventions, signing autographs, and having conversations with her fans. Fans she came to love back.

The article is an excerpt from Craig Miller's upcoming book, Star Wars Memories.

SECRECY AND RUMOURS

BY CRAIG MILLER

George never stopped worrying that details about *The Empire Strikes Back* might get out.

He wanted the story, the worlds, all of the new characters to be a complete surprise when people saw the movie. He didn't want things to leak out and have people's enjoyment spoiled.

Mostly unsaid, he was also worried that the film and its elements might get ripped off in cheap, quickie sci-fi movies or on television. That he definitely didn't want to happen.

So there was a lot done to keep things secret.

Copies of the script were distributed only to those people who needed to read them. (I was quite pleased that I was considered one of those people so got copies of each of the drafts. I felt I needed it to do my job, and apparently other people thought so too.)

Every copy of the script had a code number indicating who it was given to. And every page of each script had identifying information running the length of the page, including the code number, so if a script turned up somewhere or got photocopied, it could be tracked back to the source.

What's more, to keep perhaps the biggest surprise secret, most people's scripts were missing one page. You can probably guess which one. The page where Darth Vader says, "I am your father".

And contrary to popular belief, he doesn't say, "Luke, I am your father". The scene as it appears in the film is

DARTH VADER

Obi-Wan never told you what happened to your father.

LUKE SKYWALKER

He told me enough. He told me you killed him.

DARTH VADER

No. I am your father.

LUKE SKYWALKER

No. No. That's not true. That's impossible.

Even crew members at the studio, ones shooting that sequence, didn't get copies of the script with that page in it. A few, who needed to know, got it that day or the evening before.

That's how much George wanted to keep *The Empire Strikes Back's* secrets secret.

To that end – and because I wanted to do something special to thank *Starlog* magazine for all the help they'd been to us over the years – I came up with an idea that would serve both purposes.

Working with the editors of *Starlog* in the Fall of 1979, I came up with a plan.

I produced a list of rumours about *The Empire Strikes Back*. Words that would be visited. New characters we'd meet. Things that would happen. Some of these were rumours that were actually floating around at the time. Some were even true. Others weren't.

One purpose of this list was to confuse things. So in addition to the rumours that were already out there, I invented a bunch more.

Would Obi-Wan be back and, if so, how would he be taking part? Does Chewbacca get captured and held prisoner by the Empire? Does Han Solo disobey orders and fly off to rescue him?

Does the Emperor show up? Will he be played by Orson Welles? Or Christopher Lee? Is Darth Vader or Obi-Wan Luke's father? (That one was dangerously close to our big surprise but we went with it.)

The list included talk of an ice planet, a jungle planet, a different desert planet than the one we'd been to in *Star Wars*. Black holes, time travel, intelligent dolphins.

Dave Houston, the West Coast Editor of *Starlog*, turned it into a fun three-page article, which he sent me for approval.

I showed the finished article to George. He loved it.

But thought I should add more rumours to it.

I told George I had already provided all of the rumours in the article. He said "Write more". So I did.

I wrote a "sidebar" which Dave and *Starlog* included at the end of the article. In it, I, on behalf of Lucasfilm, respond to the article they'd sent me, telling them they'd done a better job of gathering rumours than I'd hoped they'd be able to do. And confirmed that four or five of the rumours were accurate. Of course, I demurred from specifying which ones.

And then included a few more rumours for he and his readers to ponder.

I also supplied the magazine three photos that hadn't previously been released, so they got a fun article with three exclusive photos. That was my thank you gift to them.

The article appeared in the issue that reached subscribers' mailboxes the last week of December, 1979; copies appeared on newsstands the first week of January, 1980, five months before *The Empire Strikes Back* opened. And we kept people wondering about what would be in the movie!

The article is an excerpt from Craig Miller's upcoming book, *Star Wars Memories*.

STARLOG EXCLUSIVE

Stalking THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK with Ear and Typewriter

By DAVID HOUSTON

Some of the things we hear about the new *Star Wars* picture, *The Empire Strikes Back*, are verifiably accurate. The original script was based on the original *Star Wars* script, and there are some new characters that will appear for the first time in the movie. But there are also some things that are just plain wrong. Here are some of the things that are wrong, and some that are right.

Does the Emperor show up? In the original script, the Emperor was to appear in the movie. But in the final version, he does not. This is a disappointment to many fans, but it was a necessary decision for the movie to be made.

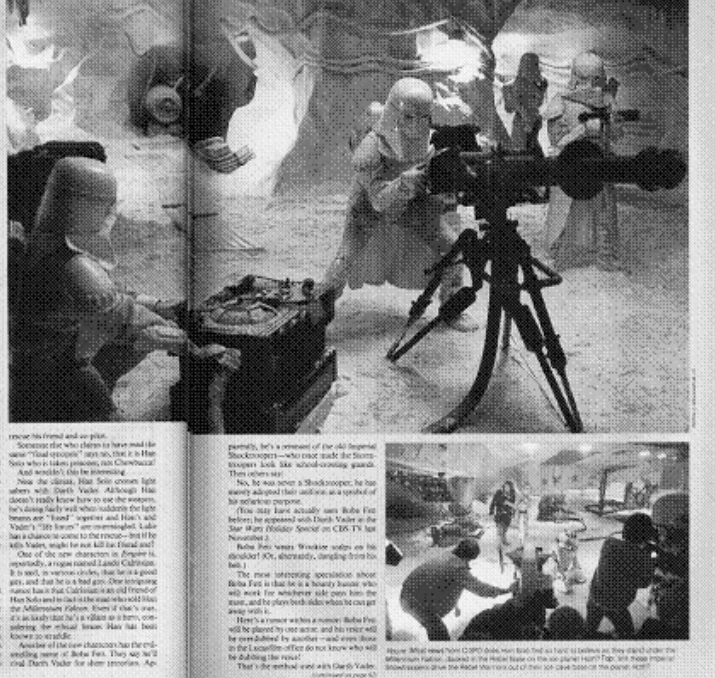
Will he be played by Orson Welles or Christopher Lee? In the original script, the Emperor was to be played by Orson Welles. But in the final version, he is played by Frank Oz. This is a disappointment to many fans, but it was a necessary decision for the movie to be made.

Is Darth Vader or Obi-Wan Luke's father? In the original script, it was suggested that either Vader or Obi-Wan might be Luke's father. But in the final version, it is confirmed that neither is. This is a disappointment to many fans, but it was a necessary decision for the movie to be made.

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Empire

News from page 37

of course His body was played by Dave Prowse and his voice by James Earl Ray. Which brings to mind another rumor—that Dave Prowse will not be playing Vader in the new movie. (Obviously, Lucasfilm broke its promise to specifically deny this. Prowse is playing Vader.)

We had gotten around that the Emperor will make an appearance in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Usually, persistent rumors that he will be played by Orson Welles... said by Christopher Lee.

One of the special-effects people told us he has for fun that neither the Emperor nor Ben Kenobi would be in the picture—but those thoughts on the effects team are angry and are no more to be trusted on such matters than anyone else.

"Will the Real Darth..."

Occasionally one hears a fretful discontent over the ending of *Star Wars* some feel that it would have been more satisfying if we had seen a direct confrontation between Luke and the man who is strongly believed—Darth Vader. Perhaps it's just wishful thinking in opposition, but it is a strongly held belief that *Empire* concludes with a fierce light saber duel between Luke and Vader.

And more than once we've heard that it is Luke who kills Vader in the final scene. In fact, we've seen a number of articles that say that Vader was killed by Luke. And we've seen a number of articles that say that Vader was killed by Luke. And we've seen a number of articles that say that Vader was killed by Luke.

Chewbacca, C-3PO and R2-D2 have larger roles in *Empire* than they had in *Star Wars*, it is said.

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THE VISUAL CONCEPT OF STAR WARS

BY JAMES MASON

As a seven-year-old seeing *A New Hope* for the first time – and this was when *A New Hope* was only *Star Wars*, and not Episode IV, and was a wholly unknown commodity – I only wanted to see this as a kid as it looked insanely cool and brimming with amazing spaceships and creatures that were striking to a boy who was dumbstruck at so much visual imagination on display. And now with the passage of time and seeing behind the curtain of how films of this scope are made. Knows whose work gave this series such a strong identity and created a whole universe; the concept artists.

The main one would be Ralph McQuarrie. George may have written about a ‘galaxy far, far away’ but he leaned heavily on Ralph’s futuristic, yet still nostalgic to the pulpy sci-fi covers of old in their style. Vader’s iconic mask was down to McQuarrie’s view that he should have some sort of breathing apparatus. The now iconic ships like X-Wings, Y-Wings are down to him. C-3PO (an obvious nod to *Metropolis*) and R2-D2 were given their first rendering to show what this film could be. McQuarrie went all out in the ambition and vision as he felt that this film wasn’t going to be made and as such just unbound his limitations of what could be. That likely inspired everyone else to just go for it and try make a film that due to its simple ‘Hero’s Journey’ story, was fun and accessible but had visuals that despite some cineastes knowing their influences, was never seen before on the big screen. In some ways the visual aesthetic of the worn hi-tech sci-fi world made something so fantastical, seem plausible.

Joe Johnston was another concept artist/FX technician who designed the stand-out Boba Fett armour. Johnston’s strong visual sense led to him becoming quite the successful director, whose filmography is comprised of *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, *Captain America: The First Avenger* and in my eyes, the first great comic adaptation *The Rocketeer*.

Ron Cobb who was a cartoonist and concept artist did some work for the aliens for the cantina scene and inspired the giant lizard being ridden by a stormtrooper moment. He went to work on *Alien*, *Aliens*, and *The Last Starfighter*.

Syd Mead’s works prompted a court case over the AT-AT design and was settled. Well known for his work with automobile companies and being a “Visual Futurist” his art would be what created the oft-copied *Blade Runner* world of a future noir LA.

A New Hope was and still is a phenomenon and in 1977 it was just a perfect time where a lot of supremely talented visionary people got together and made a film that created a franchise and a passionate fandom. From the opening title crawl and John Williams’ unforgettable fanfare, if it didn’t look the part I genuinely believe the film wouldn’t be what it is today. A franchise that is now making a lot of money when back then film studios foolishly didn’t even figure that merchandising is a most lucrative cash cow. If the concept artists didn’t design super cool looking characters they wouldn’t have sold many action figures.

Such is the importance of design in movies.



THE LAST JEDI

BY JEANNETTE NG

There is a lot of bluster around trying to “prove” the ways in which *The Last Jedi* fails and much of it reaches for a phantom objectivity, as though trope conformity, setting-based nitpicking and structural similarity to *The Hero's Journey* are the last words in storytelling.

Thus I hesitate to add to that discourse, because to me, what ultimately matters is how I felt when I first saw *The Last Jedi*. Which is to say it was a revelation. It spoke to me in a language of osmosed symbols and told me story that was true to my bones.

And so, anything I have to say about the film will keep coming back to that epiphany I felt. All these words I write now are but a fumbling substitute for me carving out my heart to show you. The proof of its quality is not in the arguments I can offer but in the fact that I am writing this and that I am wearing my hair in three buns as I do so. This is the film that made me a Star Wars fan.

The Last Jedi recasts Star Wars as a tale about revolution and resistance in a way it fundamentally wasn't before. For all that the originals had the Rebellion as an important faction and plot point, the film follows Luke and they are very much his story. The war happens in the margins. The beats of the films are that of Campbell's now infamous Hero's Journey, which are fundamentally personal given how its written as a Jungian understanding of myth. The Empire were given the trappings of the Nazis, but there is a difference in seeing that in a film from the 70s, where it is meant to evoke a historical villain already vanquished and seeing it now.

The Force Awakens resurrected the Empire and for all that we may have cried foul at the return of a defeated antagonist, the sense of fighting wars already won has become familiar to me.

Furthermore, *The Last Jedi* peoples its Resistance with female faces, from purple-haired Vice Admiral Holdo to Lieutenant Tallie Lintra and Paige Tico. This reflects a reality too frequently untold, in which women have always, always



fought¹, in which women are the backbone of the Resistance. It was also electrifying to see a scene where three women talk in turn about matters of strategy.

The Last Jedi gives greater context for the Resistance, giving a glimpse of a glittering casino city built on blood money. It stands as clever callback to the framing the Mos Eisley as the most wretched hive of scum and villainy in *A New Hope*, but also subverting the idea that the worst the galaxy has to offer are pirates and outlaws. Rose and Finn's misadventure gives new and important weight to what is at stake for the galaxy. Like everyone else in the film, they fail in their quest, but their story introduces that thread of inspiration in the slave children who tell Luke's story at the end of the film. In the bleakest moment for the Resistance, it offers an answer the question of how Luke Skywalker, Jedi Master, can defeat the all of the First Order with laser sword in hand: not through the brute force and slaughter, but through the inspiration his legend will bring the new generation.

Intentionally or not, *The Last Jedi* captured perfectly for me the time ghost of 2017.

At its heart, *The Last Jedi* is a story about legacies and legends. It turns inward with a cast that idolises the original heroes: Kylo Ren walks the footsteps of his grandfather, painfully aware of his inadequacies; Rey desperately lays claim on that very legacy she has no right to by blood and birth; Poe quotes Leia with ease and reserves for her a respect he is reluctant to give others.

Even as *The Last Jedi* grants each of its revered icons moments of legendary glory (I cried at the sight of Leia commanding the Force), it also shows us their moments of frailty and humanity. They are people who have made mistakes, who regret, who have unfinished stories. It hurts to see them that way, with Luke tired and haunted, but never has Leia been more real and beautiful to me than in *The Last Jedi*. We see the toll that all the years have taken and in some small way, there is inspiration in that.

The Last Jedi picks apart the simple parables and happily ever afters of the original and in revisiting the tropes, it gives us something a little complex. I will not be the first to point out how Kylo Ren 1 I will never be not quoting Kameron Hurley's "We Have Always Fought".

mirrors Anakin in his petulance, frustrated ambition and seeming redemption, but more than that the narrative interrogates the original. It asks what it means to "turn", to be redeemed, if the simple slaughter of one's emperor is enough (spoilers: it isn't). It shows a dark side that all unrestrained anger and self-loathing, rather than the effortlessly bad-ass presence of Darth Vader. Its seduction is no longer framed as being about black leather and dominance, but instead that easy, narcissistic slide into impotent rage and toxic emotions. It is an easy darkness to fall into, the lure of which I am too familiar with.

As Kylo Ren's opposite, Rey stands as someone without a legacy. She comes from a nowhere planet, from nothing. Her greatest fear lies in that insecurity of belonging and on some metaphorical level, her arc felt utterly about me. Like how the refrain of a good pop song can feel like it was written you and you alone, but more so. A thousand times more so. Rey has that same bravado I recognise in myself, the assumption that she belongs. She feels it in her bones and she dreams of it at night. She claims the legacy of the Jedi as her own, demanding Luke to teach her of the ways of the Force.

But just as strongly as she wants to find her place in this story, she fears the answer she sees in the cavernous mirror under the holy island². She fears herself an impostor, something that the toxic strains within our current fandom are keen to reinforce. She cannot be nobody, they say, citing so-called rules of good narrative and as though stories could solved that way.

Rey's origins are simply this: a refutation of the feeling that these are stories that one must inherit, that this legacy cannot simply be claimed by those outside of it. Rey's blood and her birth don't matter because mine don't matter. She belongs, because I belong.

And that, to me, is everything.

² The solipsistic embrace of the dark side stands in opposition to the light side's transcendent surrender of the self. All fascinating themes for another day.

THE LAST JEDI

BY ANDREA SWINSCO

The Last Jedi. Some people loved it, some people hated it, and that's fine by me. I was been perfectly happy to keep my opinions to myself and let others enjoy the film if it's their cup of tea. We all have different tastes.

Unfortunately there have been some who have insisted on trying to prove why I'm wrong and they are right, and almost every article, tweet and meme they've sent me has used the argument 'old school Star Wars fans are just bitter because it's not like the originals. Get over it, this film was for us, not you'. Well, now I've been goaded and insulted once too often so now I'm going to tell you why I hated Last Jedi (hint: it's not because I'm a bitter, old Star Wars fan!). If you don't like what I have to say then perhaps you shouldn't have been pushing your opinions down my throat!

I don't think it was a well-made film (regardless of what the subject matter was). Although there were some visually stunning sequences, some nice and some quiet moments, overall I found the plot very weak. The second story arc was pointless, merely there to give some of the characters something to do, which they then failed to do, and went back to where they started. The primary story arc (the development of Rey) was okay, but a bit disjointed and at times obscure. Again, there were some nice sequences but the whole thing lacked emotional depth.

The dialogue was terrible! There was an overuse of humour which was often used to gloss over a lack of meaningful dialogue. At times it felt like someone cracking a bad joke at a funeral to cover up their embarrassment at all the emotion. Many of the lines were formulaic and corny (God speed, Rebels was particularly bad), and dialogue which should have been deep and meaningful was often bland.

The direction wasn't strong enough. That was a cast full of good actors, but they didn't give their best. A better director could have drawn out some really powerful performances full of soul tearing lows and adrenalin fuelled highs, but this just ticked along on a bland level. I didn't feel Rey's loneliness. I didn't feel Kylo's torment. It was more like an early rehearsal than a final performance. The only real emotion I felt was for the death of a minor character at the very

beginning and the tribute to Carrie Fisher in the end credits. Even Luke's death just left me cold.

If you want an example, just look at Domhnall Gleeson's performance in *The Force Awakens* when he is giving the speech to the troops, so full of fire and fanaticism, and compare it to his shouty little rants in *The Last Jedi*.

Moving away from the film itself and on to Rian Johnson's treatment of the material he was given to work with, I am frankly disgusted with how he behaved. Imagine if you started a painting but had to let someone else work on it while you were away. You would expect them to add their own twist maybe, or tinker with the elements, but not to slash up the canvas completely, call it modern art, and then hand it back with a 'fuck you' and leave you to try and fix what was left. But that's exactly what Rian Johnson has done.

I know he wanted to create something new and different and I have no problems with that. There is plenty of opportunity for him to do that with his own trilogy. But he took JJ Abrams' work and completely vandalised it. He took carefully constructed story arcs and left them down a dead end to die. He took developing characters and either killed them off or turned them into laughing stocks. The new characters he introduced himself were so wooden as to need serious work if they are to become any kind of role model or have lasting resonance. God knows how Abrams is going to finish the trilogy with the material he's been left with but there's no way he can make something amazing and unfortunately that's going to reflect badly on him and not on the man who destroyed the material he had to work with.

There is much more I dislike about the film; the change of language (apparently it's a laser sword now, not a lightsaber!), the way force ghosts can now have physical interactions (Yoda hits Luke), the schmaltzy ending with the cheeky Victorian-style scamp who I thought was going to burst into song, the fact that sacrificing yourself to save others is now wrong but letting the next generation sort out your mess is fine... I can go on and on but seeing as these are drawing comparisons with the original trilogy then they are just the rantings of a bitter old fan!

HARDWARE WARS

BY CHRIS GARCIA

There's a glaring hole in the National Film Registry, at least to me, and that's fan films. You probably know what a fan film is. It is a film that takes an established franchise and then it creates a new story in that world, or a story that relates to that world somehow. They have existed since the 1920s, though they really came of age in the 1950s. LASFS even made a couple, one of which apparently still exists! These kind of films are now exploding all over the place because of YouTube and Vimeo and Facebook and on and on.

There are sort of three that I think nowadays people have seen for the most part. *Jane Austen's Fight Club* is one, where it's prim and proper women of the regency era, and they're fight-clubbing, and it's great. There's of course *Troops*, a Star War thing about ... Basically a take on the television program *Cops*, only using stormtroopers. Really, really fun stuff. The one that I think deserves National Film Registry recognition, and probably the most widely seen fan film of all time, is *Hardware Wars*. Ernie Fosselius made it right after *A New Hope* came out, in 1978. It's a fake trailer, with my all-time favourite voice artist, the incredible Paul Frees, doing the voice, the voiceover. *Hardware Wars*.

It tells the story of ... Well, it doesn't even tell the story. It gives you hints of the story of what *A New Hope* was, but makes it all DIY and fun. It's brilliantly, beautifully done. The characters, everything from Arty-Deco, who was the replacement of course for R2D2, as an actual vacuum cleaner, to Chowchilla, the Wookiee Monster, who was basically a Cookie Monster hand puppet dyed brown, The more widely-knowngeable among you of California cities and towns, will know that Chowchilla is a city in the state. Ham Salad is the character based on Han Solo. It's just got all these great bits. They say they're going to the greatest hive of scum and villainy, and they open at a honky tonk bar instead of the Mos Eisley Cantina. The song they play there is a take on "I'm Proud to be an Okie from Muskogee" called "I'm Proud to be Ol' Obi-Wan-Kenobi."

It's just all sorts of little funny things. The bits are clean and hilarious. It really plays with a bunch of different types of humour. There's word play, there's

direct reference, there's secondary reference, there are irons playing spaceships, there are all this sort of stuff going on that just kills me, and it's not on the National Film Registry! Arguably the funniest ten minutes in 1970s film and it's not on!!!

What worries me about that is one, I understand why. People look down on fan films. Part of the reason for that has to do with copyright. They're stealing people's ideas and running with them, which I never really see. People have been doing that for centuries. Shakespeare did it. But they sort of get this idea that they're low film, and that they don't really have any historical impact. They do. There are lots of kids who saw *Hardware Wars* and wanted to become comedy film makers, or wanted to make their own fan films. In fact, if you're looking for influence, things like *Hardware Wars* and *Troops*, they totally inspired a generation of underground filmmakers who are now exploding because they have an area to do it.

I think *Hardware Wars* needs to go first. There are probably some others and I think I could see no good reason why something like that wouldn't be considered, other than it's low film. There are other low films on the Registry, but not many. *Spaceballs* isn't on either, but that's far more understandable as *Ghostbusters* only recently got on a couple of years ago. Films from the 1980s are just now starting to get their due on lists like the National Film Registry, and while both *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back* are listed, not much science fiction of the 1980s is on, save for *Blade Runner*.

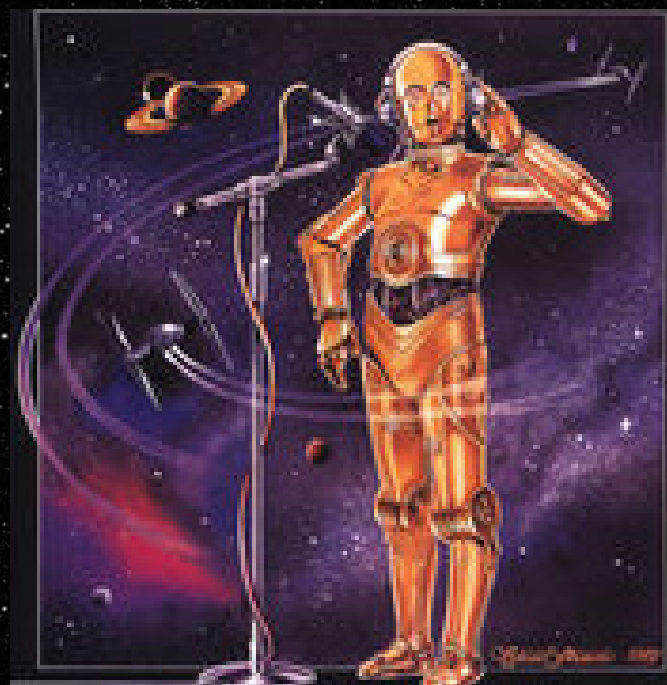
There are a few parodies. *Airplane!* is listed, so there is an appreciation for the style. The real reason to put it on the National Film Registry isn't any of those style reasons, though; it's all about the importance of Star Wars beyond the technological and artistic mastery. It is about the saturation of Star Wars into the culture, but moreover, it shows what it did for fandom. *Hardware Wars*, even more than the original movie, demonstrates the importance of big budget blockbusters on the people who love them, and especially on their creativity. Yes, *Hardware Wars* isn't a part of the Star Wars Universe, but it demonstrates the power of the universe so thoroughly.

STAR WARS ON THE RADIO

BY JUAN SANMIGUEL

I saw a magazine ad. It had a picture of R2-D2 and C-3P0 at the Hoth Alliance base and said “Star Wars on the Radio” or something like that. There was a toll-free number that would tell you if there was a radio station in your area carrying the show. My parents let me call and there was a local radio station playing the show. I got the times it would play during the week.

The ad did not explain what the show was about. Was it new stories with our favourite friends from a long time ago in a galaxy far, far way? I hoped it was something like the Marvel comic stories at the time. When I heard it, it was a dramatization of *A New Hope*. By the time I started listening, it was episode 3 of the show. The droids have come into the story and they were making their escape to Tatooine. I wondered what the first two episodes were about since the events in episode 3 take place as the film begins. This was around the spring of 1981.



This was a radio show not an audio book. It had a complete cast. Mark Hamill and Anthony Daniels would reprise their roles as Luke Skywalker and C3P0. Perry King played Han Solo, while Brock Peters played Darth Vader. Others would perform the other parts, and they all sounded right for the roles.

The radio show used the film’s score and sound effects. Blasters, lightsabers, Vader’s respirator, and all the rest of it sounded just like the films. John Williams’ Academy Award-winning music made the radio show feel like the films.

On Saturday afternoons, the radio station would not only rerun the episode of the week but play an episode of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. Both shows were part of NPR Playhouse, a source of radio drama on National Public Radio and playing them different days of the week. I was getting a dose of two of the biggest Science Fiction series every week.

The show would tell the story of *A New Hope* in 13 half hour episodes. Science fiction writer Brian Daley wrote the scripts. Daley had written a series of Han Solo novels. The radio series would expand on the story. The first episode had Luke Skywalker seeing the Star Destroyer attack the Tantive IV, participating in a drag race with his friends at Anchorhead, and saying good-bye to his close friend Biggs Darklighter as he was about to defect to the rebels. The second episode had Leia and her father getting the plans to Death Star and Leia setting off for Tatooine to contact Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Other added material included Luke learning lightsaber basics from Obi-Wan before using the remote training drone seen in the film; Han and Chewbacca facing Heater (one of Jabba’s lieutenants) after Han killed Greedo (this was based on the scene with Jabba that George Lucas had shot but not used until the Special Editions); Vader interrogating Leia after the torture droid drugged her; and Luke going through a simulator after he arrives on the rebel base on Yavin IV.

The show was a big success. The show's production team got to adapt *The Empire Strikes Back*. Billy Dee Williams would join the cast as Lando Calrissian. The show would debut in February 1983, adapted by Daley into ten episodes. There was added material here, too: Imperial forces attacking a rebel convoy before the start of the film and a lively conversation between Han and Luke before rescue teams recovered them from the wilderness of Hoth.

It was just fun having Star Wars come to my bedroom and reliving the great adventures in my head. It was a great way to spend an afternoon.

Sadly, no adaptation for *Return of Jedi* followed. NPR funding was cut by the government, and NPR Playhouse suffered. Highbridge Audio, an audiobook company, sold recordings of the both shows on tape and CD. The sales of the recordings were so good it led Highbridge Audio to produce a six-episode adaptation for *Return of the Jedi* in 1996. The only film actor to return was Anthony Daniels although the other radio actors returned. Brian Daley wrote the scripts, which would be one of his last works. Highbridge Audio sold *Return of the Jedi* with the recordings of the other shows.

Could Star Wars return to radio? Someone asked this at a panel at Star Wars Celebration

in 2010. At that time, *The Clone Wars* was still going strong. Since then there has been another Star Wars television show and they are available on streaming services like Netflix. Now you could see and hear Star Wars at home anytime you want. A radio show seems superfluous.

As great as it is to live in a time where Star Wars is everywhere, it was a fun time to have sound and your imagination take you back to the greatest adventure of all time.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

COMING SOON TO A RADIO NEAR YOU

THE SAGA CONTINUES
LISTEN AS LUKE SKYWALKER MEETS YODA, THE JEDI MASTER, AND LEARNS THE SECRET BEHIND THE FORCESM
IN 10 EXCITING STEREO EPISODES

EXCLUSIVELY ON NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO MEMBER STATIONS NATIONWIDE

A production of National Public Radio in association with KUSC-FM, Los Angeles, and with the cooperation of Lucasfilm Ltd.

THE FIVE GREATEST STAR WARS GAMES OF ALL TIME

BY CHRIS GARCIA

I love video games. You probably knew that about me, didn't ya? In fact, at the Computer History Museum, I'm the video games guy, always talking about the history of games and what they mean to the overall history of computing.

I am also a sci-fi geek, and am of the perfect age to have fallen deeply in love with Star Wars on its first release.

Can you see where this is going?

There have been exactly five really good Star Wars video games. 5. Out of several dozen. 5. The first one was, in fact, the first one. This should not be a shock that people thought so at the time, but it holds up.

Star Wars by Atari is a vector graphics game that is basically a retelling of the original, and easily the best, Star Wars film sequence – the Assault on the

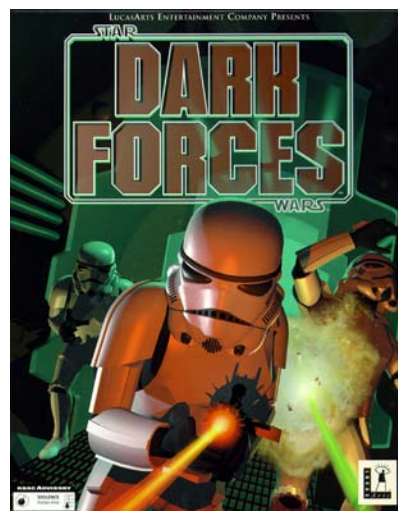
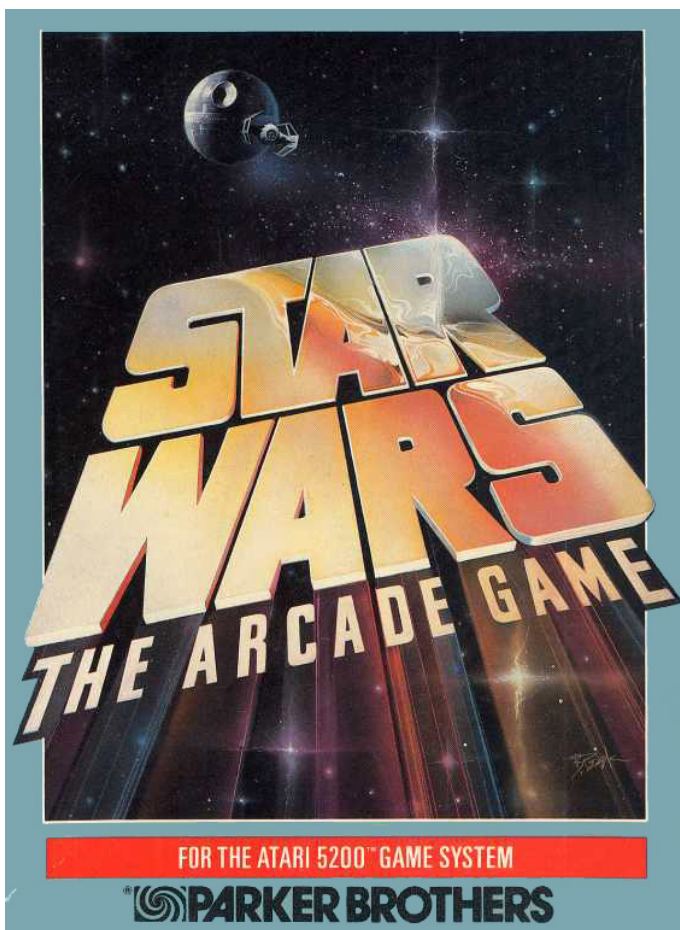
Death Star (aka The Battle of Yavin). The graphics were amazing, though completely made up of lines, but it was the sound that really set it apart. Atari's amazing sound chip, POKEY, allowed for great sound effects, but it was a Texas Instrument voice synthesis chip that allowed for the first digitally-sampled voice bits, with Harrison Ford, Alec Guinness, and Mark Hamill all having phrases that play on throughout the game. It's an incredibly well-made game, and one that I play every time I see it in an arcade.

Of course, the second Star Wars game worth a damn would be another arcade classic – Atari's *Return of the Jedi*. It's a raster graphics arcade console, and it's a lot of fun! It seems like a much more advanced game than that original Star Wars game, but it is far wider-ranging, with a speeder-bike race, and you pilot an AT-ST and then the Millennium Falcon! It's an awesome game, and one that I was really, truly, amazingly bad at.

There was a *The Empire Strikes Back* game for home consoles, which I never liked, and it was a long time before you got another really good Star Wars game. It was the rise of the PC game that brought about the best Star Wars games ever, and specifically it was the amazing work of LucasArts.

The first of them was *Dark Forces*. It was based around the amazing game engine called the Jedi Game Engine, which later turned to the dark side and became the much less awesome Sith game engine. *Dark Forces* was an amazing game.

It came out when I was a sophomore at Emerson, and my room mate, with his Pentium Super-PC, had a calendar with its release date marked on it.

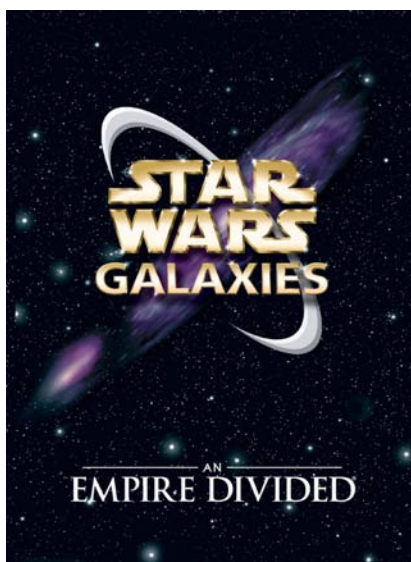


It was an incredible first-person-shooter, and one that had so much going for it, including multi-floor levels that you could look up and down at, making it more complicated, but also more immersive. The way that the game unfolds with smart, and the storyline was even turned into one of the better non-Zahn Star Wars universe novels by William Dietz. MY favourite part? It was a story game, and it wasn't the kind of long, sprawling story game that eats up days and days of your life. You could finish it in a couple of solid days play, and there was no multiplayer, which made it more compact an experience.

After that, there was a long, slow wait. It was a cold time, Hoth cold, for those of us who loved Star Wars games. The sequel to *Dark Forces* was lame, and most of the other LucasArts games were decent, at best. The *TIE Fighter* and *X-Wing* games were basically flight sims, which I don't cotton to, and *Rogue Squadron* wasn't great either. It wasn't until MMORPGs became a thing that Star Wars games got an entirely new life with the release of the amazing *Star Wars Galaxies*.

We had yet to hit on the massive MMO hit way back in 2003. *World of Warcraft* wasn't out yet, and *Ultima* and *EverQuest* were hits, but not world-changers. As far as MMOs go, it's one of the very few I have a lot of good things to say about. The environment is richly-developed, and gorgeous, and the sound design in particular is awesome. There was something of an effort made to turn it more into an art creation engine than a regular gaming space. For example, a number of folks created music videos, or machinima, using *Star Wars Galaxies*, most notably the hit video for MC Chris' Fett's Vette.

There seemed to be more of *Second Life* than of *Ultima* in *Star Wars Galaxies*, and the fact that it died, and that the fan community began to work to emulate and create new gameplay on their own servers really speaks to the impact the game had on players.

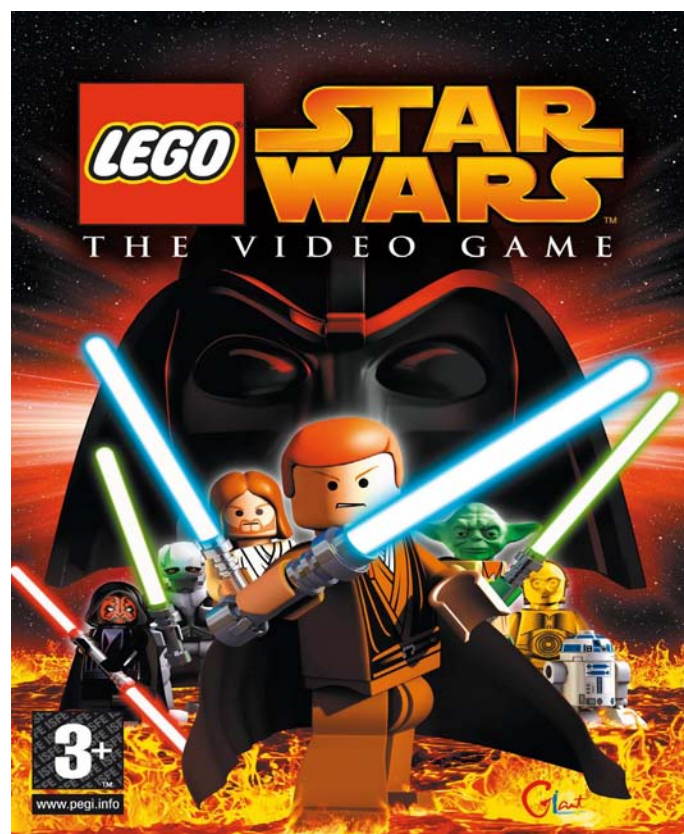


And then, there's *LEGO Star Wars*.

Let me start by saying how much I love the new LEGO concept. I love it. A lot. I mean a whole lot. LOT! It's just so much fun, and the real beginning of the LEGO video game concept was *LEGO Star Wars*. It's got the combination of the Star Wars universe with the joyous idea of LEGO construction pieces. I love it! The gameplay is fun, and not too difficult, and the graphics are just ideal.

So, what makes a good Star Wars game? I think it's something intangible. There are great flight and fighter sim Star Wars games, and a bunch of terrible ones. There are great story games, and terrible ones. There are first-person-shooters that rule, and those that suck. The thing that makes the great stuff great – fun. That's reductionist, but it's true.

The way that the games treat the gameplay, the way that the game plays with the setting, and ultimately, the way that the Star Wars universe is re-invented. It takes a story that is interesting, and that doesn't feel as if it's just re-hashing. Well, the first two games were simply too new in the world of arcade games, even if they were simply allowing players to do the same thing the film characters were. And maybe that was the thing that made those two games awesome, the ability to **be** Luke, to fly a speeder bike. That might be what does it for the early ones, but they all serve the same purpose – fun.



BRICKING IT TO HOTH

BY JAMES SHIELDS

OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE TO BUILD...

Ask any Star Wars fan what their favourite scenes in the series were, and the Battle of Hoth will be close to the top of most lists, if not topping them.

So it was for me, and when LEGO released Star Wars themed sets, the snowspeeder was a must have. A couple of years later, when they released the iconic AT-AT Imperial Walker, that was another must have for me.

Skip forward to 2005, and there were a number of LEGO fans heading to Eastercon, and thought we should do something Star Wars and LEGO related at the convention. Recreating the Battle of Hoth was an obvious choice.

Although I had a fair collection of sets, I was only beginning to learn how to go about acquiring bricks to build models of any size, but Richard James (aka Bazooka) was a lot more advanced, and he grasped

the idea and built a fantastic set of front doors for the rebel base.

We set up some rebel defences in front of the doors, and arranged some snowspeeders to defend the base.

Inside the base, a collection of rebel ships were arranged. We had some X-Wing fighters, of course, but also Y-Wings (which weren't seen in the film, but probably would have been present), but also some A-Wings and a B-Wing (which were a lot more doubtful).

The Imperial assault was a pair of AT-ATs provided by Richard and me, and various stormtroopers. Unfortunately, we only had a few proper snowtroopers between us, so most of the imperial troopers were wearing standard stormtrooper helmets.



The display at Eastercon was a lot of fun. A lot of children present at the con helped with the set-up. One of the children was thrilled to be allowed to build my Millennium Falcon, which kept him busy for a good couple of hours. There were various other SF related models on display, most notably Dave MacKenzie's model of Port Merrion (aka the Village from The Prisoner). It was enjoyed by many at the convention over the weekend.

And there the story might have ended. Except, in 2010 James Bacon was helping organise Wexworlds, a science fiction festival in Wexford, and James asked me to put together a Star Wars LEGO display. We quickly decided to feature the Battle of Hoth again.

This time I built my version of the Echo Base blast doors. There were a number of Hoth themed sets that had been released in the previous five years, including revisions of the Snowspeeder, rebel trenches, tauntauns, and a wampa cave, and most importantly, a 5,500 piece version of the Millennium Falcon. It was fun incorporating these into the display. I built various parts of the interior such

as the rebel command centre, though many of my details didn't bear much resemblance to the movie.

I now had two AT-ATs, and James Bacon brought a third, making the Imperial attack look quite impressive.

It's perhaps slightly ironic that very few people got to see the display, because of snow! On Friday night, after I set up the display, the country was hit by a snowstorm, and by Saturday the town (and most of Ireland) were snowed under, and a lot of people couldn't get to the festival. Those that did had a great time, and the Battle of Hoth display was very popular.

The Battle of Hoth took a break for a few years. Then, at the end of 2014, I was asked to display at a small show in Ashbourne library, not far from where I live. I needed something that would fill a big display space quickly, and I realised I still had the blast doors from the Wexworlds display, though the front walls had been repurposed. I built a new version of the front



wall. It was a simpler version than the Wexworlds one, as I didn't have time to build on site, but it was probably seen by more people.

This was the point where I decided Hoth could be an ongoing display rather than something to be displayed once then destroyed. Over Christmas that year I happened to get my hands on the "bacta tank" version of Luke Skywalker. This gave me inspiration to build the medical lab with Luke in the tank, under the supervision of medical droids, and an anxious Leia looking on.

Following this I built the rebel command centre, with the computer consoles and terminals. While I was building these, I came across battery powered light sets in a local discount store. Each set had 50 LED lights, and the LEDs happen to fit in a LEGO Technic hole, making them integrate really easily into a model, though some planning is required to accommodate the length of wire between each LED. They really help to make the display stand out.

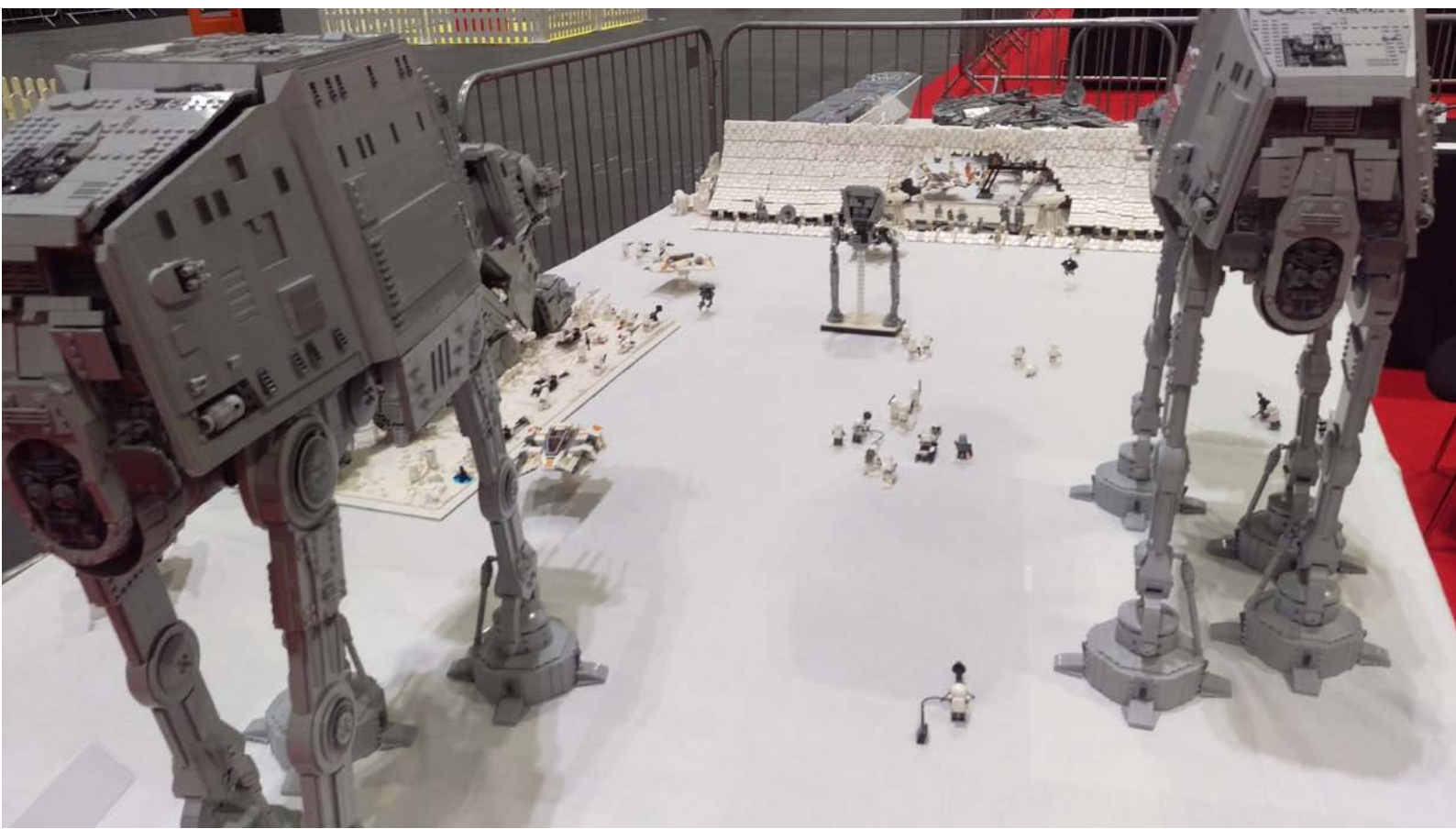
I was looking for a way to incorporate these rooms into the Hoth diorama, and I came upon the idea of building them over the snowspeeder hangers. I displayed versions of the base with varying amounts of interior detail at a number of shows in the first half of 2015. Towards late 2015, I was unhappy with the level of detail in front walls and doors, so I planned a rebuild of the doors, making them bigger, and more

accurate to the movie, and motorising the doors. I also came up with a technique to make the texture of the front wall of the base more realistic.

In December 2015 I collaborated with some UK LEGO fans to display at Brick Live in the ExCeL in London. The display featured three giant AT-ATs designed by Pete Brookdale which really looked stunning. My partner, Fionna, joined in and built several parts of the display, including an improved Wampa cave and Princess Leia's bedroom (after R2-D2 had turned on the heating).

During 2016 there were a number of further improvements to the diorama. I added some extra interior details, and also started improving the rebel trenches. Towards the end of the year, I started work on one of my favourite parts of the diorama, the shield generator. I had been tinkering with ideas for this over the previous years, but hadn't found a design I liked. The trick turned out to be to make it bigger, and the finished generator is made of over 4,000 parts!

During 2017 I wanted to do something about my AT-ATs, which were still the LEGO set ones (including James Bacon's, which I still haven't given back to him after the Wexworlds display). There was no way I could afford to build giants like Pete Brookdale's (since one was never going to be enough). But I came across a design called the "Plus Size AT-AT" by a fan





who goes by the name Raskolnikov. It's a good bit bigger than the LEGO set versions, and has a fairly impressive part count at roughly 2,500 pieces, but is something that I could conceivably build several of.

Another Irish fan also decided to build one, and for a show in Belfast we had two large Walkers and three from LEGO sets. Over Christmas I built my second and third. The third one was modified into a fallen position, with a snowy base.

The diorama was displayed again in January at Tayto Park, a theme park in Ireland, this time with a total of five large AT-ATs (three of mine and two from other members of Brick.ie).

Of course there are always parts I want to improve. The front doors and walls are next on my list for a redesign. I also have plans for X-Wing bays and tauntaun pens, and various other interior rooms.

Over the years it's been very satisfying to see improvements each time I display the diorama, so it will probably never be truly finished.



INTERVIEW WITH TIMOTHY ZAHN

BY WILL FRANK AND ZEYNEP D

Will Frank and Zeynep D interviewed Timothy Zahn at Capricon 38, in the cold Chicago February of 2018. What follows is a recollection of that interview, which may be incomplete but which gives an impression of the interview for those who could not attend.

Will Frank: How did you get pulled into writing Star Wars?

Timothy Zahn: Lou Aronica wrote to Lucasfilm in 1988. Lou and Bantam wanted to do a continuation from *Return of the Jedi*. There was talk of Han Solo and Lando books set before the movie. This letter disappeared into an unanswered letter pile. In 1989, Lucasfilm started to talk about doing books, found the letter, and contacted Bantam. Bantam got a selection of authors together, and sent in some samples and Lucasfilm liked my work. My agent called to say he had a very interesting offer. We discussed it for an hour and I told him the next day. I'd never done a trilogy before, so worried I would fall on my face, but also couldn't let down thousands of Star Wars fans. I wanted to get the Star Wars characters right and said yes.

I was with Bantam for six weeks, I had moved over from Baen. My editor at Bantam was worried about media distractions. My agent had an offer from Tor, but reckoned that Bantam would do well by me. 100K copies were initially wanted, but bookstore people didn't believe that and said they wanted 70K. So that was the first run, and then another two runs of 30K were printed.

A lot of people claim I restarted Star Wars. No. I want to clarify that the only people who bought it because my name was on it, were 5,000 COBRA fans and my mother. I got a chance to put the fork in the pie crust and show what was underneath. By the time *Heir of the Empire* dropped off the New York Times best-selling list, Lucasfilm and Bantam had contracted for 12 more books.

Zeynep D: How did you get pulled into the new continuity?

TZ: Interesting story. Long version: In September 2016, my agent had been nudging Shelly Shapiro¹ about my availability. At Salt Lake City I met Mike Stackpole² and Pablo Hidalgo³ for dinner. Two weeks later I got an email from Lucasfilm saying they would like me to come down and talk about Star Wars. Varying schedules meant I couldn't get down until mid-November, and in that time we did emails. So Dave Filoni⁴ was going to be there, and there was something about being part of the story. The meeting had been budgeted for two hours, and there was the film crew scheduled. I got in there first and sat at the other end of the room, just the crew then Leland Chee⁵, and she knows what is going on, and so Pablo comes in and asks me to move seats to the head of the table and then the story group come in and all say they're big fans – so I am not in trouble.

I was told that Thrawn is going to be the main villain in season three of *Rebels* and how 'the Internet is going to melt'. They took me to the screening room and I hear the glorious Lars Mikkelsen voice. I had a tour of the bullpen, where *Rebels* people were working and signed some books. Bantam were there, and then they went and discussed a prequel showing Thrawn's history. I had to sign two NDAs – for entering Lucasfilm, securing my first born; and for entering into *Rebels*, my dominant kidney.

It was eight months until Star Wars Celebration Europe in London. I told my wife and son, and a couple of friends, when I needed to disappear, that I'd be 'down at Lucasfilm'. I didn't want to lie to people but didn't want to tell them.

1 Shelly Shapiro is the Editor-at-Large at Del Rey, responsible for their Star Wars fiction.

2 The author of the *X-Wing* series, amongst others.

3 Member of the Lucasfilm story group.

4 The show runner on *Star Wars Rebels*.

5 Another member of the Lucasfilm story group and the keeper of the Holocron.

ZD: Will you write any more Star Wars books?

TZ: If they want me to write a Star Wars book, they know where to find me! It was kinda of a repeat of when *Heir to the Empire* first came out – how are people going to react? I watched the live-streaming of *Rebels* in London. They said “let’s show the trailer and expand the universe a little” and people knew that it was Thrawn as they watched him walk out of the shadows and saw the blue skin, and red eyes and rank and the room went crazy.

They made the right decision. People are interested in seeing Thrawn.

The cool thing about Star Wars is that it is such a huge canon, such a huge area that you can always do things about. Fans and Star Wars are both rewarding in their own way. I have not spent my entire career on tie-in work, but I would do a Star Wars book a year, and then fill in with other things.

WF: Do you struggle with the ownership issue? Mara’s death wasn’t well managed, and how is it when characters appear differently to your designs?

TZ: They own the character, you know that going into it. I met a woman who was very upset about Mara Jade, at a con, but I didn’t write that book. She didn’t care, it was my character and my fault. It’s not my character – I write her, I do not have full ownership. Most people recognise you don’t have your name on the cover, it is not your fault.

I have no idea how *Rebels* season four will go, no idea at all. There are many ways to get Thrawn off camera for the original trilogy, but Dave and the *Rebels* guys like him, and so while he is making money, I expect they will keep him.

ZD: Have fans and fandom evolved?

TZ: I don’t think the fandom has changed that much, certainly the book reading fandom. Overwhelmingly polite – even those who do not like the books – fans have always been very enthusiastic and polite. Star Wars fans are polite, and readers as a subset, even more so.

Originally anyone who knows Thrawn knew him through the books. The great thing about Star Wars, each generation has an entry point. Fandom has

always been very good to me and I do not see that changing anytime unless I screw up very badly.

ZD: Is there a theme or motive in your work around teaching? For example, Luke training or doubting training new Jedi, Thrawn training his own successor and in *Outbound Flight*, Obi-Wan and Anakin?

TZ: I’ve done some teaching, knows the doubts, are you getting through to the student. I tend to write people I would like to know. An example of teachability in characters is Sherlock Holmes and Watson. I read them once every couple of years.

Holmes, although he is very brilliant and sees all this stuff, is impatient with people. He asks Watson, tells him he is very good, but tells him he missed everything. Thrawn likes to teach, if they are willing to learn. Notice that Thrawn only does if they are willing to learn. Eli is willing to learn, Pellaeon, I like people who want to be teachable.

When I got the comments back on *Thrawn: Alliances*, part of it is not having the ego, to know you do not know everything. Ego gets in the way of everything and interpersonal relationships. I can learn from others.

ZD: I have a file on my computer collecting places I would like to visit, but cannot because they do not exist. Your places: you just describe them so well, from one page to a couple of paragraphs they all feel solid. Do you sketch them? Do you think about them and wonder how to make them real?

TZ: I just make them up as I go. I want something visually interesting. I usually do not think of these ahead of time. What would be an interesting setting? If I put that in, where can I use it? Could I use it anywhere else? How will the action be influenced by the geographical stuff? This looks interesting, how can I work my action around it?

WF: You are best known for writing characters that sound like the characters. Han sounds like Han, and Luke seems dignified, Luke and R2 together are amazing, droids are amazing.

TZ: Here is the secret to all that, it is serendipitous. Long before Thrawn, I would go on car trips going to conventions. We would audio record a whole movie, record the whole movie and play them in

the car trips, then my son would visualise the movie and play with his Lego. I did these with all three Star Wars movies and heard them 10+ times. I heard the pacing, dialogue, how people said things and it stayed firmly in my mind. Stuff like the interaction between Luke and Artoo and even when 'Chewie and I' was changed by a copy editor, I changed it back to 'Chewie and me'.

In *Spectre of the Past*, there is a scene, Luke is tearing up an asteroid, stuck away from the X-wing and no space suit, Mara Jade and Talon Karrde are off elsewhere. Luke slices the hatch, does a Jedi hibernation trick, flies over to Mara Jade who opens the ship and then Artoo flies over to the ship.

Lucasfilm said that I cannot do this, and told me to use a tractor beam. But if there was a tractor beam Luke would have flown over. Artoo flies the X-wing from Coruscant. Luke says to Artoo, I want to keep it on manual for a while in *Empire*. They can take the X-wing into the hangar, X-wing out of the hangar, but not the flying, the docking with Mara's ship. So I added three words. I had "we have two half ports," and added "with tractor assist".

You learn a lot about diplomacy and compromise when you work in someone else's universe. Not being snide, just trying to figure it out. Lucasfilm were very easy to work with, I would have quit after three books otherwise, and not done 11.

ZD: In *Thrawn*, there are female officers in the book. Back then in *Legends*, we didn't talk about it, but the representation patterns were the same of the original trilogy, whereas new books are following the new continuity. How was it handled?

TZ: I argued against female Imperial officers, as you do not see them in the original trilogy, but I thought that was stupid, as you lose half your people. Price was set up as a governor in *Rebels*. Word came down that more female offices wanted. This Empire is smarter. It was interesting in *Rogue One*, infiltrating the base with this guy with four days of stubble and a woman with a faceplate?

This is less distracting. The movie people are still with the old system. I pointed the dichotomy with the two groups out and there was no problem with it. I like good female characters, and if they want them in, I will make them good.

ZD: Talking about writing – what do you read?

TZ: Sadly, I cannot read fiction anymore, it is too much like research. Most of what I read is non-fiction, military and politics, something to throw in the mental grab bag. For instance, how Switzerland managed to keep Germany from invading. I always thought too hard, but know I am going to use it somewhere down the line.

Audience question: What are the differences in revising for Lucasfilm?

TZ: My own stuff, I get the final word. Shared work, the IP owner has the final word. Diplomacy comes in, Lucasfilm is good about it, the formats, typos. I never realised the R2-D2 letter number thing, or using 'Artoo' in dialogue, things like that. There is the occasional wall that I do not know about and that is why the story group is there to tell me. Changes are easy to do. Anything really major is caught in the early stages. I had ideas – an insane clone, Obi-Wan reincarnating a Jedi ability – where I was told "no, you can't". I'm kinda glad they did, as *Outbound Flight* would have been a very different book. We fixed that in the outline stage before the manuscript.

Audience: Was Mara Jade as a character difficult to pitch to Lucasfilm?

TZ: Mara Jade really sailed through. No problems. Lucas didn't like her. He visualises in black and white, and she is not a Jedi and not a Sith. She's a grey character, a little bit like Faramir, who doesn't want the One Ring for himself but for his father. Mara, in the same way, is looking for justice and was told this is what justice is. Not even grey, pretty unique.

A hard sell was the Hand of Thrawn duology. Two things I asked for: Firstly, it was ten years past: the end of the war with the Empire and entering a new era. Secondly, I wanted Luke and Mara to get together. Okay on the first, but Lucasfilm did not want the relationship, not ambiguous, but okay to be unresolved. I said, "okay, I am not doing it, thanks for the offer". Two weeks later, they said, "okay, you can do that..." They generally liked her as a character.

ZD: I'm glad you stuck to your guns on that.

TZ: Just to add to that – some people wanted Luke

and Mara to get together in the Thrawn trilogy, but younger fans didn't realise that time is needed, and Mara needed the time to adjust her world view to what was really there, as opposed to what she had been told. Luke had some of his own things to work out, partly with her help.

from them, Shelly Shapiro, and a couple from Pablo. All are very good at what they are doing and spotting stuff. For instance, "this won't work in a shipyard, but we could do it over here instead". Certain continuity may change, and I do not think they are going anywhere.

Audience: How do you get over the nervousness of writing and handing things to an editor? How do you overcome stage fright, coming to cons?

TZ:: One never quite overcomes it. I know it is the best I can do. I cannot tell, I am too close. First indicator, the editor. Really do not know. Wish I had a better answer.

Audience: How much control did the story group have over your books?

TZ: For both of the books [*Thrawn* & *Thrawn: Alliances*], we worked out where in the timeline it will go, so it won't bump into something else Lucasfilm is doing. I get those comments in the outline. They're not going in and changing stuff - typically they say what needs to change, and I get to do it.

They have added new people. A couple are working directly with my books - Matt Martin and Jennifer Hemmel - and most of the comments are



INTERVIEW WITH TOM VEITCH

BY JAMES BACON

Journey Planet: You are currently working on a biography. Can you tell us something about it, what it will be covering, and any details of its release?

Tom Veitch: My new book, which will be out in a few weeks, is partly biographical. But mostly it is about Star Wars!

As you might know, back in 1988 Scottish artist Cam Kennedy and I did a graphic novel called *The Light and Darkness War* for Marvel/Epic. (*L&D War* has since been collected in hardcover by Titan Books.) At the time there were no Star Wars comics or novels being created, so I got the idea of sending copies of our comics to George Lucas and proposing a new fully painted Star Wars graphic novel. I talked to Cam Kennedy and he said he would love to do painted Star Wars comics. So I wrote a letter to George Lucas. George loved the idea and the rest is history.

For the record, here is the letter I sent to George Lucas on November 19, 1988:

Dear Mr. Lucas:

This letter is in regard to the possible licensing of a new Star Wars comic book.

Cam Kennedy and I are the creators of a limited series called THE LIGHT AND DARKNESS WAR, which is currently appearing from Epic Comics.

We'd like to do a series based on your creations, possibly four 48-page painted productions in the new "bookshelf format". Most likely we would approach Epic, acting as independent licensees, once permission is gained.

It is our understanding that you withdrew Star Wars from comic books some years back. But the appearance of the Star Wars roleplaying game has made us wonder if you might be open to returning to comics, especially in the kind of first-class production which Cam and I would provide.

If you haven't seen our other work for Epic, I'd be glad to send copies.

Best wishes, Tom Veitch

Three days later I got a phone call from a woman named Lucy Wilson, who had worked for George since 1974, saying George wanted to see our work. I sent him the first three issues of *L&D War* and within a week we were offered the Star Wars comics franchise – not just the writing and art, you see, but the actual business itself of publishing new Star Wars comics! At the time I was not into the business-side of things, only the creative. So I passed the project to Archie Goodwin at Epic, and he accepted it enthusiastically. (Archie, as you probably know, used to write Star Wars stories, for both the Marvel comic books and the newspaper strips that he did with artist Al Williamson.)

From the get-go, Lucas and his people were incredibly generous toward us. George gave us 'carte blanche' (his words) to make up a story that took off from the end of *Return of the Jedi*. And right away they invited us out to Skywalker Ranch to go through the Star Wars archives.

JP: Did you fly out to Skywalker Ranch?

TV: No, I didn't visit until a few years later, after the entire six issues of *Star Wars: Dark Empire* were published by Dark Horse Comics.

JP: 'Carte blanche' – that means 'do whatever the feck you want!'

TV: Yeah. It was a signal to me that Lucas had switched off his 'control mode'. He was going to let us play freely in his world. So right away I told him that above all, we wanted to do BIG things – major stories, not the piddling little ones that don't affect the Star Wars universe.

Anyway, Lucas wanted to see our ideas, so I put together several pages of thoughts and faxed them to him. My first idea, believe it or not, was to do a series called *The Jedi Chronicles* which would delve into the history of the Jedi Knights, "from the days when the Jedi were numerous and the Force was honoured and respected throughout the Republic."

JP: Obviously in 1988 you were already determined to open the door to stories about the 'Knights of the Old Republic'.

TV: Exactly. I imagined these *Jedi Chronicles* would include both an oral and written tradition, a vast and always growing collection of histories, epic sagas, and first-person accounts of the lives of the great Jedi warriors and masters of old.

JP: But he didn't approve your *Jedi Chronicles* idea?

TV: Not at first. And he vetoed my other suggestion, also in the initial proposal, that we be allowed to focus on the twenty years following the Clone Wars "when the Jedi were being hunted down and exterminated". That idea was to create a whole group of new Jedi characters, all who would become martyrs under the reign of Vader.

But Lucas was already planning the prequels, you see. So his response was to tell us that we only had 'carte blanche' to work with the time after *Return of the Jedi*.

JP: Was this before Timothy Zahn proposed his novels [the *Thrawn* trilogy]?

TV: Yeah. In terms of the creative timeline, the basic concepts for *Dark Empire* were proposed and accepted a year before Tim was hired by Bantam. And our project was fully outlined and plotted and approved by Lucas about a month before Zahn came on board.

JP: Do you talk about all this in your new book?

TV: I talk about the whole process of creating *Star Wars: Dark Empire*, and also I go into the creation of

Tales of the Jedi, the collection of stories we eventually did about the history of the Jedi Knights.

JP: What about the movies? Are they in your book?

TV: Sections of this new book offer detailed analysis of the Star Wars films that were released after 1999. A group of friends and I met to view and review each of the films, and our discussions were recorded and condensed into chapters in this book.

JP: So you had seminars on everything from *Phantom Menace* to the new Disney Star Wars movies?

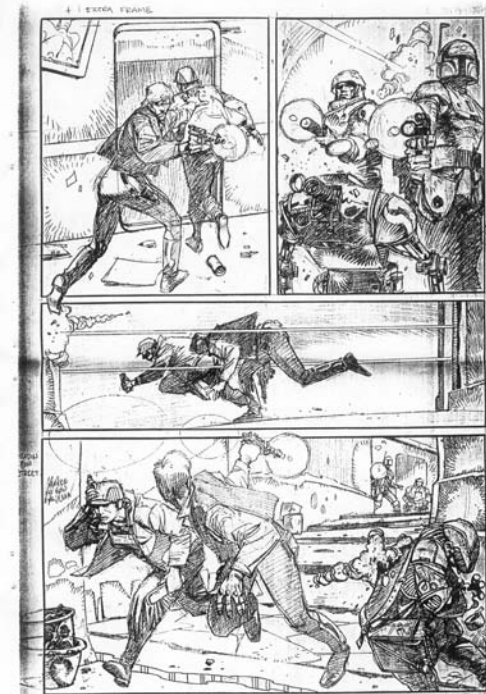
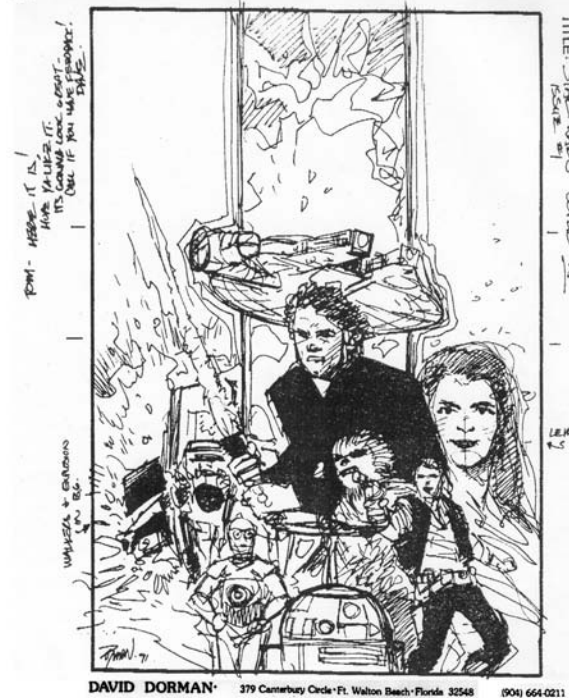
TV: Sure. There are chapters on the three prequels, as well as *The Force Awakens*, and *Rogue One*. There is also a short chapter on *The Last Jedi*.

JP: Are these like fan reviews?

TV: Not exactly. They are more like 'writer reviews'. We tended to nitpick the plots of the films. And there is a big emphasis on how the movies could have been made better. It was a lot of fun.

JP: What else does the book contain?

TV: Lots of stuff. It's about 400 pages in total. One section I'm most proud of is a collection of Star Wars ideas I came up with back in the day, that I never submitted to Lucas. You see, beginning in 1988 I kept huge notebooks on Star Wars, in which I would just let my imagination go, dreaming up story ideas, characters, worlds,





aliens, droids, machines and weapons.... For this book I've put together a substantial selection of these, just for the fun of it.

JP: That must be for the people who ask, "Where do you get your ideas?"

TV: Exactly. And this is to demonstrate that there's a well of ideas inside you, infinite and available to everybody, just like dreams.

JP: What research did you do into Star Wars for the *Dark Empire* story?

TV: Back in 1988 there were no prequels, no 'special editions', and almost no Expanded Universe. What we had were videotapes of the three original movies, and the radio plays both as tapes and as Brian Daley's scripts. We had the shooting scripts for all the movies and for the Ewok films. We had Brian Daley's Han Solo novels and we had the great work that West End Games was doing in expanding Star Wars with their roleplaying games. For associated material we had the films that influenced George Lucas, including the Flash Gordon serials and the Akira Kurosawa samurai films. We of course had the collection of Marvel comic books – many written by Archie Goodwin. And of great importance, for me personally, was Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces* and his other work. I was also affected by Campbell's teachers, including the books of Heinrich Zimmer and Carl Jung.

One thing to know is that back then there was a lively underground actively trading anything

connected to Star Wars. So we also had boxes of movie magazines from the early 1980s, and every 'making of' video we could find.

JP: With Dave Dorman's covers, I recall *Dark Empire* being shockingly brilliant, a huge moment as a fan. How do you recall the response being?

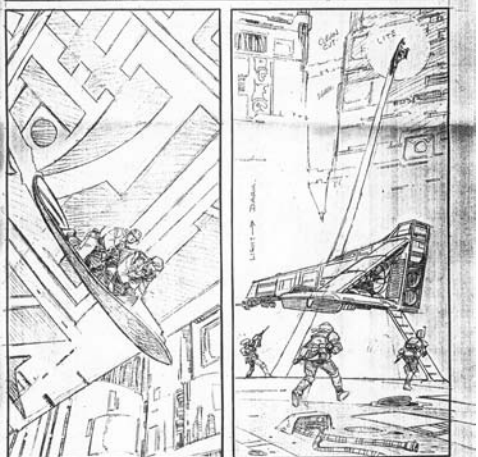
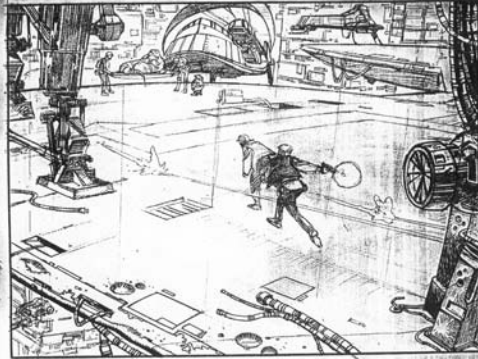
TV: Dave had the genius idea to make the covers look like movie posters. And being one of the best science fiction artists going, he delivered the goods – far beyond anything seen in Star Wars comics covers up till then. Thanks to Dave, as soon as they were published, the books leaped off the shelves and *Dark Empire* became an instant hit.

JP: The story had something to do with that, of course. And Cam Kennedy's painted pages transport you to the Star Wars galaxy.

TV: *Dark Empire* has gone through many collected editions, and was translated into dozens of languages. Right now used copies of the last Dark Horse edition, published in 2010, are going for about \$160 on Amazon. New copies are going for \$250.

JP: Did you know you wanted to write *Dark Empire II* and *Empire's End*? Was a trilogy always part of your overall plan for the story?

TV: I did visualize a trilogy from the get-go. But I didn't know exactly what the story would be until I neared the end of writing the first set of comics. Interesting though, the comics began being less fun to write, once the first series became a hit. Suddenly we were feeling lots of pressure from the business side. And there were people hungry to push us out of the picture.



Fortunately the comic business has room for hundreds of creators, and Dark Horse was very skilful in expanding the franchise – and the Star Wars universe – in a number of directions.

JP: The legacy of *Dark Empire* and *Jedi Tales* lives on today, with writers citing your influence in recent works such as *Star Wars Rebels*, why do you think your comics resonated so much with readers?

TV: I hope it's the imagination in our work. And I hope the story triggers the imagination part of the brain in the readers! I know that's what the original Star Wars movies did for me. Indeed, I still watch them, and seem to get fresh enjoyment each time I do.

JP: Can you let us into an insight, from *Dark Empire*, for instance the way you feel the Force works?

TV: I can share a short essay from the forthcoming book with you. It kind of gets to the core of what I hope to communicate about Star Wars. Really, there are two main themes of my book. One is the idea that the Jedi knew the only way you can conquer the Dark

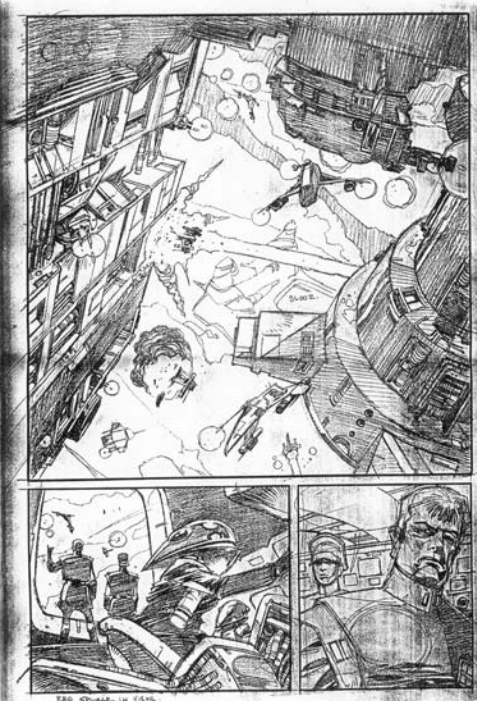
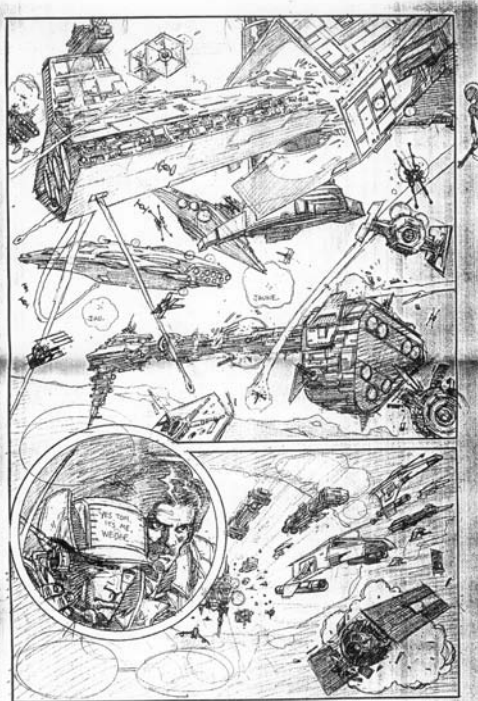
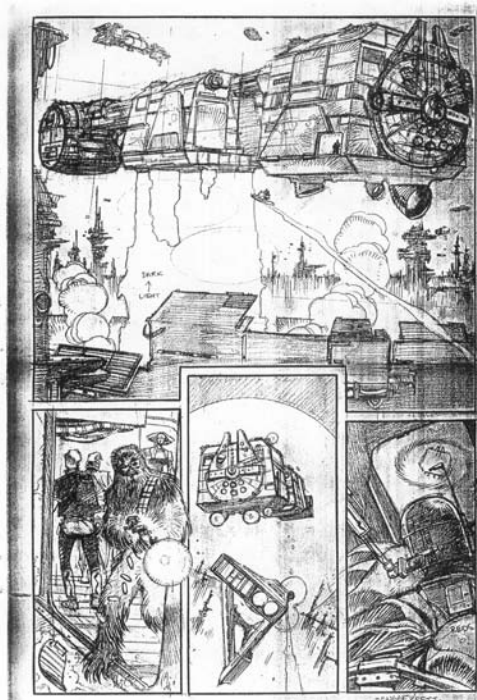
Side is by embracing and passing through it – even if it kills you. Becoming a luminous being, like Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda, doesn't just mean you are a twinkly ghost. Light means knowledge. It always has and it always will.

There is a great distinction between Jedi powers and Jedi illumination, and this results in their being two classes of Jedi – a Warrior class and the Master class. It seems obvious to me that the very greatest Jedi Masters sacrificed living by the sword and moved into a state of liberation from the social roles of the warrior tradition. And that's what Luke should have done when he isolated himself on the ancient Jedi island in *The Last Jedi*.

The other theme is that there is a connection between the Jedi and Buddhism. I sum that up in a short essay in the middle of the book called 'Joseph Campbell's Thunderbolt'.

JP: Thanks for your time, Tom. Could we reprint that essay in the zine, to close the interview out?

TV: Sure!



JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S THUNDERBOLT

BY TOM VEITCH

“I have come to the conclusion that there is a force larger than the individual. It is controlled by the individuals, and it controls them. All I’m saying is that the pure soul is connected to a larger energy field that you would begin to understand if you went all the way back and saw yourself in your purest sense.”
— George Lucas, quoted in *The Making of Star Wars* by J.W. Rinzler

YODA: Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? Hmm? Hmm. And well you should not. For my ally is The Force. And a powerful ally it is. Life creates it and makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we...(Yoda pinches Luke’s skin)...not this crude matter. Feel it you must. Feel the flow. Feel The Force around you...Here, between you and I and that tree and that rock...Yes, everywhere, waiting to be felt and used...Yes, even between this land and that ship! — *The Empire Strikes Back*, scene 312

Joseph Campbell, in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, tells the story of Buddha, who, as a young man was known as Prince Five-Weapons, trained in the military arts, adept with bow, sword, spear, club, and fists. Going up against the ultimate evil, a terrible ogre who hides in the forest, the future Buddha uses all his weapons, to no avail. They all stick to the ogre’s hair, leaving the creature unharmed. Finally, to conquer his adversary, the fearless Prince realizes he must use his sixth and ultimate weapon — a thunderbolt he carries in his stomach.

The thunderbolt, Campbell tells us, signifies the spiritual power of Buddhahood, the indestructible enlightenment which shatters the illusory realities of the world.”

Ordinary crude arms — arrows, sword, spear, club and fists — were useless against this enemy, whose darkness can only be penetrated and conquered by a wisdom that transcends the phenomenal realm of names and forms. As Campbell says, “Therewith the situation changed. He is no longer caught,

but released; for that which he now remembered himself to be is ever free. The force of the monster of phenomenality was dispelled.”

Campbell concludes: “As the rising smoke of an offering through the sun door, so goes the hero, released from ego, through the walls of the world - leaving ego stuck to the sticky-hair of the ogre and passing on.”

Heroism, then is not made of physical or technological power. The true hero is born of knowledge, insight, and wisdom. Or, as Master Yoda says, “Wars not make one great,” and “Luminous beings are we.”

My friends, you can’t imagine how important the idea of heroic knowledge is to Star Wars and to the Jedi, who are the central characters that set Star Wars apart from other tales of science fiction warfare and adventure.

Campbell points out that the Buddha, by his “thunderbolt” of spiritual intuition, overcomes all the opposites of the mind and the world: being and not being, life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil... All the opposites that bind us to hope and fear and link our actions in this world to defence, attack, killing and conquest. The real hero bypasses violence by making it obsolete. He is released into a power that transcends crude matter...and the shedding of blood.

Let’s ask ourselves why we should believe that “Buddha’s thunderbolt” has significance for the Star Wars saga and its mythology of “Light Side” and “Dark Side”.

Well, for one thing, we have George Lucas’ repeated statements that *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was a primary influence on Star Wars.

We also have Lawrence Kasdan and Irwin Kershner, respectively writer and director of *The Empire Strikes Back*, both reportedly avowed Buddhists. It was Kasdan who wrote the words of a 900-year-old

Jedi, Yoda of Dagobah, thus defining the Jedi philosophy as a combination of Mahayana Buddhism, Chinese Taoism and Japanese Zen.

And, for my own part, there's the answer George Lucas gave me when I asked him about the spirituality of the Jedi: "Look to Buddha," he said.

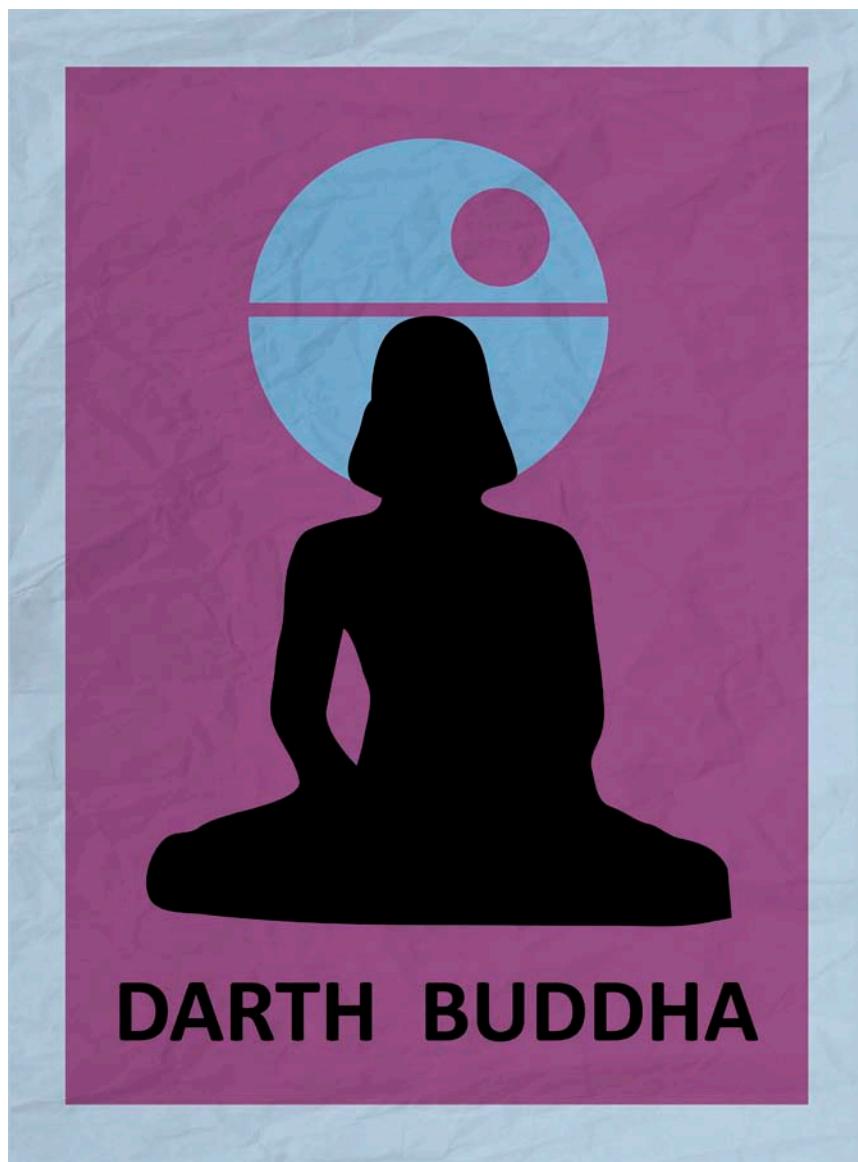
I did look to Buddha...and to Campbell as well. And I couldn't ignore — as many Star Wars writers have done — Master Yoda's assertion that the Jedi are "luminous beings".

I also couldn't ignore that the films are overbalanced toward the Dark Side of the Force, with the Jedi all but eradicated by a murderous power principle embodied in the ancient Sith — Emperor Palpatine aka Darth Sidious, his apprentices Darth Maul and Darth Vader, and now, with the The Force Awakens, Snoke, Kylo Ren, and others.

Surely, in the great canvas of time and history that makes up the Jedi mythos, there was plenty of room for exploring the Light Side of the Force — and looking beyond sword-play, telekinesis, acrobatic skills, "Jedi mind tricks", and other athletic and magical abilities.

So we did that, both in the comics themselves and in the text pages I wrote for the first series of Dark Empire. But the main course was Luke's confrontation with the Dark Side — a challenge that would not be won with a lightsaber or parlour tricks. It was a challenge to know himself — to know what he was made of ... to know the spiritual reality he shared with Obi-Wan Kenobi, Yoda — and with his father, he of 20,000 midichlorians!

This battle to know himself could only be won with insight — not the "five weapons of the Prince". In fact, to beat the Emperor, Luke had to find "the thunderbolt in his stomach" — his own luminous nature beyond the phenomenal realm, beyond the five senses, beyond the war of opposites, beyond the struggle of good vs. evil...and beyond the conventional heroic ego.



As I wrote at the time:

"Luke often wondered what happened to Ben and Yoda, when they passed out of this universe and their physical bodies simply vanished, leaving only heaps of empty robes behind. How could such a marvel be? Now, as the flood gates of the Force open to him, Luke begins to understand how such things are possible. The Force itself, beyond the physical outlines of the body, is not only a Jedi's greatest ally, but his unshakable luminous reality."

Let me now add, the Force is also his wisdom — his insight and his knowledge of what is real and what is illusion.

Tom hasn't yet released the title or cover of his new book on Star Wars. But as soon as the book is ready, it will be announced on his Facebook page, which you can visit at <https://www.facebook.com/tom.veitch.writer>. The new book will also be announced on Tom's Amazon page at <https://www.amazon.com/Tom-Veitch/e/B000AR87DK/>.

ALAN MOORE'S STAR WARS: OBLIQUE STRATEGIES

BY ANTHONY ROCHE

Much of the last year for me has been spent in extending my knowledge of Alan Moore's body of work as a writer (extraordinary both for its quality and quantity). I assumed he had had little to do with pre-existent comic-book titles but had virtually from the first (with *V for Vendetta*) devised his own imaginative universes. The single glorious exception was, of course, *Killing Joke*, that virtual one-off intervention into the Batman franchise, where the villain moves to the centre of the narrative and where Batman and the Joker, rather than operating as polar opposites, become (cracked) mirror-images of each other.

When Moore **did** take on a pre-existent strip for a long run, he reached for *Swamp Thing*, hardly a cornerstone of the DC empire but one that had its own bizarre life in the DC margins, a fertile invention by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson which the even more fertile imaginations of writer Moore and artists John Totlebein and Stephen Bissette would take to heights of unprecedented originality. Over this past year, my friends James Bacon and Pádraig Ó Méaloid have brought me Moore rarities which showed a greater degree of involvement on Alan's part in pre-existent comics titles than one would have suspected. They do come from the heady outset of his extraordinary career, where he was clearly looking for work and willing to try almost anything. But the work also reveals how even at this early stage, and even with characters he had not created, Moore was already laying down the coordinates of his own distinctive imagined universe.

I never knew Alan Moore had written for a Star Wars strip until James presented me with two 1990s volumes reprinting Moore's work on the George Lucas epic from the early 1980s. The work was not for the *Marvel Star Wars* monthly, as I first surmised (Moore writing for Marvel would have been a rare phenomenon indeed) but for a British publisher, part of the move on American comics made by English writers and artists from the early 1980s on.

I couldn't wait to see what Moore had made of the

Star Wars franchise. The first point about the strips he wrote is that they are very short – in general, around eight pages, sometimes as short as four or five, with one of them stretching to fifteen. But there is nothing small about Moore's imagination and these strips could best be described as mini-epics. The whole evolving arc of the Star Wars narrative has of course an epic sweep as it unfolds over decades and many sequels (and a reordering of their sequence). Moore keeps the main Star Wars storyline at arm's distance, in the background and as a necessary referent for his own stories. In the foreground are visionary parables in the Edgar Allen Poe or H.P. Lovecraft mode, touching on universal themes, but conveyed in a single narrative incident which snaps shut and comes to a satisfying conclusion within the allotted pages.

The very first, "Dark Lord's Conscience", is a fine example. Only one character from Star Wars is present. None of Moore's six strips features all of them. Most often, it's Princess Leia and/or Luke Skywalker; R2-D2 and C-3PO have one of their own; and Han Solo makes a single appearance, for most of which he is imprisoned and unable to act, with Chewbacca asserting his agency instead.

In "Dark Lord's Conscience", Darth Vader dominates the story; none of the forces-of-good characters puts in an appearance. As with all of the Moore stories in the franchise, the issue of violence is examined and made real, in a way very different from the sanitised shoot-em-ups of the movies. Moore brings on a character called the Shamer whose aim is empathically to reawaken the deadened consciences of the many empire troops who have killed ceaselessly and without compunction. Under the crushing weight of the collective memories of those they have killed, the soldiers turn their weapons on themselves and fire. The Shamer then confronts Darth Vader and in a Shakespearean speech about conscience, seeks to awaken the Dark Lord's conscience. To the Shamer's surprise (if not the reader's), he is mown down by Darth Vader, who clearly shows he is beyond the promptings of conscience (or has none); but the story enables us to

calibrate the comparative degree of his evil, not just to reproduce it. The archetype is deepened.

“Rust Never Sleeps” (the title of a Neil Young LP from 1979) gives centre stage to R2-D2 and C-3PO (with none of the other characters present, beyond a passing reference to “Master Luke”). They are unceremoniously dumped on a planet which serves as a graveyard for worn out robots, seeking to source the planet’s metal. The planet itself is a living entity (possibly Moore’s tribute to the great Jack Kirby’s creation, “Ego, the Living Planet” in *Fantastic Four* #67) and wipes out the storm troopers who pursue the two robots to the planet. The story concludes: “The imperial records noted the loss of a star destroyer with all hands, [...] victims of an unforeseeable fluke of circumstance. We have a name for such flukes. We call them ‘Acts of God’. But the Empire had dispensed with such foolish and arcane notions long ago... and perhaps that was their loss.” The backdrop for these stories is epic also, therefore, in the sense that their brief narratives are beautifully framed by metaphysical inquiries and concerns.

There isn’t much Moore can do with Han Solo on his one appearance except keep the banter with Princess Leia going and hand over the action to Chewbacca. Luke Skywalker works self-consciously within a “heroic” mode but the limits of understanding which go with that role become only too apparent in the stories in which he features. At the end of “Blind Fury” Luke stares at the flames which have consumed the robot R.U.R. (after the robot in the famous Czech science-fiction play by Karel Čapek from 1920, also called R.U.R.).

The narrative voice ends by stating “There is a lesson here somewhere” and speculates that “perhaps if [Luke Skywalker] stares into the flames for long enough it will be revealed to him.” The final panel is a close up of Luke’s uncomprehending face and a repeat of the word “Perhaps...”.

The final story, “Tilotny Throws a Shape”, has Princess Leia as the one Star Wars character. The story is mainly concerned with a metaphysical debate between the elegant Tilotny the shape changer and the masculine Splendid Ap about whether their artistic inventions create the materials of their art as well as their forms or whether these pre-exist the act of creation. To say that Princess Leia is somewhat beside the point in such a disquisition is putting it mildly. Moore has his fun with one major convention of comic-book “realism” of the 1970s and 1980s, the death of a major character, by having the narrative promise that within its brief four-page span, the Princess will die. And so she does: “Her heart has turned to diamond. She dies.” But before Lucasfilm can be warned of this unacceptable development, Moore has waved his magic wand and brought Leia back to life again: “Forget it. I’m alive again. That’s all that matters.” And with that restoration of conservative order in the Star Wars universe, Alan Moore departs.

As even my brief quotes and descriptions show, the writing is just as accomplished as you would expect. These stories take place at one remove from the world of Star Wars; the individual franchise characters are sent on a brief sideways trajectory into an Alan Moore universe. This leaves him free to invent whatever his fertile mind can devise while returning Han, Luke, Leia et al. to the George Lucas franchise at the end largely unharmed and unaltered.



WRITER-ALAN MOORE ARTIST-ALAN DAVIS LETTERER-JENNY O'CONNOR

THE LUCASFILM BUY AND FANWORK

BY WILL FRANK

The weekend of October 27-28, 2012, I found myself unexpectedly stranded in Dallas, and that wasn't the weirdest part.

I had flown to Dallas for a wedding, and intended to be on a flight back to New York City on Sunday night. But when mechanical issues grounded that plane, I was stuck in Dallas overnight--which quickly turned into multiple nights, as the next day was the day that Hurricane Sandy made landfall in the NYC area. (Remember those halcyon days?) My work was closed for the week, so I called my airline and got my flights changed around, and on Tuesday, October 30, I was back on a plane.

And still not ready for the weirdest part.

"So, while I was in the air," I wrote in an airport waiting for my connecting flight, "Disney bought Lucasfilm...where's the Scotch?"

It threw me for a hell of a loop, and I wasn't alone. Lucasfilm, for all that its productions over the past decade-plus (the Star Wars prequel trilogy and the fourth Indiana Jones movie, most principally) had... issues, had been a major institution in Hollywood, and for that matter, one of the last "studio" entities in the business that felt like an actual studio, a place where an artist did artistic work. George Lucas had started out as one of the "movie brats," rising to prominence after the end of the Studio Era, a rebel against the Hays Code and the old ways, and now he had sold to probably the biggest corporation-as-studio there was. So yeah, I saw more than a few people wondering if this marked some sort of turning point in film, even as I saw a lot of people optimistic--if cautious, it was 2012 and the prequels were still fresh in everyone's mind--about the announcement that Episode VII was set for 2015.

I can't deny that I was feeling all of that mix--and then, my work brain caught up with me.

For those who don't know, I'm a lawyer specializing in intellectual property. So that work brain asked one question:

"What about the fanwork?"

Fanfiction and fanart (and other forms of fan-created content, like fanvids) have been a complication in the existence of major media franchises forever, and the universe of Star Wars was no exception. In fact, fan content of Star Wars was often some of the highest-quality fanwork in existence. Famous examples included TROOPS, a short film parody of COPS set on Tatooine and dealing with the stormtroopers who were looking for those droids, and Ryan v. Dorkman, a pair of short films of two guys having a lightsaber fight, which launched the creator, Ryan Wieber, into a career in visual effects that eventually netted him two Emmy Awards for his work on Heroes.

Lucasfilm had always had a pretty lenient policy on fanwork; their line could basically be summed up as "don't make money from it." And even that had some impressively narrow definitions of "make money"; see, again, Ryan v. Dorkman, where the creator launched a career. He definitely benefited... but he didn't make money, see.

(And stop me here before I digress into a long discussion of the value of fanfiction as training for writers generally. Other people better than I am have made that argument, and that's probably better for a different issue of Journey Planet.)

But anyway, now Lucasfilm was in the white-gloved hands of the single most notorious "I Own This, You Don't" corporate entity in human history: the Walt Disney Corporation. Walt, the story goes, lost the rights to his first great black-and-white cartoon creation, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, in 1928 when he and his long-time collaborator Ub Iwerks quit working with Universal Studios, who had the copyright to Oswald. Walt is said to have come up with the idea for Mickey Mouse on his train journey back to Hollywood after quitting Universal. (The Disney Empire would eventually reclaim Oswald in the 2010s, trading away sportscaster Al Michaels' ABC contract to NBC-Universal in exchange. What a sentence.)



But Walt never forgot the feeling of losing your creation...so it seems he decided to inflict that feeling on everyone else. The Walt Disney Company has been considered by copyright scholars to be one of the prime movers in the extension of copyright, and the protection of corporate-owned characters. Most famously, the Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998 is derisively known as the “Mickey Mouse Protection Act,” with detractors noting Disney’s heavy lobbying efforts, and the fact that the Act’s extension of the term of copyright by 20 years happened just as Mickey Mouse himself was about to enter the public domain.

So...now what? At the time, no one knew. As I said, Disney had announced new Star Wars movies the moment the deal went public (and by the way, it went public upon signing – I still don’t know how they managed to keep that under wraps!), so the worst-case scenario was that Disney would put its hammer down on Star Wars fanwork.

The one glimmer of hope is the pun in the previous sentence...because Disney had acquired Marvel Entertainment three years before, and hadn’t brought its hammer (Mjolnir, one assumes) down overmuch there. Marvel fanwork was as active as ever--probably more, with the waves of new fans brought to the table by the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

So, I and many like me had nothing to do but wait and see.

Now, it’s six years later, and what has that waiting and seeing produced?

Well, no news is good news. There’s a flood of new content; movies, TV shows, books, comics, games... and fanfiction to match. And no indication of a greater crackdown, of Disney tightening their grip (after all, the more they do, the more star systems will slip through their fingers).

Why? Who can say? Did Disney lighten up? After all, Mickey Mouse is getting close to the public domain again, but this time, there’s no push for an extension act. Maybe they did lighten up. Maybe owning Marvel gave them a clue. Maybe it’s just that fanwork is normalized in mass culture far more now than it ever was before; after all, cases like the Star Trek “Axanar” mess make a lot more headlines, and whatever you may think about the quality of the “Fifty Shades” books, everybody knows they started as Twilight fanfiction.

I don’t think I got worried over nothing, so much as, I got a nice first-hand experience in how culture and media change and change each other. Always nice to see.

STAR WARS SCRAPBOOKING

BY MICHAEL CARROLL

I started collecting Star Wars clippings as soon as I heard about the movie back in the summer of 1977. I can't find most of the clippings now... They might have gone the way of all things, inadvertently consigned to that great garbage heap in the hereafter. Then again, they might just be trapped under a huge pile of old comics.

The source of the logo to the right is long forgotten, but the paper is of slightly better quality than newsprint so it was probably a magazine, and probably from 1977 or 1978: this logo appeared on most of the posters and pre-publicity material for the first Star Wars movie, but was supplanted by the one we all know and love. (I'm assuming that Leia's legs were trimmed by the magazine's layout artist and not by me, but we won't entirely rule out the possibility of over-eager cutting on my part.)



The source of the Brown Thomas ad (below left) is unknown. It's almost certainly dated sometime in May 1983, though, if that helps.

**THE FORCE
WILL BE WITH YOU AT
BROWN THOMAS**

"Return of the Jedi"—the new film featuring the Star Wars crew. And now you can enter the Star Wars Universe in the "JEDI" ADVENTURE CENTRE at Brown Thomas.

Photographs and concept drawings from the new film, Storm Trooper and Darth Vader costumes on display in special settings.

The Communications Centre-Monitor messages from C-3PO and that deadly Jedi Darth Vader.

Get your ticket for the "Return of the Jedi", opening in the Ambassador Cinema, Dublin on Friday June 3rd, from the booking office in Brown Thomas.

Win a trip to Elstree Studios where "Return of the Jedi" was made. Pick up a leaflet in the "Jedi" Adventure Centre.

Brown Thomas
GRAFTON, DUKE & DAWSON STREETS
There's no place quite like it.

I don't know anyone who visited the "Jedi" Adventure Centre, so I can't say whether it was any good. Actually, I'm a little bit annoyed at myself for not going: in 1983 I was working full-time and at 17 years old was more than capable of taking the trip into Dublin to see something like this. I mean, I made the trip to see the movie itself, so why didn't I visit the exhibition? Bad past me!

Expertly clipped from the cover of Look-in, 24 May 1980 (below right) – cut 'n' paste in the days before home computers. Look-in was a kids' TV listings magazine that also included comic strips based on then-popular TV shows.

The Look-in cover as it originally appeared is below. No idea why I didn't keep *The Empire Strikes Back* logo, too. I love logos!



Below:



The first proper advert I saw for *Return of the Jedi* is above. This would have been mid-to-late May, 1983. I don't remember exactly when I saw the film, but I do recall that it wasn't long after it opened. I also recall that I went on my own because no-one else would go with me.

The clipping below is from the cover of 2000AD and Tornado, prog 166 (21-28 June 1980), drawn by comics legend Brian Bolland. Your chance to win *The Empire Strikes Back* electronic game!



STAR WARS NASTY!

The face of evil in new space epic

THE £23 million follow-up to *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* sci-fi films seems set to make E.T.'s eyes boggle even more.

For the production—the return of the Jedi—promises not only to shatter the lovable alien's cinema box-office records, but introduces ultra-darker new characters into the fantasy trilogy which has many of its regular stars.

One of them, a cross-tooth space pirate called Bib Fortuna, is described enthusiastically by the film director, George Lucas, as "one mean son of a bitch".

Another posse, the menacing Jabba, the Hut, required in the previous two films, emerges as a more gross, appalling and vicious villain.

When, in part, a creature called C-3PO, "an astromech droid", is "reprogrammed" on people's computers.

Goldmine
The extra element of evil has not been lost. The British film exports, *Star Wars* and *Empire*, were awarded 11 goldmines.

But when *Return* opens in Britain next month it will have a P.C.C. rating—children under 15 might need to be accompanied by an adult.

Highly British actor David Prowse is again Darth Vader. Anthony Daniels is C-3PO—and the character is also back in his (old) West Kensington.

Star Wars' director, George Lucas, has not been disclosed. But his percentage of the *Star Wars* take is



Menacing: "Son of a bitch" Bib Fortuna



Riveting: C3PO and Han Solo

30% BIGGER COLOUR PRINTS

BONUS OFFER

£1.49

Smile. It's on Kodak paper.

KODAK DISC

Joyce's easy going holiday

NUDIST BAN ON

DROIDS IN SESAME STREET

BY CRAIG MILLER

It must have been the Spring of 1979 when I first got in touch with the folks at Children's Television Workshop, the organization (now called Sesame Workshop) behind the television series Sesame Street. The show had been on the air ten years and, from its beginning, had been highly rated and well-respected.

They had occasionally had guest stars on episodes and I thought it would be great if we could get the droids to visit Sesame Street.

Everyone at Lucasfilm liked the idea and so did Children's Television Workshop. We worked out a basic plan for how things would go and things moved forward. I would serve as Producer for Lucasfilm on the project.

The writers at Sesame Street wrote scripts for several segments that R2-D2 and C-3PO would appear in and sent them to me. I read through them. I wasn't giving notes on the material. No "make this funnier"

or "change that line". It was their show. They got to decide what the material would be. My comments were strictly whether or not we would do a given segment.

I suppose if there was a line where C-3PO swears or makes an inappropriate comment about someone, I'd have had to say something but that sort of thing wasn't an issue. Not on Sesame Street. Basically, I was judging the Star Wars-ness of the material. Yes, the droids were on Sesame Street, a place on Earth today, not someplace far, far away a long time ago. But we were just going to ignore that. The issue was keeping our characters in character.

The only segment I had to kill was one where they wanted to have R2 sing the Alphabet Song (also called "The A.B.C."). The one that's basically musically reciting the letters of the alphabet.

I said "R2 doesn't talk". They replied that they could use a synthesizer and have it make sounds that kinda sound like the letters of the alphabet. Just like the noises he makes now but letters. I had to say no. If R2 can say letters, he can say phonemes, syllables. If he can do that, he can talk. R2 can't talk.

So they cut that segment.

But I approved everything else. And planning went forward.

My duties as producer were to coordinate everything and make sure everything worked smoothly. But, honestly, once we were on the stage for Sesame Street and things were moving, there isn't a lot for a "Producer for Lucasfilm" to do. The production was Children's Television Workshop's baby. The Sesame Street producers were running the show.

So I had a second job. I operated R2-D2's head.



Ed Breed, R2-D2, and Craig Miller

Today, the hobbyists who build their own R2 units have radio control systems that let one person control everything that R2 does. And more than we could make him do in 1979. But back then, it took two people using two separate radio-control units to operate the little droid. Ed would steer R2 (and was in charge of making sure he functioned at all) and I turned his head, wiggled his eye, and blinked his lights.

The morning after we all arrived in New York, a limo arrived at our hotel and took us to the studio where we met the producers and crew. We only had two days to shoot a number of segments so we went right to work.

We did a group of segments that were spread through one episode of Sesame Street and a few more “wild” segments that they could drop into assorted episodes. Sesame Street’s format of multiple, unrelated segments in each episode allows them to build shows on themes or topics or just what looks good and fits for time.

For one sequence, additional characters came into the scene and the camera made a big move. Which meant my co-operator and I, who were standing beside the camera, had to move out of its way. This movement meant I was now at the wrong angle to see the monitor, which was on a tall wheeled cart. I needed the cart to pivot just a couple inches so I could see it. So I reached over and gave it a gentle push, turning it very slightly. Just enough so I could

Big Bird (Caroll Spinney) and Craig Miller



see it. After the director called cut, someone came over and told me I wasn’t allowed to touch the cart. I wasn’t in the right union. For the second take, someone was stationed there to turn the cart.

One amusing thing to me – though quite understandable – was that all of the Sesame Street people wanted their photos taken with R2-D2 and C-3PO. My team didn’t care. We wanted our photos taken with Big Bird. (As they say, familiarity breeds contempt. Or, at least, a blasé attitude.)

I have to say that this experience was pretty great for me. This was the first TV project I got to produce. I got to operate R2-D2. I got to work on Sesame Street and meet Big Bird and other Muppet characters. All pretty great things.

But one other pretty great thing happened that trip.

A few weeks earlier, I was at Windycon, a Chicago-area science fiction convention, to give a presentation on The Empire Strikes Back.

The evening before the convention started, I had



R2-D2 and Tony Daniels as C-3PO rehearsing a scene



dinner in the hotel restaurant with a friend and a group of other people I met at that dinner. One of them was a young woman who'd flown in from New York that afternoon.

We spoke a few times over the course of the convention and, on the last day, she gave me her phone number, saying "If you're ever in New York, give me a call".

And here it was, three weeks later and I was in New York. I called her. We went out to dinner. She told me she really hadn't expected to ever hear from me. After all, I lived in Los Angeles. But, surprise, here I was in New York.

That was our first date. But not our last. Eventually, we got married. We still are.

You can find a clip of the show at <http://bit.ly/craig-miller-clip>, and you can find other links to the various segments we did on YouTube.

The article is an excerpt from Craig Miller's upcoming book, Star Wars Memories. The full version is over twice as long, and contains more about Craig's experiences - keep an eye out for the book when it comes up!



EMPIRE STRIKES BACK PAPERWEIGHTS

I don't really have a story to tell about these pewter paperweights but they're kind of cool and I just thought people would like to see one.

Gary Kurtz had them made and gave them to everyone in the cast and crew for *The Empire Strikes Back*. They came in a dark blue cardboard box and are about 2.75" x 3.5" and, being pewter, are fairly heavy. I still have and use mine. They do a good job of keeping papers from floating off a desk. (Except, as I've discovered, when faced with a determined cat.)

IMPERFECT WORLDS

BY CHARLOTTE 'CLEO' WOLF

STAR WARS AS A MIRROR FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL NARRATIVES

As I scroll through YouTube, Facebook, and other social media connected to fandom, I frequently see one phrase repeated over and over in response to the newest Star Wars saga film, *The Last Jedi*: “Disney and SJWs are ruining Star Wars.” Although I am myself what many would refer to as a Social Justice Warrior, (or perhaps more appropriately in this case, a Social Justice Smuggler) as well as a Disney fan, I did not feel that I saw the themes, subtext, and cultural messaging I would expect to see in a film with a radically progressive direction.

Yes, there is a woman in power now, but we have had that before in Senator General Princess Leia Organa. I think that list of titles undoubtedly dwarfs those of both her mother in the prequels and her protégé in *The Last Jedi*. We have characters of colour that take a lead role, but when compared to other current pieces of visual science fiction, notably *Star Trek: Discovery*, this too is simply in the vein of its contemporaries. Fans who are old enough to remember the release of the prequel trilogy will remember the debates held over their style and message as well. In fact, when each trilogy is compared with the others, they are each unique, holding their own individual style and representation of the galaxy and its inhabitants. These particularities of style, theme, and subtext are each quite reflective of their contemporary culture of their production.

A New Hope was released to an American audience in the height of the Détente period of the Cold War. For many Americans, the fear of the vague yet tangible foreign threat of communism was finally beginning to subside. Less than four years after the end of US military involvement in Vietnam and roughly a decade after the end of the Civil Rights Movement, many Americans felt the threat of an enemy much closer to home. Much like the present, the country was in the midst of a conservative backlash that formed in reaction to the radical social movements of the decade prior and brought about the rise of the Nixon Administration.

The narrative of the film fits right into this cultural framework. A farm boy, a young woman politician and activist, and a naval-pilot-turned-well-meaning-criminal struggle against a tyrannical government and its looming villainous goon, lead by a mentor preaching the ideals of a world ruled in peace rather than fear. We follow these heroes as they join the Rebellion, emphasizing the extent to which every individual makes a difference. Their final victory — destroying a super weapon capable of destroying a planet — resonant in a period in which more and more Americans look favourably upon nuclear disarmament. Contemporary to films like *Logan's Run* and *Tron*, the Hero's Journey ran strong in American media of the time. Luke falls in step with other portrayals of a valiant, kind-hearted, and understanding hero that were quite common in the post-Vietnam period.

The rest of the trilogy follows this narrative, but with a more solemn tone. These films were released in the tense period at the tail-end of the Cold War between the fall of the Détente period in 1979 and the fall of the Iron Curtain beginning in 1988. This period is framed by a retightening of government control around an American populace now awoken to the possibility of a freer world and the immorality of American imperialism. Here then, the tone of the Saga becomes darker as the Empire makes repetitive gains against the Rebellion. The Empire takes a much more visible position in the films and the Emperor — a likely allegory for Nixon — is brought into the story. The films maintain their black and white positions of good and evil, but the heroes are less morally pure and now all hold rank in the Rebellion, a departure from the anti-military themes of the first film. To resist growing Imperial control, the heroes must turn a Black capitalist to their cause, find a new mentor after the brutal death of Obi-Wan, and combat the criminal underworld that the Empire had allowed to flourish under its rule. This last point parallels the Second Mafia War, which started in 1978. The trilogy then concludes not with a true victory for the Rebellion, but with an

optimistic view of the future in which the power of fear that the Empire wields is broken with the deaths of its figureheads and our heroes acknowledge that the true struggle to dismantle the tyrannical rule of the Empire can now begin, echoing American hopes for the end of the Cold War as the Soviets adopted perestroika and SALT II was ratified.

You can see this same connection between tone of the films and the country's collective consciousness continues into the prequel trilogy. Released between 1999 and 2005, these films fall in a time where the American social contract was stretched thin. With memories of the Gulf War fresh in the minds of many Americans, another Bush on the campaign trail, and a president going through impeachment, the political manoeuvring and guerilla warfare of *The Phantom Menace* resonated with many fans at the time of the film's release. With *Attack of the Clones*' release six months after 9/11, the tone had shifted to our heroes lashing back at the splinter group of their divided government. As well, Anakin's anger towards the Sand People on Tatooine – who were framed as rapists and murderers – could be read as a metaphor for the rising tide of irrational Islamophobia of the time. Likewise, *Revenge of the Sith*, released a year and a half after the capture of Saddam Hussein, finds an America where some are questioning and regretting continued involvement in the conflict, while others grow more devoted to the post-9/11 understanding of patriotism. As a parallel, *Revenge* shows the flaws of war as the conflict shatters friendships, destabilizes democracy, instils a new rigid social order, and makes a villain of a hero.

The narrative of a conservative political figure rising to power from the shadows by leveraging both sides of an invented war to generate fear, thus justifying his consolidation of power, feels like an echo of the 9/11 and Iraq War-related conspiracy theories that were so pervasive during this time. The moral system established in the previous film changes, with black and white giving way to only really grey and darker grey, save a few characters. More than teaching the viewer how to be a hero and trust in the side of good as the Original Trilogy did, it provides warning of the path to corruption and the inevitable failing of moral puritanism. In the midst of a growing divide between religion, science, and nature, the Jedi are shown as fallible and the Force is given both its own will and a biological explanation. The themes of a chosen one, corruption of a hero, forbidden romance, and free will vs. predestination were also quite

common among contemporary films like *The Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Titanic*, and *Batman Begins*.

After following this history of the other two trilogies, one can now see just how much the narrative of the Star Wars saga is influenced by its contemporary culture, and the newest instalment is no different. It is art following life, not a piece of agitpop propaganda for the radical SJW agenda as so many have sought to claim. *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi* follow a narrative of a society facing yet another reactionary backlash. The looming dark figures of the First Order feel almost inseparable from images of the contemporary Far Right. Their figurehead, Kylo Ren, is drawn from the everyman young members of the reactionary white supremacist movement taking its reins from the dead hands of its decrepit, yet influential leader. Continuing the parallel, the First Order is well funded, yet it is not treated as a credible threat until it successfully destroys the old, progressive government. Though the Rebellion is still alive in the form of Resistance, it has become disillusioned from what it once was, having lost its connection to its heroes, ideals, and the government that it helped create, similar in many ways to the Democratic party's alienation from Millennial activists and the wider progressive cause that once fuelled its base.

The films' subtexts also centre around the rising power of a new generation and their opportunity to reshape the structures of the world around them. Rey, our powerful Force user hero, is an orphan of no noteworthy lineage, gifted power through the will of the Force rather than influential parents. She reflects a growing dissatisfaction with dynastic, entrenched power much of American society. A defected stormtrooper of the First Order, Finn relates the ability of new generation to reject the oppressive norms taught to them and strive to overcome the indoctrination of their upbringing. Poe's arc in *Jedi* parallels the greater value placed on human lives and community wholeness over symbolic, pyrrhic victories in Trump-era Resistance. Rose, a working class victim of human trafficking conveys both the necessity of resistance and the strength brought by an empowered base. Finally, acting together from both their diverse backgrounds and the real world diversity of the cast, these characters together weave a narrative of the importance of intersectional allyship in the struggle for justice that has become a common refrain among young people.

The major messages of the films, too, fit with current cultural trends. The Force is no longer black and white, evil and good: it is about balance. Within a person, there is an expressed ideal towards the balanced use of the Force, but also in the world. Life cannot exist without death, good without evil. “The Dark rises and the Light to meet it.” Against the rising tide of rejuvenated white supremacy, another unified force will rise to meet it. It seems no accident that the Resistance is led by three women and two men of colour, and First Order by a contingent of white men. Indeed, this mirrors the ways that feminists, Black Lives Matter, the LGBT community, and other marginalized people have rallied together to oppose the increasingly fascist power of hegemonic white American Conservatism. Even outside the narrative sphere of the Force, it is emphasized that the actions people take, not the people themselves, are evil, a concept highly reminiscent of the Restorative Justice Movement.

Both *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi* challenge both the Hero’s Journey and the idea of a hero itself. Characters reject their calls to action and instead further the story through their bonds to one another. Each film is framed around a hero from the original trilogy imparting their final lesson, finding peace with their past mistakes, and passing on. Heroes are framed as fallible: Han abandoned his wife and cause to return to his life of smuggling. Not only does Luke nearly murder his nephew and apprentice, but he responds to this by completely abandoning the New Republic. In many ways this mirrors the changing format of social movements from the largely figurehead-centred radical movements of the 1960s in favour of a new, community-based format in which those who have the drive and skill to accomplish the task at hand step up together to inspire change as the movement demands. It also harkens to the

ways in which social justice movements are coming to grips with the flaws, shortcomings, and misdeeds of the deified historical leaders.

Ultimately, these films project an uncertain and difficult future for both the galaxy and the society it reflects. Challenged by the rising tide of both fascism and reactionary politics, the Resistance is left in a precarious position. Facing an opposition that is better-funded, better-positioned, and holding much of the political power, it must evolve to survive. If the Resistance cannot reclaim and mobilize the legends of its heroes, legacy of their past victories, and philosophies that underpin their ideals, then they will surely perish.



ICONIC STAR WARS VEHICLES IN LEGO

BY JAMES SHIELDS

So it started as a conversation with James Bacon about the various versions of the B-Wing starfighter LEGO have released. And then we got talking about fan versions. It probably should have stopped there, but it didn't as we got into other vehicles. But let's start at the beginning...

B-WING STARFIGHTER

LEGO have released three versions of the B-Wing at minifig scale, plus a larger "Ultimate Collector Series" model. LEGO have also produced smaller scale versions of many of the vehicles, but, somewhat surprisingly, I'm only aware of one small scale B-Wing set.

Set	Name	Year	Parts
7180	B-Wing at Rebel Control Centre	2000	338
6208	B-Wing Fighter	2006	435
75050	B-Wing	2014	448
10227	B-Wing Starfighter (UCS)	2012	1487
75010	B-Wing Starfighter & Planet Endor (Microscale)	2013	83

The first version, 7180, was released in 2000, the second year of LEGO's partnership with Star Wars, so LEGO were still finding their feet with this franchise. I think it is certainly a more basic design than the later versions, but it is one of the better of the early starfighters, and captures the shape well with the more limited part selection available. However the central engine block is very blocky and doesn't have a lot of recognisable detail. Also, there's just a Technic beam sticking out holding the cockpit. It also includes the rebel command centre, which has some nice details, with a rebel engineer and astromech droid.

6208 is a massive improvement, and the wings on this version are my favourite, with long curved slopes for a very slick finish. The engine block is improved, but I feel the design was compromised to get a spring loaded missile launcher in. The cockpit

let's the design down a bit, and while the connection to the engine block is better, there is still the end of a technic beam visible, and there's a completely unnecessary section between the cockpit and the engine block that pushes the cockpit too far from the S-foils. It has a nice stand/service gantry, though less interesting than the command centre of the original. The part count has risen by around a hundred pieces, but I expect the ship has grown by more than that, as there are likely fewer parts in the stand than there were in the command centre. It contains Ten Numb and a rebel pilot.

75050 has lots of gorgeous details in the engine block and cockpit, which are both hard to find fault with. The air intake fins at the front really nail the look of the movie ship. The weapon pods at the end of the wings are also really nice, though they do feature the newer missile launchers, which on not a huge fan of, at least they are less intrusive than the giant one on the middle of the engine block of 6208. The wings are the only thing that seem a step backwards, being mostly constructed of layered plates, and look a little too skinny and insubstantial for my taste. The part count is almost the same as 6208, but there is no stand or base, so all the parts are in the ship. It contains three minifigs, General Cracken, a new version of Ten Numb and a generic rebel pilot.

The Ultimate Collectors' B-Wing, 10227, is well worth a mention. It is an incredibly detailed and beautiful model, though at a much bigger scale, with nearly five times as many parts as the minifig scale versions.

For me, however, the official LEGO sets are always subject to constraints that the fans aren't. LEGO fans are often able to take a design to wonderful levels of detail, and I've picked two fan B-Wings that are worthy of mention. The first is from Krispijn (aka krispy), though he says he based his model on other fan builds, and many other fans suggested improvements that he incorporated. His ship uses some really clever techniques to capture the shape almost perfectly, with lots of angled plates and hinges. He has captured the slight angling on the



KRISPY'S B-WING

I discovered a model by RenegadeClone in an old forum topic. There were no real instructions, so using LEGO Digital Designer, I reverse-engineered the model from the pictures. It is very similar (at least on the outside) to their build and I feel they deserve credit for it. Because I first build it in digital and only later in real bricks, I found the internal skeleton I designed was not strong enough, so I had to redesign it and the model is now sort of swooshable as they say. I'm happy I was able to actually take some blurry pictures and convert it to a digital model that is also buildable in the real world (and has been built by others). The digital model (and parts list) was also my first contribution to the Eurobricks community. I like that others have taken the model, improved upon it, and shared the improved model in turn.

leading edge of the central wing beautifully. I suspect it captures the shape most perfectly of any minifig scale B-wing. The second is from a fan who goes by the name of Inthert. Although I think he sacrificed a little but of accuracy, he has used "SNOT" (studs not on top) techniques to get an almost completely smooth finish. For me this is the most beautiful minifig scale B-Wing, and I've been busy trying to build my own version.

MILLENNIUM FALCON

No discussion of iconic Star Wars ships would be complete without mentioning the Millennium Falcon, and LEGO have produced no less than seven versions at Minifig scale (including two Ultimate Collector Series versions). There have also been quite a few small scale versions.

Set	Name	Year	Parts
7190	Millennium Falcon	2000	663
4504	Millennium Falcon	2004	985
10179	Ultimate Collector's Millennium Falcon	2007	5197
7965	Millennium Falcon	2011	1254
75105	Millennium Falcon	2015	1329
75192	Millennium Falcon (UCS)	2017	7541
75212	Kessel Run Millennium Falcon	2018	1414
4488	Millennium Falcon (Microscale)	2003	87
7778	Mini Scale Millennium Falcon	2009	356
75030	Millennium Falcon (Microfighter)	2014	94
75193	Millennium Falcon (Microfighter)	2018	92

The first version of the Millennium Falcon, like the B-Wing, was released in 2000. While it is scaled to minifigs, it clearly is built to a much smaller scale than many other minifig scaled models, but the scale has stuck for "playset" versions of the Falcon. Like



INTHERT'S B-WING

I think the B-wing has appealed to many builders over the years just because we saw so little of it on screen in *Return of the Jedi*. But beyond that look at it! That thing has engines and wings and weapons all over the place and yet it still manages to form a coherent, elegant and frankly cool ship. The wings and engines posed the biggest challenges: how to create orange circles and a grid-like engine intake? My answer was to use arches and tiles to make the circle designs and technic right-angle beams for the intakes. Adding the battle damaged parts was another highlight for me, never before had I used such a bizarre variety of SNOT techniques to achieve the look I wanted.

many sets of the era, it used a lot of parts repurposed from other themes, and the main hull used large curved panels that had previously been used in flying saucer sets from a UFO theme. The cockpit seems to be just hung on the side, with no attempt at the connecting tunnel from the movie version. It included six minifigs, Han, Chewie, Leia, Luke, Artoo and Threepio, so is clearly set at the point where the Falcon and crew are escaping from the first Death Star.

The second version, set 4504, came out in 2004, and was one of the first sets to feature “fleshy” faced minifigs, after the decision to give minifigs in licensed sets accurate skin tones rather than yellow faces. The ship uses an innovative technique of hinged wedge panels to create the curved surface of the ship’s disk without resorting to large panels or custom mouldings. It is also one of the last sets to use the old classic space 4x7 wedge plates, which I feel capture the shape of the front wedges better than some of the later versions. The piece count has jumped from 663 to 985, with a corresponding increase in detail. I also really like the hyperdrive inside. This set is set as the Falcon escapes from Hoth, so includes Han, Leia, Chewie, Threepio, and a snowtrooper with a big gun.

The next version was the Ultimate Collectors Falcon, released to celebrate the 30th anniversary in 2007. This is clearly a different minifig scale to the others. The brief was that four minifigs should be able to sit in the cockpit. It captures the exterior detail of the ship beautifully, and the shape is almost perfect. It stands on seven wonderfully detailed landing legs. The cockpit is perhaps a little bit of a let down, as it is made from tubes and plates and looks a little clunky with no glass, but it does help give the feel that everything is real LEGO. Sadly with all the structure needed to hold the ship together, there was no room for an interior. It is a beautiful set and has been one of my most prized possessions for over ten years.

In 2011 it was time for a new playset version, so 7965 was released. The piece count jumps to 1254, and the detail has been ramped up over the 2004 version in a number of areas. There are a lot of new curved pieces in the access tunnel to the cockpit, which looks very smooth. There’s a lot of extra interior detail with a nice computer console, and an area for Luke to practice his lightsaber moves as well as the secret smuggling compartments. I do feel the front wedges don’t look as well, however.

2015 saw the release of The Force Awakens, and another version of the Falcon, set 75105. This one is similar to the previous one, but has the new rectangular sensor array. As before there is a nice level of interior detail, with a new printed shield for the Dejarik table. The minifigs included are, of course, Rey, Finn, BB-8, with the older Han and Chewbacca, and two members of the Kanjiklub Gang.

Although the Ultimate Millennium Falcon had come out for the 30th anniversary of Star Wars, something special was needed for the 40th anniversary, so why not an even more Ultimate version of the Falcon? A lot of new parts had been produced over the past ten years, so there was plenty of areas that could be improved. Two complaints from the first one, the cockpit, and the lack of an interior were addressed. The cockpit has a new specially moulded piece produced for this set, though I won’t be surprised if it shows up in other sets. Although it wasn’t practical to have a full interior, there are several roof panels that can be lifted to show parts of the interior. The part count has risen by almost 50% compared to the last Ultimate Falcon, so the result is certainly impressive. I don’t own it yet, but I suspect it’s only a matter of time.

The final version is the recently released Kessel Run version from the soon to be released Solo movie (sorry if that’s a spoiler for anyone). Apart from the colour change to white, the most notable feature of 75212 is the extra section on the front. However this can slide out to return the ship to its familiar shape. There are some new interior details, including what appears to be a bunk and a bar area.. Other than that, we’ll have to wait for the movie to find out what it’s all about.

I’d like to mention a couple of fan versions of note. The first is by a fan who goes by the name of Marshal Banana. His is a similar size to the UCS versions, and certainly more detailed than the 2007 version, though I’m not sure if it’s as detailed as the 2017 one. However, it’s interesting as in a lot of places he’s approached the problems in slightly different ways to the LEGO versions, so come up with different solutions.

The other one is a stunningly detailed model of the Falcon interior that’s about 30% bigger than the Ultimate Collector sets, built by a Singapore team called Titan Bricks.



JAMES' YT-1210

I wanted a ship that looked somewhat similar to the Falcon, but also had its own unique features. I picked the Corellian YT-1210, a predecessor of the YT-1300 the Falcon is an example of. It has a similar cockpit, but lacks the front mandibles, and has completely different engines. It was a lot of fun to work on.

X-WING FIGHTER

There have been a lot of sets based on the X-Wing fighter over the years, and it's undoubtedly a very popular ship. However, at minifig scale, there have really only been three versions of the T65 from the original trilogy, and one of the T70 resistance fighter from the latest trilogy (albeit in two colour schemes).

Set	Name	Year	Parts
7140	X-Wing Fighter	1999	266
7142	X-Wing Fighter (re-release)	2002	266
4502	X-Wing Fighter	2004	563
6212	X-Wing Fighter	2006	437
9493	X-Wing Starfighter	2012	560
75102	Poe's X-Wing Fighter	2015	717
75149	Resistance X-Wing Fighter	2016	740
7179	X-Wing Fighter (UCS)	2000	1300
4484	X-Wing Fighter & TIE Advance (Microscale)	2003	76
6963	X-Wing Fighter (Microscale)	2004	41
30051	Mini X-Wing (Microscale)	2011	61
9677	X-Wing Fighter & Yavin 4 (Microscale)	2012	77
10240	Red Five X-Wing Fighter (UCS)	2013	1559

Set	Name	Year	Parts
75032	X-Wing Fighter (Microfighter)	2014	97
30278	Poe's X-Wing (Microscale)	2016	64
75125	Resistance X-Wing Fighter	2016	87

The X-Wing was part of the original 1999 line-up. The ship was grey, and a fairly basic design, with "click hinges" supporting the wings, meaning the wings had to be individually moved into the attack position. This was released as 7140 in 1999, and re-released as the identical set 7142 in 2002.

It got a revamp as set 4502 in 2004. This ship was a world apart, with some clever techniques to make the nose slope inwards. The new white colour scheme was a lot closer to the movie colours, though whether X-wings should be grey or white remains a contentious issue for LEGO Star Wars fans. The set also has a clever mechanism for opening the wings by turning a dial at the back of the ship. The set had over twice as many parts as the previous version, but included Yoda's hut. The fighter is almost identical to the version released as set 6212 in 2006, though the hut is absent from this set.

The X-wing then took a break until 2012 when a new version, 7493 was released. The part count increased by over a hundred pieces, and it's certainly more detailed. The wing mounted lasers are particularly nicely done on this version. It also has a nice feature that it includes wing dressings to make it either Red Leader or Luke's Red Five. The wing opening mechanism is further improved, and be opened with a single turn of the dial at the back. I would have thought the 2012 version left little room for improvement, but there's a new version coming out later this year, so we'll have to see.

I'll also mention the T70 X-Wings from The Force Awakens, the first released was Poe's X-Wing in 2015, with its distinctive orange and black livery. Only a year later, the Resistance X-Wing was released in the more general blue and white colours. The ship is almost an identical design, apart from the recolouring. For me releasing two almost identical versions of the ship in such a short timeframe is a little disappointing. I'd have preferred to see a bit more time between them, and maybe a more original design for the second one. However, I'm sure some people will want to make several into a fleet, so having matching models in both colour schemes will be appealing.

I feel I have to give a brief mention to the Ultimate Collector versions of the X-Wing. The first was one of two released in 2000, and is still a stunning model. The second, from 2013, manages to pack in even more detail. They really are beautiful display pieces.

There are a number of fantastic fan builds of the X-Wing, and there have been many clever solutions to achieve some of the tricky shapes found in the ship.

One example is by a Finnish fan, Sami Kattelus, whose models were on display at the 2017 Worldcon in Helsinki. His X-Wing has carefully tuned fishing wire to allow a triggering mechanism to fire the four spring launched missiles in sequence.

Another LEGO X-Wing that blew me away was from James Cherry. It's 78cm long and 54cm wide, making it about 1/16th scale, significantly bigger than the UCS versions, and he's managed to pack in a lot of extra detail.



JAMES CHERRY'S X-WING

The X-wing was and still is my favourite Star Wars ship. It also presents a technical challenge which I really enjoy tackling. The wing box mechanism took a lot of figuring out as the large scale of the model meant it had to handle a lot of weight and still operate. As with all my models I print out scale plans to build to, I measure everything constantly and then use a 3D model to get a sense of shaping, I had a plastic kit version of an x-wing as a reference. The plans were from the studio scale model that were derived from the original film props. I was most proud of the fuselage and nose as the complex angles narrowing towards the nose were really hard to recreate accurately in LEGO. I used ball joints and finger hinges to get the shaping.



SAMI KATTELUS' X-WING

I am building my personal Star Wars Universe for me to play with and touch on and look and imagine and... For that I have started with some iconic vehicles both from the Empire and the Alliance. X-Wing was a natural start I guess. And I also had some curious ideas, how to make guns fire and how to launch the proton torpedo so I wanted to put them into use. And yeah, that is the thing for me in general that I admit I might be a little proud of. Making all the functions really work so that you can play with it. Pull a lever and the wings open smoothly. Pull another one and the laser cannons fire as in the movies and yet another one and the torpedo launches. Often these mechanisms include some use of fibre wires in addition to LEGO parts.

AT-AT IMPERIAL WALKER

Perhaps one of the most iconic vehicles from the entire movie series, I'm a little surprised there haven't been more versions of the AT-AT.

Set	Name	Year	Parts
4483	AT-AT	2003	1068
10178	Motorised Walking AT-AT	2007	1137
8129	AT-AT Walker	2010	815
75054	AT-AT	2014	1138
4489	AT-AT (Microscale)	2003	98
20018	AT-AT Walker (Microscale)	2010	88
75075	AT-AT (Microfighter)	2015	88

There have been four at minifig scale. The first, 4483, came out in 2003, and still holds its own today. I really like the printed dishes for the knees and shoulders. The head is a challenging shape, and the way it's build for this set is a little fragile. There's also only room for one driver and now commander.



CAVEGOD'S AT-AT

I always wanted the Kenner AT-AT as a child but never got it. I would say that the Battle of Hoth is my favourite scene of the entire saga.

There's a nice removable module for snowtroopers to sit in behind the side bay doors.

The next set, 10179, sounds like it might be a UCS set from the set number. However in this case it merely indicates it was an exclusive from LEGO shops and their online store. This set is motorised so it walks on its own. And it really looks great when in walking mode. I do feel the design is a little compromised to facilitate the walking function. It still manages to get the driver and a commander into the cockpit in the head, and the head has less tendency to fall apart than its predecessor.

SAM PEARSE'S AT-AT

I love minifigure scale vehicles, and I loved Star Wars. The AT-AT was my favourite vehicle, so big and imposing! It would have been everything I'd have loved in a set as a kid. I had seen Brickplumber's minifig scale AT-AT and took inspiration from his (quite a few techniques too). But I wanted to try and make it as much mine as I possibly could. The head was my own design with some snippets of help from Cavegod, the underbelly, side panels, roofing, feet with flappy toes and rear wall are all my own design entirely, as well as the interior. The structure was done using similar methods as Brickplumber as it was my first ever proper MOC, and I didn't know hardly any special techniques or think I could manage anything better. It is actually quite a simple build with no real special techniques I'm proud of, I'm just proud that it can stand up by itself! I have to say, I am also proud of how the head turned out too. A LOT of effort went into that!

RASKOLNIKOV'S AT-AT

The AT-AT came about just because I wanted to have some bigger AT-ATs to go along with my Imperial army. I had two 75054 sets, and they looked too small in comparison to the Rogue One AT-ST. In terms of techniques, the Plus-Size AT-AT owes a lot to the general structure of LEGO's AT-AT sets. Sometimes, coming up with that general structure is the toughest part. My favourite added detail is the exterior ladders. I also think using the 1x3 locking hinges as greebles turned out well.

This was followed in 2010 by set 8129. The part count actually falls to 815 pieces. And I definitely feel it suffered as a result. It appears a little smaller than the other versions, and there are a lot of visible gaps. The wedges on the sides don't connect up with the shoulders at all, for example, which I feel spoils the illusion a little. It does have a great selection of minifigs, 8 in total, and despite the slight reduction in size, the cockpit still fits a driver and an officer.

75054 came out in 2014, and the part count is back up to 1138, one more than the motorised version! It really does look much better for it, with no visible gaps and a much cleaner line. Once again, the driver and an officer fit in the head.

There are some great fan versions of the AT-AT. Perhaps the most famous is by a UK fan Pete Brookdale, known as "Cavegod". This was actually submitted as a "LEGO Ideas" project, and received over 10,000 votes to be considered by LEGO to become an actual LEGO set. Unfortunately it was rejected, and it's not very hard to see why, as the massive body on very thin legs has the potential to cause serious injury if it fell over. At over 6,500 pieces it's a real beast. Another is by Sam Pearse. It's slightly smaller than Cavegod's but I love how he left a side open so you can see what's going on inside. He even made a base so it can be posed in a crashed position, with all the snowtroopers trying to escape!

Finally is the version by a fan known as Raskolnikov, which he calls the "Plus Size At-AT". It's a good bigger and more detailed than any of the LEGO sets, but still very manageable for most fans. It has about 2,500 parts. Best of all, the instructions are available for free from the following website: https://rebrickable.com/mocs/MOC-6006/raskolnikov/plus-size-at_at/

LOSSES INCLUDE BLUE ELEVEN, RED THREE, AND GREY TWO

BY JAMES BACON

The moment that I saw Jyn Erso on screen, you could just feel that strength of character, that depth, and she was so like the military actors I have seen before in war films, strong jawed in silence, aggressively earnestly determined and positive with solutions. Similar to many war movie stars, yet cut out of the leadership style that Princess Leia possess. We never saw her fly. I often felt that, seeing her fly, would have been good. We associate the flying with leadership and heroics, in Star Wars sometimes, but as was demonstrated in *The Last Jedi*, it is not as simple as jumping into an X-wing. I realised that I knew some of the female characters who had flown, or were meant to, but started to research, and found that enjoyable. I have not given much more than a listing here, but this is fanzine, and I am sure that others have insight, opinion and thoughts on portrayal and the nuances or mess ups in Star Wars.

Rey's skill in the Millennium Falcon, her fearlessness and incredible ability to take on professional pilots, was brilliant. When in *The Force Awakens*, we got to see female pilots, I was so pleased. I had spent some time looking, dare I say studying the deleted scenes released on the Blu-Rays of the original trilogy in 2013, sitting as it was, on an afternoon in Stef's, I watched them again and again and took notes. Star Wars suffers now, in being a product of Britain in the late 1970s. I do not understand the issue with women performers in Star Wars being cut. Camie Loneozner played by Koo Stark who teased Luke in Torsche Station, or Jenny who threw a drink over Han Solo in the cantina played by Jenny Cresswell.

As with all things Star Wars, there are many experts, although this element wasn't really gone into in any depth.

In *Splinter in the Mind's Eye*, Leia pilots a Y-Wing, and in 2010, artist Adam Hughes did art for a card in Topps' Star Wars Galaxy Series 5 (above right). He said at the time, "Before anyone gets confused, this is from the very first Star Wars novel,



Splinter of the Mind's Eye (1978), by Alan Dean Foster. It starts off with Luke and Leia flying to a diplomatic mission on one planet only to be forced into a crash-landing on another. Luke was in his X-Wing, and Leia was piloting a 2-seater Y-Wing with Threepio. I'm assuming Leia wasn't doing this in her white robes.... I guess I always liked the idea of Leia in the rebel pilot flight gear? He also commented on Twitter, "Don't @ me about how that helmet fits over her buns unless you've spent time online wondering aloud how Luke and Han's street clothes fit under their stormtrooper armour in Star Wars."

Which made me laugh.

Leia flew the Falcon during *The Empire Strikes Back*, escaping from Cloud City so we know she has skills, and when Dark Horse started the Brian Wood-written Star Wars comic series, taking the story from *A New Hope* as its sole source, he said of Leia, "She can



sense, the footage was never used. Anne Murray had a fascinating career, and was noted in the Independent when she passed away in 2010.

Vivienne Chandler (above) had the role of an X-Wing pilot named Dorovio Bold. When asked about it, for an online interview, she said 'It all seems such a long time ago... I remember sitting in a cockpit which of course had a big blue screen behind it. I had been sent a script with lines to say, all cut of course subsequently, except I do remember going to a cinema screening and seeing myself AND I had a credit! Anyway I remember sitting there and thinking well no doubt this will look real on the screen but the inside of the cockpit looked a bit tacky and cobbled together! Not quite cornflakes packets and the inside cardboard of toilet rolls, but almost! I also remember wandering into the wardrobe department and being in awe of

handle firearms, she basically takes over her own escape from the Death Star. She survives torture. She BEATS torture, actually. Later we see her on speeder bikes, fixing the Falcon, shooting more dudes, and so on. It's almost insulting to suggest she can't fly an X-Wing, the Rebellion's fighter of choice.'

Return of the Jedi was the point where Lucas and co. could have done something amazing. It felt like they were on the cusp of it, integrating female pilots into the film. They spent the money, time and effort on it, but didn't follow through to the end. The four female pilots from *Return of the Jedi* who never made it into the film: Poppy Hands, Anne Murray, Vivienne Chandler (above) and Lynne Hazelden (right).

Lynne Hazelden, visible in the scene in the briefing room (right). Identified as Grey Two Gunner, but called Karie Neth. In *Star Wars lives live on*, and this saw Karie Neth as a character card in the *Star Wars Customizable Card Game - Death Star II Limited*, and also in the *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader* game where the character was voiced by Grey DeLisle. Ms Hazelden passed away in 2013.

Poppy Hands was an A-wing pilot Sila Kott/Green One. Dubbed over by a male voice. Sila Kott appeared in a four pack of figures entitled 'Battle over Endor'.

Anne Murray was middle aged at 54 when she was filmed, in an A-Wing, which would have made lovely



the amount of Darth Vader and all the rest of the costumes. It seemed like a great sea of them.' I have seen reported, that she was agnostic about the piece being cut, apparently due to poor audience reaction at women getting killed. Ms. Chandler passed away in 2013.

Where did they appear again. Well, that is an interesting question. They did not. Despite much talk about the resurrection of two pilots for *Rogue One*, Gold and Red Leader, the opportunity to use other older footage was again lost.

Rogue One did offer the opportunity for five pilots. Three of whom had speaking parts in the film. Jaldine Garams, Blue 3 played by Geraldine James, an X-wing pilot, who was part of the attack on Scarif. Wona Goban Gold Nine played by Gabby Wong an Y-Wing pilot who is part of the group that use Ion Torpedoes against a Star Destroyer, that disables it. Lieutenant or Warrant Officer, Laren Joma, Blue Eleven. Piloting a UT-60D U-wing starfighter/support craft that gets down to Scarif, and then is shot down. I have yet to identify who Laren Joma was played by. (Write in!)

Zarene Dallas, Zal Dinnes. When *Rogue One* was being touted, one of the interesting things that came out were some old style Topps collector cards, and there, distinctly as a rebel pilot, who was Zal Dinnes. Zal Dinnes was played by Zarene Dallas in *Rogue One* although her role was not listed in the end credits. Given a nice back story, Dinnes took part in the Attack on Scarif, and subsequently in the Battle of Yavin, where she was shot down and died. Now Zal Dinnes should not be confused with another pilot, Evaan Verlaine, who appeared in the *Princess Leia* comics as Gold 3. Some fans thought that Zal and Evaan were the same. Interestingly, Dinnes is only

seen in a screen shot in the Visual Guide.

Evaan Verlaine (Gold 3) survived Scarif and Yavin, and her helmet is shown in the visual guide for *Rogue One*. Initially she does not like Leia, a fellow Alderaanian. As well as *Princess Leia*, she appears in *Bloodline* by Claudia Grey.

The Force Awakens had already presented us with Jessika 'Testor' Pava, played by actress Jessica Henwick. 'Testor' first appeared in the Jason Fry written novel, *The Weapon of a Jedi* in 2015. As part of Blue Squadron under Poe Dameron in *The Force Awakens*, she flies as Blue Three in an X-wing and participates in the resistance attack against Starkiller Base. 'Testor' survived that and had subsequent missions. She has also appeared in Marvel's *Poe Dameron* comic series, written by Charles Soule and drawn by Phil Noto.

In *The Last Jedi* Admiral Holdo, played by Laura Dern is probably the greatest star pilot in the Star Wars Universe, splitting Snoke's gargantuan Supremacy, Mega-Class Star Destroyer, some sixty kilometres wide, an incredible sacrifice. In *The Last Jedi* we see key characters such as Paige Tico played by Veronica Ngo on the Cobalt Hammer, part of Cobalt Squadron, Transport pilots Pammich Nerro Goode played by Crystal Clarke and Cova Nell played by Daniela Tlumacova co-piloting one of the thirty U-55 orbital loadlifters that escapes, carrying Poe and Leia to Crait. Lt Kaydel Connix of Dulathia played by Billie Lourd and Shauna Macdonald, is credited as and played Temporary Command Centre Resistance Pilot, who I have not yet found, but I will keep looking.

Tallissan 'Tallie' Lintra, Blue Leader played by Hermione Corfield was an A-Wing pilot who attacked the *The Fulminatrix*, Siege Dreadnought. Lost in the



hanger when Kylo Ren attacked her home shop.

In the world of comics, there is more luck. Shira Brie was part of Rogue Squadron, appeared in Marvel's *Star Wars* #56 in February 1982 and was an excellent character, a Double agent for the Empire, as part of her work for the Rebellion, she was a Lieutenant, was brave, was merited and made a Captain, there were some serious romantic undertones going on with Luke, including a passionate kiss, and she was shot down and thought killed by Luke in an infiltration raid, when Brie was flying a TIE Fighter, thus losing face and respect, which was part of a plan by Darth Vader. She appeared as a pilot in a 3 pack figure set in 2008. Brie would come back as Lumiya, and appear as a nemesis to Luke in many stories.

X-Wing: Rogue Squadron published by Dark Horse Comics started in July 1 1995. It ran for 35 issues and was written by Michael Stackpole. Cesi Eiriss, a Twi'lek, was created by Michael A. Stackpole for the 1997 one-shot comic *X-Wing Rogue Squadron* #½. She also appeared in 2008 as a figure as part of a pilots 'evolutions' 3 pack as well as being mentioned in other comics. Feylis Ardele was a pilot, recruited by Admiral Ackbar, who served in the New Republic Defence Force during the Galactic Civil War, and a member of Rogue Squadron. Feylis appeared in 6 arcs. Princess Isplourrdacantha Estillo of Eiattu 6, known as Plourr Ilo for short, a member of the royal family of her homeworld, was a Rogue Squadron pilot, and appeared in nine arcs of the comic series. Ibtisam was a Mon Calamari pilot who flew for the Rebel Alliance and the New Republic during the Galactic Civil War. Joining the Alliance Starfighter Corps around 4 ABY, she volunteered to fly a modified B-wing starfighter at the Battle of Endor, was shot down during the massive fleet action and spent twelve hours adrift in space, and then subsequently after recovery went on to appear in seven arcs of the comic.

Kirst and Wister. Kirst first appeared in *A Day in the Life*, a short comic story that was included in *Dark Horse Star Wars Tales* 12, written by Brett Matthews, pencilled by Adrian Sibar, Kirst is a member of Rogue Squadron in the Battle of Endor. Wister was also a Rogue Squadron pilot, but in the fighting following the destruction of the Death Star was upsettingly killed.

Shara Bey served in the Alliance during the Galactic Civil War with her pathfinder husband, Sergeant Kes Dameron. They had a son, Poe. Bey

was a highly decorated A-wing pilot in Green Squadron at Endor. Shara Bey's story was in Marvel's *Star Wars: Shattered Empire* by Greg Rucka. Rucka also went on to make mention of Shara in the 2015 novel *Before the Awakening*, which saw Poe learning more about his mother.

In the amazing cartoon *Rebels*, Hera Syndulla is a Twi'lek and captain of the Ghost. Through the series she appears to increase in stature and in rank, and by the battle of Yavin, she is a General, and is seen after the Battle of Endor, as well as appearing with her ship in *Rogue One*, at The Battle of Scarif. Her skill both in an A-Wing as well as in the Ghost is amazing. Sabine Wren is a Mandalorian of House Vizsla, escaping the Imperial military academy following the creation of some fearsome weaponry, she is an excellent engineer, star pilot, close quarters fighter, and artist.

I know that there was a female pilot in *The Phantom Menace*, flying for Naboo, and an unidentified N-1 starfighter pilot was a member of the Rebel Alliance in *Star Tours*, although I have not done much research into them.



AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

BY IRFAN RYDHAN

As most Star Wars fans know, director George Lucas took spiritual elements common in most major world religions to create his epic saga of good vs. evil. As a Muslim, I always thought of the Jedi as what a true follower of Islam should be like. Never mind the fact Jedi masters with their North African style cloaks and scruffy beards look like Sufi Sheikhs, but the way they are taught to respect a greater power, fight for the defence of the innocent and honour a code of morals and ethics in order to bring about peace and justice to their society is basically what Islam teaches all Muslims to strive for. So what really is the connection between these similar Islamic principles and the fictional Jedi Order of the Star Wars saga?

I decided to look into this question more deeply. What I came across from my research off the internet and talking to other Muslim Star Wars fans was not only surprising, but also a bit scary. For example it was reported in a National Australian magazine that more than 70,000 Australians identified their religion as Jedi, Jedi Knight, or Jedi-related in the country's 2001 national census! Don't these people realize that the Jedi are make-believe? There may be some truth in fiction, but instead of looking for the truth, people get caught up with the fiction. In this paper I hope to reveal where some of the truth of the Jedi and Star Wars comes from: Islam.

Back when *The Phantom Menace* first came out, *The Muslim Magazine* had some interesting pieces on the connections between Islam and the content of the Star Wars films. One was an interview with Dhul-Nun Owen, who talks about how George Lucas had contacted members of the Habibiyyah Sufi Order in Berkeley, CA in order to do research for Star Wars. There was also a piece by Mahmoud Shelton about how Sufi ideas of spiritual chivalry ("futuwwat") have parallels in Jedi teachings.

Surfing the internet, I came across an interesting article entitled "Eternal Jihad: The Way of the Mystic-Warrior" from a Sufi website:

"We are at the core a Movement of Jedi; masters of Futuwwat ("the Way of the mystic-warrior"). We encourage adherents to train both physically

AND spiritually, for their own personal edification and to enhance their knowledge and abilities in the STRUGGLE. The Real does not lie alone in contemplation, prayer and meditation; nor does it lie alone in action and revolution. Both of these are notions of "one or the other" and Allah is not "one or the other." "Allah" literally means "the One[ness] which manifests from Nothing." As we have stressed before, this "Nothing" is not the "lack" of all, but rather, it is Nothing in the sense of Totality of Being, which is symbolized by the numeral zero – this number itself originated with Sufis. Allah is neither the positive alone, nor the negative. Allah is the perfect balance between the two. The direct centre of two polarities is always zero, Pure Nothing, from which the Totality, the Tawhid (Unity), the Oneness of ALL becomes manifest. For it is out of zero that all subsequent positive and negative numbers reel. That is Allah."

Notice the Arabic term "al-Jeddi" (master of the mystic-warrior way) along with another Islamic term not mentioned, "Palawan" (similar to Lucas' "padawan" for Jedi apprentice) which were actual titles used by Muslim Knights!

THE FORCE

The Force is the common thread between all six movies and is defined as an energy field, which binds all living things together (i.e. Allah, God, a Supreme Being or Power that most religion's adherents worship, follow and/or yearn to become a part of). According to Star Wars mythology, the Jedi "are a noble order of protectors unified by their belief and observance of the Force."

George Lucas, the creator of the Star Wars films, has attributed the origins of The Force to the film *21-87* (dir. Arthur Lipsett) which used samples from many sources. One of the audio sources Lipsett sampled for *21-87* was a conversation between artificial intelligence pioneer Warren S. McCulloch and Roman Kroitor, a cinematographer who went on to develop IMAX. In the face of McCulloch's arguments that living beings are nothing but highly complex machines, Kroitor insists that there is something

more: 'Many people feel that in the contemplation of nature and in communication with other living things, they become aware of some kind of force, or something, behind this apparent mask which we see in front of us, and they call it God.'

In Islam, Allah has no image, body or form that humans can imagine or even comprehend. Allah is a supreme being of positive energy and goodness which was there before time (in the understanding of human beings), and will be there at the end of time. According to the teachings of Islam, Allah blows his spirit into all living things and thus, we humans are inherently good in nature. Because human beings have free will to do good or bad, we have the potential to be a medium of positive energy and goodness, or we can succumb to our animal desires ("Nafs" in Arabic) and suppress this inherent goodness we all have inside of us, to do evil instead. This is similar to the description of the Force given by Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*, where he says: "Its [The Force] energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we...(Yoda pinches Luke's shoulder)...not this crude matter [Flesh]. You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you...me...the tree...the rock... everywhere!"

APPRENTICESHIP

The Jedi study and train under the apprentice-master relationship similar to how many religious students study under a priest or religious scholar until they have learned enough to teach and train the next generation of students. From a Muslim perspective, the similarities between the Jedi and the Islamic traditions of instruction are strikingly similar. For example a Muslim scholar usually trains under a Sheikh for a number of years before they are given the right or permission ("Ijazah" in Arabic) to professionally teach others about Islam. "In Islamic Sufism Sheikhs will have "silsilas" that list the chain of teachers going back to the Prophet Muhammad (S). A "silisia" indicates a Sheikh's lineage of mystical learning from which he draws his spiritual authority."

Similarly in the Jedi tradition of Star Wars, each Padawan (apprentice) is taught the same tradition and skills their Jedi masters were taught by their previous masters. Star Wars fans know the lineage of Jedi instruction starting from Yoda to Count Dooku to Qui-Gon Jinn to Obi-Wan Kenobi to Anakin Skywalker.

In the first Star Wars movie, *A New Hope*, Luke Skywalker, like his father, Anakin, lives in the desert¹. From among this remote desert area with no roots of a civilized urban society, a chosen one (i.e. a Prophet) arises who brings a hope of peace and justice to their society. Anakin is the chosen one in the prequel trilogy, and Luke can be considered the chosen one from the original trilogy.

Similarly, the Prophet of Islam lived in the desert where there was no true rule of law or justice and people followed the tribal system of blood vengeance. Prophet Muhammad (S) brought Islam to the Arabs, which completely changed their way of thinking and the way they lived their lives. Instead of living for the present and for themselves, as Muslims they live for the hereafter and are taught to take care of the poor, orphans, those less fortunate than themselves and to fight for social justice and well being for the whole community.

Thus the Jedi too is taught to be selfless and not selfish like the Sith (an ancient order of Force-practitioners devoted to the dark side and determined to destroy the Jedi). Just as Yoda taught young padawans "not to give into fear and be tempted by the Dark Side (i.e. temptations of the devil or "Shaytaan" in Arabic), Muslims are taught not to be attached to the "Dunya" (life in this world) nor to fall prey to the diseases of the heart (jealousy, envy, fear, hatred, etc.) as they lead to evil and sin.

As well known American Muslim scholar Shaykh Hamza Yusuf states: "Every criminal, miser, abuser, scoffer, embezzler, and hateful person does what he or she does because of a diseased heart. If hearts were sound, these actions would no longer be a reality. So if you want to change our world, do not begin by rectifying the outward. Instead, change the condition of the inward. Everything we see happening outside of us is in reality coming from the unseen world within. It is from the unseen world that the phenomenal world emerges, and it is from the -unseen realm of our hearts that all actions spring."

THE GREEN ONE

There is an interesting connection between the Jedi master Yoda (a short, green skinned creature first seen in *The Empire Strikes Back*) and Islamic traditions.

1 The desert planet of Tatooine was actually filmed near the real desert town of Tataouine in Tunisia.

“Al-Khidr” means “the green one” in Arabic. Qur’anic commentators say that al-Khidr is one of the prophets; others refer to him simply as an angel who functions as a guide to those who seek God. And there are yet others who argue for his being a perfect wali meaning the one whom God has taken as a friend.

So in other words Yoda (which means “wise one” in Hebrew) is like an angel or spiritual mentor who guides the young Jedi in the ways of the force and to be strong enough to resist the temptations and evil inclinations of the Sith and other dark forces.

In *Return of the Jedi*, the Emperor tries to influence Luke Skywalker to give into his feelings of anger and hatred². Because the Jedi (as Muslim warriors) are taught that one’s intentions in battle must be pure and that it’s wrong to kill out of anger, even when is outwardly justified.

‘Ali (RA) the nephew of the Prophet Muhammad (S), was faced with this situation at the Battle of the Ditch. The noble Imam ‘Ali had knocked an enemy soldier to the ground and was raising his sword to kill him, when the unbeliever spat in his face. Imam ‘Ali at once stood still and refrained from killing his enemy. Hardly able to believe his own eyes, the unbeliever asked: “Why have you spared me, O gracious one?”

To this, the noble ‘Ali replied: “Your property and your life have become sacrosanct to me. I am not authorized to slay you. I can receive permission to kill only in holy combat, in fighting commanded by Allah. Just a few moments ago, I had overcome you in battle, knocked you to the ground and was on the point of slaying you. But when you spat in my face, my selfish anger was aroused against you. If I had killed you, I would have slain you not for Allah’s sake but for my own selfish reason; they would then have called me not a champion warrior, but a murderer. When you spat in my face, my selfish passion threatened to overwhelm me, so instead of striking you with the sword for my own sake I struck my passion for the sake of Allah, Exalted is He. There you have the reason for your escape.” The unbeliever was of course in awe by Ali’s noble character, and immediately accepted Islam and became Muslim.

MUH-JEDI-DEEN

² As we all know, Luke’s father Anakin did fall prey to the Emperor’s whispers and joined the Dark Side.

The Jedi could be considered “holy warriors” (or “Mujahideen” in Arabic) as they fight for truth, justice and peace. They meditate (i.e. “Dhikr” – remembrance of Allah) as much as they can, to become one with the Force, even in the midst of battle. Just as in *The Phantom Menace*, the Jedi master Qui-Gon Jinn³ begins to meditate in the middle of his battle with Darth Maul, while he waits for a forcefield to go down.

Islamic History is filled with stories of Muslim Warriors who also stop in the heat of the moment of battle to give their prayers to Allah. Hussein (RA) the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (S) stopped to do his Asr (mid-day prayers) at Karbala. There is even an account of ‘Ali (RA), known as the “Sword of Light” (light-saber?), who completed his “Salat” (Arabic for prayers) while he had an arrow stuck in his leg or foot!

The lack of fear for death exhibited by Jedi Knights Obi-Wan Kenobi, Yoda, Qui-Gon Jinn, Luke Skywalker (particularly in *Return of the Jedi*) resembles the Muslim warrior’s creed that states that the Muslim loves death more than the unbeliever loves life.

Just as Jedi who fight and die in battle are still alive in spirit form, as evidenced with Obi-Wan Kenobi in *A New Hope*, respectively, Muslim warriors who become Shaheed (Martyrs) are not considered dead. As stated in the Holy Qur’ân:

“And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: ‘They are dead.’ Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not.” (The Noble Qur’ân, 2:154)

There are even accounts in Islamic history where noble and pious Muslims, speak to the living from the grave, similar to how Obi-Wan Kenobi guides Luke Skywalker from the spirit world after his death.

Hafiz Ibn Kathir writes:

“Zaid ibn Kharjah was one of the pious that talked after his death. When he died and was placed in his coffin, he started to talk and said: ‘I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah and his name Ahmad was mentioned in the previous scriptures (Old Testament and New Testament); and Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were two caliphs and now it is Usman’s

³ The term “Jinn” in Islam is one of the forces of the “unseen”.

Government. Four years have passed and there are two years to go and conflicts will come and Muslims will become weak.' A lot of scholars verify this narration including Imam Bukhari and Imam al-Bayhaqi.

There is another saying in Islam, which is "Life in this world is Paradise for the Unbeliever and a Prison for the Believer." Some reasoning behind this saying is that if one puts all their faith in this world (the "Dunya"), then it is very easy to fall off the straight path and be tempted by Satan (i.e. fall prey to the Dark Side).

This is shown very clearly in *Revenge of the Sith*, which is all about the chosen one, Anakin, and his fall into the Dark Side. Lucas, himself stated in an interview that he chose the final battle between Anakin and Obi-Wan to be on a planet with flowing molten lava and fire, which represents the fires of Hell. The ultimate showdown between good and evil.

Anakin falls victim to the dark side because he loves power and the Dunya (as he wanted to have the power to live forever and save his loved ones from death - i.e. his wife from dying during childbirth). He has excessive anger and arrogance (as he felt he was the most powerful Jedi and no other Jedi was better or stronger than him) and distrust for those who are his righteous guides (as he felt Obi-Wan was jealous of him and thought the Jedi Council was against him, which lead him to follow other sinister forces for guidance). Lastly he had hatred in his heart (he admitted to hating the "sand people")! Everything that Islam teaches the Muslim to avoid!

THE SAND PEOPLE

The "sand people" or the "Tusken Raiders" could be considered a metaphor of the Arabs and other people of the Middle East, since they live similarly to nomadic Arabs in the desert. In *Attack of the Clones*, the Tusken Raiders kidnap and torture Anakin's mother, Shmi, which eventually leads to her death. Anakin then proceeds to kill all the sand people in vengeance, and as he tells Padmé, he "killed all of them, including the women and children." But this did not relieve him of his anger and hatred.

I believe Lucas was trying to make a point about the continuous spewing of hate and evil against the Arab and Muslim people, which has been continuing to

get worse and worse in mainstream Television and Films out of Hollywood (i.e. "Executive Decision", "True Lies", "The Siege", etc.) and of course after the attacks of September 11th, 2001 - the cat came out of the bag and many more films, television programs and radio shows started to generalize, stereotype and attack Arabs, Muslims and the religion of Islam. This lead to a lot of hate crimes against anyone that even looks like an Arab or Middle Eastern (including some Non-Muslim Hispanic and Latinos). Many innocent people, specifically women and children, have been harassed, attacked and sometimes even killed, because of this hate. CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) received 1,717 complaints of hate crimes and attacks on the civil rights of American Muslims within the first 6 months after 9/11.

This wasn't the only example of Lucas getting political, since after *Revenge of the Sith* debuted at the Cannes Film Festival, many Europeans were saying that Anakin represents Bush and his neo-con cohorts (who were in power at the time). One couldn't help but notice the very overt examples in the last and final instalment of the Star Wars series.

An example that sticks in my mind is when the Emperor, or Senator Palpatine was taking control of the Senate. Senator Palpatine was calling for war against the "separatists" (i.e. read as "insurgents", "terrorists", etc.) and the Jedi, all the while the whole Senate erupted in agreement. Padmé then says "..So this is how liberty ends, with thunderous applause"!

Of course the most obvious example was when Anakin tells Obi-Wan before their final duel, "Either you're with me, or against me", which is basically straight out of Bush's mouth when he said "Either you're with us [i.e. America], or you're with the terrorists" immediately after the attacks of 9/11.

This reminds me of a very funny take on the whole Bush-inspired U.S. "War on Terror" transposed into "Star Wars" mythology I came across on the web. Here is an excerpt:

"It's believed that Skywalker [Luke] was specifically trained by infamous terrorist O bin Wankanobi. Wankanobi, occasionally called "Ben" and easily recognized by his bearded visage and long, flowing robes, achieved near-martyr status among the Rebels after his death last year during a spy mission. His more fervent followers believe that Wankanobi lives

on within them today, some even claiming to hear his voice during times of duress. The attack on the Death Star came shortly after the Empire's destruction of Alderaan, a planet whose government was known to harbour terrorists. Responding to criticism over the total annihilation of the planet, [Darth] Vader stated, "There is no middle ground in the War on Terror. Those who harbour terrorists are terrorists themselves. Alderaan was issued ample warning. The fight for continuing freedom is often burdened by terrible cost."

In other words, the Emperor, Darth Vader and the Empire are equivalent to Bush and Company and Luke Skywalker, the Jedi and the Rebel Alliance are referred to as "terrorists" (or "separatists", "insurgents", etc.).

THE JEDI ARTS

The most popular aspects of the Star Wars films are the exciting lightsaber duels and swordsmanship (Lucas is an admitted fan of old Samurai films) and martial arts style fighting (which of course originates from the East). As a former student of Eskrima Serrada (Stick and Blade fighting developed by Muslims of the Philippines) myself, I see a lot of similarities in the fast-moving and short-range fighting I studied for about two years, and the invented art of the Jedi masters.

When Anakin fights Count Dooku (Christopher Lee) at the beginning of *Revenge of the Sith*, at end of the fight, Anakin applies a disarm and cut that is a technique from Eskrima to Count Dooku's arm. Going back into history, the technical differences between the Japanese/Chinese arts and the Muslim arts of Southeast Asia regions of Indonesia, Philippines, and Malaysia: The Muslim arts of Pentjak Silat and Eskrima are based on paying attention to the limb of the attacker and not an immediate strike to the attacker's head or torso.

Ray Park, who plays Darth Maul in "Episode I: The Phantom Menace", studied Kung Fu (very similar to the empty hand techniques of Serrada) and Wushu and frequently travelled to Malaysia (a Muslim country) to refine and develop his skills.

The spiritual basis of the Muslim arts of Southeast Asia is very immense. This is the local Sufi expression of Islam, through martial arts practice, rather than

through poetry or music as otherwise done in India and Turkey, etc. Traditional Indonesian/Malay folklore attributes initial design of these arts to Muslim saints in the region of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in the 7th Century. The Silat system is attributed to nine main Wali or saints, also called the Wali Songo in Indonesian language.

Here another example of the Sufi and Jedi connection. As Jedi study the force and train in the Jedi arts under the apprentice-master relationship, so do the Sufis.

"What I term the more Sufi exercises include breathing exercises, means of meditative contemplation, and physical exercises. This last activity is practiced within the Qadiri-Rifai Sufi order through the Indonesian martial art of Pencak Silat Gerakan Suci. Here is a prime example of the Order's growth. Extending beyond its originally Turkish character, the Order has adopted a Muslim practice from a far corner of the Islamic world."

CONCLUSION

From my brief amount of research and study into the Star Wars saga, I found many examples connecting the ideals and principles of Islam to that of the fictional Jedi Order. Some of the similarities were clearly visible (as with the relations between the Jedi master, apprentice and the Force to that of the Sufi Sheikhs, students and worshipping of Allah), while others were a bit more hidden and surprising finds (such as the term "Jeddi" and "Palawan" for Muslim knights and the story of "al-Khidr" - the green spiritual guru which has an uncanny resemblance to the Jedi Spiritual master "Yoda")!

Even though Lucas himself is not a follower of any specific religion, he has used elements of Islam (as well as other world religions) to convey the universal understandings of good and evil. Combining that common thread of humanity with a futuristic space-age setting and exciting martial arts swordsmanship, came a creation that has inspired many, no matter their race, religion or culture. There is something about the Star Wars saga that everyone can relate to and enjoy. And I hope that those people who are searching for a truth within the mythology of Star Wars, will look a little deeper behind the fiction and find Al-Islam: A true way of life which emphasizes peace, justice and brotherhood for all humanity.

THE HOLIDAY SPECIAL SURVIVAL GUIDE

BY HELENA NASH

It is a time of great rejoicing across Cinemaland. The young moviemaker George Lucas has captured the imagination of adults and children alike with his smash hit *A New Hope*. Across the world, Star Wars toys, Star Wars bubble gum cards and Star Wars comics are snapped up by eager fans. Some people even read *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*.

But a new threat looms on the horizon. A shadowy empire called CBS, envious of the movie's success, seduces young Lucas to the Dark Side of Television, convincing him that what the world really needs is a ninety-minute *Star Wars Holiday Special*...

An ill-conceived made-for-TV extravaganza made (initially) with George Lucas' blessing, but none of his flair for the epic, the *Star Wars Holiday Special* took up a full two hours of CBS' primetime slot on the Friday before Thanksgiving, 1978. Now infamous as one of, if not the, worst things ever to befoul the small screen, it has never been repeated.

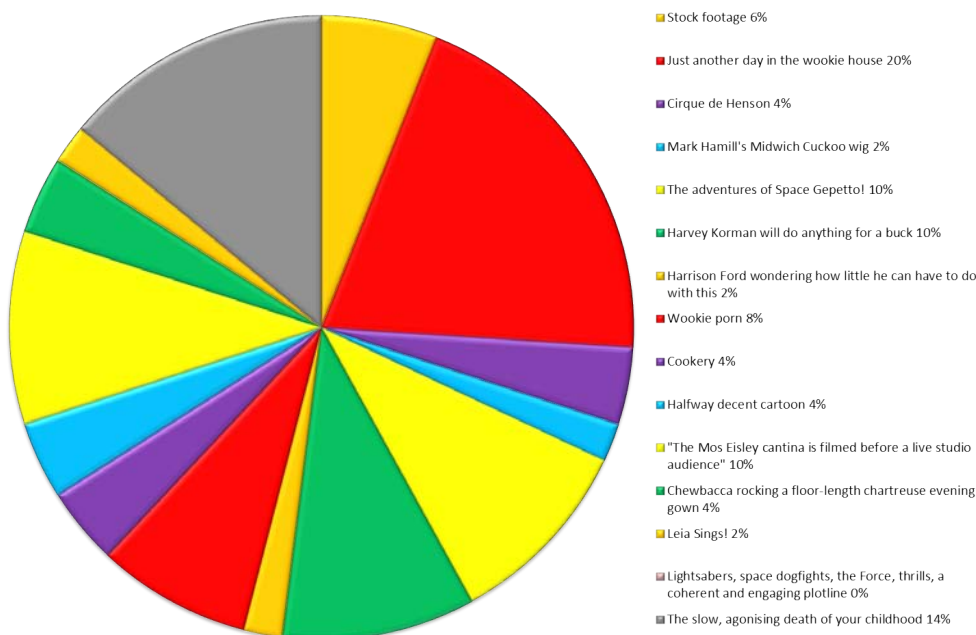
Of course none of us in Britain knew anything about this at the time. November 17th 1978 was just another day for us. While TV viewers across the Atlantic were reeling under the soul-sapping onslaught

of the *Star Wars Holiday Special*, we were probably watching Edward & Mrs Simpson, or Cheggers Plays Pop. Lucky us. Later though, rumours of a fabled Star Wars television programme reached the ears of young British Star Wars fans. Another Star Wars film?, we thought, in those long, lean years between *Return of the Jedi* and *Phantom Menace*, That sounds awesome. How can we find a way to watch it?

But these were the pre-Internet years. No YouTube, no Google, no Wikipedia, no IMDb. If you didn't see something when it was broadcast, you'd pretty much missed it, unless it was later released on videotape or later DVD. And as it happens someone had taped it. Some poor, trusting, hopeful soul, probably thinking they'd be getting another cool helping of droids, space battles, explosions and lightsabers; something to tide them over until *The Empire Strikes Back* came out. Star Wars completists and masochists the world over have come to thank and curse this unknown archivist for preserving the *Star Wars Holiday Special* for posterity when many, Lucas included, would rather it be eradicated from the memory of mankind. Only the foolhardy, the insane or those with incredibly low viewing standards would ever voluntarily sit through it in its entirety.

Which is why when James Bacon asked if there was anything I'd like to write for the Journey Planet Star Wars issue, I immediately thought of making my friends watch the Star Wars Holiday Special with me, and recording our experiences for your entertainment and education. So join me, Maisie, Ian and CJ as we waste ninety minutes of our lives that we will never get back.

And remember: We watched it so you don't have to.



H: ...so I thought why not watch the *Star Wars Holiday Special*? We haven't seen it for ages -

I: There's a reason for that.

H: We can talk through the bad bits.

M: That means we'll be talking for the next 97 minutes.

CJ, with his professional background in law-enforcement procedure, feels obliged to go on record:

C: Statement of CJ Hooper, the date is the 21st of March 2018. I've not seen the *Star Wars Holiday Special*. I have seen the first 5 minutes many years ago and then stopped -

I: Wise man.

C: What you're doing today amounts to abuse. You shouldn't do this to a child, even if he's 40 years old.

M: I also haven't seen the *Star Wars Holiday Special*. I fast forwarded through to the good bits. They never came.

H: Ian, you're the only one in the room to have seen it in its entirety because I weakened last time.

I: I have seen the whole thing once, and bits of it again for some reason, but I couldn't bring myself to watch it again - it's too awful.

H: Until now!

H: I got hold of this in the days when if you wanted to see things you had to track down bootlegs.

DISCLAIMER - VIDEO PIRACY IS WRONG

H: That's how I tracked down the Roger Corman's *Fantastic Four* film and the *Slaves of Jedikiah Tomorrow People* serial, both on VHS. And I got the *Star Wars Holiday Special* on a DVD from a bloke at a comic convention.

This was back in the 20th century before comic cons were full of skinny kids dressed up as *Deadpool* and *Harley Quinn*, buying bobble head toys and getting *Tyler Mane* autographs. Back when it was just a smelly ho-

tel room full of misfits such as myself riffling through actual boxes of actual comics.

M: And you could only get this as a bootleg because Lucas said he wanted to track every copy and destroy it.

I: Is that actually true?

H: He's quoted as saying "If I had time and a hammer I'd track down every bootleg copy and destroy it." But of course the genie's out of the bottle these days and we could all just go onto YouTube and watch it.

Poor old George, in those innocent pre-Internet days when you actually stood a remote chance.

H: Now, this particular bootleg DVD comes not only with the *Star Wars Holiday Special* itself, but also the *Muppet Show* episode featuring the *Star Wars* characters.

I: Is that the one with Luke and the droids? I remember it. And it's far superior to the *Holiday Special* as I recall.

We play the first few seconds of the *Muppet Show* episode to confirm this.

C: Well this is rather serendipitous - oh, you're fast forwarding through it to the *Star Wars Holiday Special*.

I: You'll come to wish for that fast forward button

I: We who are about to die salute you...

M: I'd just like to say it's particularly poor of you to do this to us on a week night when we can't have a drinkie.

00:00

And so it begins.

M: Woo.

We open with stock footage of the Millennium Falcon leaving some planet. Captain Solo and his furry co-pilot are doing frantic things in the cockpit. A couple of star destroyers are firing in pursuit.

I: Hey, it's Han and Chewie! What could pos-

sibly go wrong?

H: What the hell was Harrison Ford thinking...

I: He gives it a good go. It's a shame he's not in it more, because he might have saved this colossal turd.

Ford continues to deliver all the plot exposition while Chewie makes his usual 'wet goat' noises. They make the jump to light-speed and we get the good ol' Star Wars theme, accompanied by a jolly voiceover introducing the stars.

CJ stands to salute.

A headshot of Mark Hamill wearing what looks like a leftover pageboy blond wig from Village of the Damned. His face appears to be covered in thick orangey foundation. There is an outburst of laughter from the sofa.

H: What, what is he wearing on his head? He looks like a Von Trapp.

FORCE FACT: The Star Wars Holiday Special was made some 22 months after Mark Hamill's car accident in Jan 1977 which left him with facial injuries, which may have accounted for what the OTT hair and makeup.

H: Oh, Carrie Fisher's face. Look at her eyes. Was she actually off her face on drugs during all this?

I: Apparently.

H: I know we're all supposed to revere her like Space Princess Diana these days -

I: That's because people don't remember this.

FORCE FACT: Fisher is on record as having graduated from alcohol abuse and marijuana to LSD at this time. She would have moved on to cocaine by the time of The Empire Strikes Back.

Voiceover: "...and Artoo Detoo as himself."

H: Kenny Baker wasn't in Artoo for the Star Wars Holiday Special. It was just the radio-controlled version. So Baker at least narrowly escapes with his dignity intact.

Now we get to meet the show's 'guest stars' in a series of headshots. First, Chewbacca's Wookiee family; Malla the missus, his dad Itchy and his son Lumpy.

I: Hooray for Chewbacca's family!

H: The real break-out stars.

Voiceover: "His wife Malla."

I: 'His'. Sorry, CJ.

Voiceover: "His father, Itchy."

H: As played by Uncle Jesse from the Dukes of Hazzard.

We then move on to the 'special guest stars', a very odd mix of ageing sitcom stars and a couple of pop acts.

Voiceover: "Beatrice Arthur."

H: For us Brits, this woman didn't exist before The Golden Girls.

Voiceover: "Art Carney."

H: I had no idea who Art Carney was at the time. Didn't know he was the other bloke in The Honeymooners, More interestingly, he played the villainous Archer in the Adam West Batman.

We also see all-round entertainer Diahann Carroll, 'The' Jefferson Starship (sans Grace Slick) and Mel Brooks alumnus Harvey Korman, who for his sins will play no less than three different roles in the Star Wars Holiday Special.

There is a brief glimpse of a cartoon Boba Fett whanging off a blaster bolt atop some sort of dinosaur. CJ gives out a little whoop.

I: Even that's not worth it. You'd think it's worth it for the historic first appearance of Boba Fett, but no.

CJ bemoans the lack of Edward of Wickham.

00:03

The show proper starts.

We get an interesting shot of a Wookiee treehouse on the planet Kashyyyk.

H: I quite like this drawing? Painting? Set?

I: Yeah, it's good. It's different.

We then get five totally dialogue-free minutes of three Wookiees pissing about in their treehouse. Uncle Jesse is whittling away at something, smacking his gummy chops, the bloody annoying proto-Ewok kid is running around with his wooden X-wing toy making more wet goat noises and Ma Bacca is in the kitchen.

H: For some reason they decided that the best way to start a Star Wars Holiday Special is with a totally non-verbal family of bigfoots.

I: Yeah, that was definitely the best way.

Itchy shifts around in his La-Z-Boy, grunting and smacking his toothless underbite.

H: Honestly, look at Granpa. He scares the bejesus out of me.

C: Isn't that Harry Enfield's character in Upstart Crow?

We stop the recording briefly while I go into a spontaneous rant about the mildly disappointing Not-Blackadder sitcom Upstart Crow.

Itchy continues to gum away.

H: My god, Granpa and his mouth. My Grandad used to do that when he took his teeth out.

Malla is wearing a long pinny because she's not only a subject of the evil Empire but also under the oppressive hegemony of the Space Patriarchy.

I: It was the 70s! It was OK then.

H: I notice that she's wearing a pinny but her arse is hanging out the back. Her big hairy arse.

We try to work out what the all-Wookiee dialogue might mean.

H: I think Lumpy wants to run away and join the rebels.

C: Or go and pick up some power converters from Tosche Station. He can waste time with his friends when his chores are done.

H: I swear Lumpy just went 'Aw, gee whiz.'

FORCE FACT: Apparently, though he later distanced himself from the *Star Wars Holiday Special*, Lucas was the one who came up with the idea of the Wookiee family framing sequence, and went so far as to present replacement director Steve Binder with a 'Wookiee bible' of their look and behaviour.

C: In the beginning, George created Wookiee

I: In the beginning, George ripped off John Carter of Mars, Dune...

H: Hidden Fortress...

I: New Gods, Doctor Doom, and many others.

00:06

Lumpy performs a perilous high-wire along the handrail around the outside of the lofty treehouse, in a scene loaded with more peril than when Antoni Karamanopolis fell to his death from the top of a multi-storey car park in Grange Hill. This will prove to be the high point of jeopardy in the entire *Star Wars Holiday Special*.

H: Oh, Lumpy! Later on they decided that they couldn't just be called Lumpy and Itchy, so they made them Lumpbacca and Itchikaka, I think.

I: Is that like Blackagar Boltagon of the Inhumans?

H: Exactly like that.

FORCE FACT: Lumpy's full name is Lumpawarrump, and Itchy's is Attichitcuk. Malla's full name is actually Mallatobuck, and not Mochachocalatayaya, as I once believed.

Back inside the treehouse, there's some more unintelligible Wookiee nonsense, with Malla and Itchy moping about by a delightful G-Plan divider, pawing at a photo of the

absent Chewie.

H: You have to feel sorry for Malla, being saddled with this grotesque old freak. He's not even her dad.

C: I think he's actually both their dads because Wookiees are like that.

H: I don't like his Beaker mouth.

I: He's the Wookiee Alf Garnett

FORCE FACT: For US readers, Alf Garnett = Archie Bunker.

00:08

Still no intelligible dialogue.

H: Now CJ, as we're at the eight-minute mark we're already into new territory for you. We're about to discover what old Itchy gets up to when he's left to entertain his grandson on his own.

Lumpy runs back in and hugs/dry-humps his granpa's leg, much to the grotesque Itchy's amusement.

H: You're not even a Wookiee Granpa. You're one of those Hoth guys.

I: Yeah, you wampa!

C: For the benefit of the tape, the suspect has long white hair...

Itchy pulls out a C-90 audio cassette and plugs it into what looks like the holo chess table from the Millennium Falcon. But sadly not. It's some sort of lycra-clad circus clown act, compete with 'quirky' musical tonalties.

I: Look at that gleam in his eye!

H: They must have thought, "Star Wars, that had a really cool living chess set game. Let's have that but make it more... I dunno... Cirque de Soleil."

I: With a bit of Liberace thrown in.

There's a green guy with a bunch of feathers up his bum, and a couple of human Fireys

from Labyrinth. Or possibly orange poodles.

Lumpy's fuzzy upper lip positively quivers with joy and excitement that absolutely nobody else is feeling.

H: The bloke who made Star Wars Holiday Special, Steve Binder, had a number of TV specials under his belt, like the '68 Elvis Comeback and a Diana Ross in Central Park. But he was in no way a sci-fi director.

I: It's so obvious when you look at it. It's very much of its time.

C: I tend to find that 'of its time' is a general excuse for 'crap', be it rubbish dancing or racism.

I: You used to get these sorts of variety shows.

H: Well, we did in Britain, but I had no idea about America. If it was made over here, we'd have had Tom O'Connor hosting. And probably Max Wall.

M: I'd like to say that music (the bizarre synth tones of the Cirque de Henson segment) is an assault upon the ears.

H: Imagine some kid in 1978 looking in the TV Guide and going, "Mom, Dad, remember Star Wars last year? There's gonna be a TV show!". He would have out of his head with anticipation. Then this comes on. It's been ten minutes so far of Wookiee grunts and poodle people doing crap dancing. I feel really sorry for that 1978 kid.

C: If you listen very carefully you can hear the sound of my childhood breaking.

H: Do you know what shows were knocked off the air that night on CBS to make way for this? Wonder Woman and The Incredible Hulk. What a swiz.

FORCE FACT: It was shown that night in the US and Canada, and later in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Brazil, Venezuela, Honduras, Argentina and France (in a shorter French-dubbed version which I can only imagine in my more lurid cheese-nightmares). It was never repeated.

00:11

The crap circus act is over. Lumpy pulls some bratty shit about having to do the washing up. Malla goes over to her Space TRS-80 and checks the Kashyyyk inbound traffic report: no sign of the Falcon yet.

M: So they can't speak English but they can read it, is that right?

H: Should they be showing us stuff in English? I mean, I don't want to be 'that guy' but obviously I am that guy.

I: We need something in English at this point. It's been all Wookiee up to now.

H: Malla's all "Where's that man o' mine? Him and his little shaven friend?"

CJ makes an obscure reference to an old sci-fi themed advert for saucepans, starring Sandra 'Trillian out of Hitchhikers' Dickinson and off-screen husband Peter 'the bland Doctor' Davison.

Malla and Itchy go over to the G-Plan divider and get out their Secret Rebel Two-way TV. And who do we see on the screen? Well, it looks kinda like Luke Skywalker, kinda. And Artoo.

H: LUKE!

All we can look at is Mark Hamill's face; Someone has clearly gone to a lot of trouble to give him lots of mascara and eyeliner.

H: What kind of accident was he in? Was it car crash?

C: I think this is the car crash.

Some alleged comedy ensues with the Wookiee clan all gabbling at once, while Luke tries to make out what they're saying. Malla sends the excitable Lumpy away.

C: "I hate you! I didn't want to be born a Wookiee!"

Meanwhile the space gadget Luke and Artoo have been repairing starts to hilariously belch smoke behind them.

H: Oh Artoo. You and your hijinks.

M: To be fair, he did try to tell Luke.

H: It's like they once saw a British pantomime. "What's that Artoo? There's someone behind me? Can you see it, boys and girls?"

Luke reminds us the audience that Chewie is supposed to be getting back home for Life Day, and then apparently coaxes a smile out of Malla's barely mobile fuzzy face.

H: Aw, look at her lovely face. Gwendolyn Christie must be grateful that they didn't give this role in the new films.

We discuss how come Luke can speak Wookiee and CJ points out that he's just got a shed-load of XP from blowing up the Death Star so probably used some of it on language slots.

I: What do they speak? Wookiee?

H: Kashyyyki, I think.

I: Is that right?

H: No, I just made that up.

C: But Kashyyyk is their planet. That's like saying we speak Earth.

H: Fair point. It's probably wikki-wokki-wakka then.

The space gadget envelops Luke and Artoo in a cloud of smoke. Artoo starts bleeping away at Luke excitedly.

H: Artoo, WTF man? I think he's going "I'm done carrying you, fleshy one!"

00:15

The non-hilarious time filler of watching Luke and Artoo on a very small screen comes to an end.

H: I do like the Wookiees' Spanish style chiminea. Very attractive.

C: That's where they do their Wookiee pizzas.

Malla goes back to the Space TRS-80 and dials up a local trader's outpost. On the video we see a bucket-headed Imperial goon sporting a Ned Flanders 'tache, browsing

the goods on display.

M: That is a stupid hat.

Art Carney comes in dressed as Space Gepetto, or possibly Han Solo's uncle.

FORCE FACT: He's a trader called Saun Dann. And 'friend to the rebellion'.

There's some nonsense about tiny aquariums.

Imperial Ned Flanders: "I hate fish."

For some reason, Imperial Ned seems to have been badly dubbed. Perhaps his original voice didn't lend the Star Wars Holiday Special the gravitas that this show deserves.

M: (huskily) I am evil. Because I talk like this.

Then Space Gepetto uses clever 'coded language' to assure Malla that Chewie will be home soon. So basically just the same as what Luke said.

H: Is Gepetto allowed to refer to Chewie as a shaggy carpet?

I: Well, it's part of his secret code, isn't it?

C: It's racist.

H: Yeah, I don't think non-Wookiees can use the S-C words.

M: Can I just point out that I think Chewbacca's wife is far too young for him

H: How do you work out her age, out of interest? Is it the lustre of her pelt?

M: Yes.

I: Well, we know Chewie's about 150 years old.

M: And he's still running around butt naked (apart from his bandolier).

H: I think he's going through his midlife crisis. The Falcon is his Harley Davidson.

Imperial Ned is shown what look like a version of the Peltzer Bathroom Buddy and leaves without paying. Because the Empire is Evil. Space Gepetto trails off, muttering to himself pathetically.

I: This is what the kids want.

H: It's just so boring.

00:19

More stock footage of two star destroyers. Followed by redubbed footage of Vader and Imperial officer Chief Bast, played by Leslie Schofield.

C: It's Jonny Briggs' dad!

H: And Reggie Perrin's son-in-law #2

There is a brief digression while I hum the Jonny Briggs theme tune and then begin to wonder if it was in fact the theme tune to Woof! instead.

Then back to the treehouse of domesticity. Malla and Lumpy have finished the washing-up at last. Lumpy looks like he's ready to go off on an adventure with Huck and Jim. Sadly we do not follow the little guy on his adventure. Instead we are to be treated to perhaps the lowest point in the entire show.

00:20

Malla plugs some kind of tutorial tape into the kitchen viewscreen and we see Harvey Korman from Blazing Saddles done up like a pantomime dame in what looks suspiciously like brownface. He looks and sounds strangely like a Ronnie Barker character, or Charles Grey dressed like someone from the planet Ork.

H: Ah, surely one of the highlights now. The cookery bit.

I: I'd removed this it from my mind.

H: I'm told he was spoofing a particular TV chef in America called Julia Child. Like Fanny Craddock in the UK.

I: Ah, a cookery spoof. Just what the kids are after.

The chef is called Gormaanda. Two A's together, like a 60s Marvel monster.

H: It's a bit like a pantomime 'cake making' scene.

I: Every single bit that they put into this is exactly what the Star Wars core audience are not going to want.

M: And this isn't even a real recipe that you can use.

H: I like how Malla keeps flicking her hair behind her ears. Do Wookiees have ears though?

H: So TV people all got together and said, "Right, Star Wars is a big hit. What were the good bits? Wasn't there a bit with... cooking?"

I: "And... juggling?"

Gormaanda produces an extra arm, to no hilarity whatsoever.

H: I mean, I know in Britain at the time we only had three channels and if this was on I'd have had to watch this, or the snooker or, I dunno, Nationwide. But in America, they must have had something better on than this.

Gormaanda produces a fourth arm. We can't believe the bold sci-fi vision behind this.

H: For the benefit of the tape we are only 23 minutes through this.

I: Just another hour and a bit to go.

H: Let's cling on to the illusion that the cartoon will make this all worthwhile.

M: When will it end?

00:24

Stock footage of TIE Fighters attacking the Falcon. Han and Chewie struggle to fight them off.

H: I've always like the 'pump guns' on the Falcon. The ones that thrust in and out. It's not a sexual thing.

I: They're just very memorable.

Chewie seems to be quite panicky and a lot more 'touchy-feely' in the Star Wars Holiday Special.

There is a brief discussion about Chewie's exact role in the Falcon. He doesn't seem to bring a lot to the actual operation of the ship in a combat situation, apart from making lots of wet goat noises.

M: I think he's the navigator?

C: No, that's the computer. He's the co-pilot, in case Han comes down with food poisoning in-flight.

H: I think that makes him Dom DeLuise in Cannonball Run.

Back in the treehouse, an annoying alert noise brings Malla and Itchy to the screen. Peter Cushing's younger American brother lays down the law, Empire style.

H: Did he just call the planet 'Gazook'? I thought it was pronounced 'Kashick'. Gazook's the little alien in the Flintstones, I think.

Space Gepetto turns up at the treehouse and gives the Wookiees presents in exchange for hairy kisses. It looks like he's got Malla a sewing machine, because that's what all Wookiee-mums want. Lumpy gets a shoebox of electronic junk which he takes up to his spacious bedroom.

H: I'm quite jealous of Lumpy's bedroom if that's all his.

M: Yeah, but there's no door on it. Everyone's going to see when he wants to have a wank.

I: I always thought Wookiees would have weird furniture where they all hang upside-down.

H: Or maybe a tyre on a rope?

Downstairs Space Gepetto helps old Itchy into some sort of 'mento-hairdryer chair' and plugs in his present. The old Wookiee wriggles and gums with anticipation, like Albert Steptoe expecting a bit of slap and tickle with the widow down the road.

00:29

Itchy's VR helmet summons up an image of a space lady, played by Diahann Carroll.

H: She's wearing a Movellan wig.

We are then subjected to five minutes of what can only be described as Wookiee porn. Maisie and CJ both volunteer to go and make us more tea. Ian and I remain to sit it out, like MacReady and Childs at the end of The Thing.

H: It's all gone a bit Shirley Bassey. This looks and sounds like it should go at the beginning of Moonraker. Or released as a double A-Side with Lois Lane's 'Can You Read My Mind'.

Granpa's expression is very much that of Jon Voight 'appreciating' J-Lo in the movie Anaconda.

I: At least Itchy's getting something out of this. He's clearly 'very happy'.

Ian and I manage to get through the Wookiee porn sequence by ignoring what's going on on-screen and trying to name all of the spaceknights in ROM.

00:35

It's Leia and Threepio on the Secret Rebel Two-way TV screen!

They talk to Malla and Gepetto for a bit. Nothing of note happens.

We discuss the rebels-as-terrorists, and Luke's radicalisation by the charismatic preacher Kenobi.

Maisie and CJ re-enter the room.

00:38

Back to the Falcon. Chewie is still losing his shit. He and Han keep touching each other. Harrison Ford is forced to say some really embarrassing lines. The Falcon flies over Gazook.

We discuss heteronormativity in Wookiee society and whether Chewie and Malla were forced into an arranged marriage, when he'd

really much rather be off with his Corellian pal Han.

Some Imperials turn up at the treehouse.

H: Only two storm troopers? Why doesn't Malla tear their bloody arms off?

I: I'm surprised Lucas didn't CGI in hundreds more storm troopers later.

The main Imperial officer brings his Nazi A-game, doing the thing with the leather gloves. Lumpy almost gets smacked in the head.

H: This bit's almost tense.

FORCE FACT: Patty Maloney, the actress who played Lumpy also played a 'female' robot in Buck Rogers in the 25th Century. The robot may or may not have made sweet robo-love to Twikki.

The Imperial Nazis search the G-plan furniture for Chewie while Space Gepetto makes a number of desperate Bluff rolls, doing his best to distract them from the Secret Rebel Two-way TV screen. Malla's new sewing machine, shaped rather like K-9, turns out to be yet another entertainment device, as if the holo table and the porn helmet weren't enough.

We try to sing the K-9 and Company theme turn and then notice that various gadgets in the treehouse look a bit like ORAC and Slave from Blake's 7.

C: We are 43 minutes in, and are discussing any other sci-fi show except the one we're watching.

00:43

An Imperial buckethead sits down to enjoy miniature Jefferson Starship performing Light The Sky On Fire. They are dressed in a variety of Spinal Tap and Blake's 7 outfits.

H: Was that the opening chord to 'Gloria' by Laura Brannigan?

The lead singer appears to be singing into a battered saveloy or a very, very short lightsaber.

We pass the time by discussing the artwork

of Paul Gulacy and I do my world famous impression of the Melkur from Doctor Who's The Keeper of Traken.

H: "Hey everyone, let's watch the Star Wars Holiday Special! It's got... cooking, and Wookiee porn... and this..."

M: Something for everyone!

C: This is the bit I've enjoyed most so far.

M: If I stabbed you in the eye it'd be the bit you've enjoyed most so far.

The song ends, leaving the Imperial buck-toothed visibly moved by the miniaturised performance.

There's some more faff with Space Gepetto before he's finally thrown out. The Imperial Nazi Officer does a half-decent one-man good cop-bad cop routine, like a low rent Christoph Waltz.

C: Do you think by then end he'll discover the True Meaning Of Life Day?

H: No.

00:50

Lumpy plays with yet another electronic device. This one looks a bit like a Simon game. But no! It's actually a cartoon-player! IT'S THE CARTOON.

M: Hang on a sec. How come there are cartoons of the rebels? Who's making them?

I: You'd think the Imperials would crack down on this sort of seditious material.

H: This is how the rebels radicalise the youngsters. Through animated adventures.

C: Is this the Ralph Bakshi version?

FORCE FACT: The Star Wars Holiday Special cartoon was produced by Canadian animation company Nelvana, who would later produce the Droids and Ewoks cartoons, as well as animating the singing horses in Three Amigos!

H: The animation. It's a bit... simplistic, isn't it? It reminds me of Danger Mouse.

M: If Danger Mouse was shit.

H: See, people say this is the best bit of the Star Wars Holiday Special, but I think the rest of the show sets such a low bar.

M: That doesn't even look like Princess Leia.

H: That doesn't matter; she's the only female in it.

Luke Artoo and Threepio follow Han and Chewie down to a planet and crash-land in a sea of pink custard. They're attacked by a hungry Nessie, which is then driven off by... BOBA FETT! On a purple brontosaurus-unicorn.

FORCE FACT: This is the first ever onscreen appearance of Boba Fett. Some 18 months before Empire Strikes Back.

H: Yay! Boba Fett! 53 minutes and 40 seconds in. Worth the wait?

C: You said 'Bobba'. It's 'Boeba'.

H: I had no idea. All these years.

They team up with Boba Fett. There's some nonsense with an invisibility talisman. Luke and Han are left hanging upside down for dubious medical reasons. Chewie and Boba Fett go off to a nearby city seek a cure for them.

H: Chewie looks particularly like Ms Lion from Spider-Man And His Amazing Friends in this.

M: He looks a bit like a Dr Seuss person.

H: They should have just kept the cartoon and ditched the rest of the cartoon.

M: I'm going to attempt to sleep so I don't have any more pain.

H: You're taking the coward's way out.

SPOILER ALERT! Boba Fett contacts Vader. He's totally not on the rebels' side.

M: Is he naughty then?

H: Come on, you know Boba Fett's naughty. **01:08**
You know that much.

M: I don't know who Boba Fett is.

H: WTF?

After a brief Lumpy/Imperial Officer interlude, we're back with the cartoon. Boba Fett and Chewie get into a bit of a brontocorn/speeder chase with the some stormtroopers, then it's back to the Falcon, where Threepio and Artoo swiftly inform the revived Han and Luke of Boba's treachery who then escapes using his jet pack. Someone says something funny and our heroes fly off. The End (of the cartoon).

H: It's OK, but it's no Space Sentinels.

01:00

Back in the treehouse, the Imperials show their true villainy by trashing Lumpy's bedroom.

H: Oh, it's a little cuddly bantha! I take it back, this show's brilliant.

I: I can't believe George Lucas never sold cuddly banthas.

The imperial bastards pull the head off the toy bantha. Lumpy is sad, and we are slightly moved.

H: This is the day that Lumpy becomes, a man.

We hum the Binary Sunset tune in tribute to the fallen bantha.

Lumpy salvages a busted micro transmitter from his trashed bedroom and we are then subjected to Harvey Korman's second role, in an onscreen space gadget maintenance tutorial. His character, dressed as Dr Smith from Lost in Space, 'hilariously' malfunctions repeatedly. It's gripping stuff.

H: We've now moved on to the 'repair and maintenance' segment of any successful holiday special. It's literally like they tried to make the most boring thing they could.

Downstairs in the treehouse living room, the Imperial bastards watch some sort of 'Life on Tatooine' reality show, which for some reason the Empire has decided is morally instructive.

H: Hey it's the Mos Eisley cantina! The Modal Nodes! Playing their one and only tune, apparently. And Greedo! That werewolf guy! Muftak! Hammerhead! Walrus Man! Snaggletooth!

I: It's easy to forget what a big part of the original film the cantina scene was.

Bea Arthur, later of Golden Girls fame, plays Ackmena the grumpy bartender. Harvey Korman, in his third and final role enters the cantina. He plays Krelman, a pathetic stalker who drinks by pouring booze into the open top of his head, like a mini Sarlacc. He's very keen on Ackmena. It's either romantic or a bit creepy.

H: Why are there so many old people in this show? I mean, I know that half of the old people are all Harvey Korman...

SPACE SPECULATION: If this had been made with a British cast, instead of Art Carney, Bea Arthur and Harvey Korman we would have had Arthur Lowe, Mollie Sugden and Stanley Baxter.

An Imperial broadcast from Not-Peter Cushing imposes a Tatooine-wide curfew. Ackmena tries very unsuccessfully to persuade her patrons to leave the cantina. It's basically a monologue.

H: Only 20 more minutes to go.

I: Hooray!

H: It's nice that they had so many sitcom actors in this. They could have got the Fonz in too.

C: If the Fonz was in this, he could have deactivated the Death Star just by banging on the wall.

C: They could have had the cantina band playing the Marseillaise.

H: Yeah, they could have done a good Mos

Eisley Casablanca

The patrons refuse to leave and stage a sit-in, banging their mugs on the tables.

C: This is like the bit in Excalibur where Igraine does the sexy dance.

H: I think she's about to climb up onto the bar and sing 'One Way Or Another'.

Ackmena does indeed break into song, belting out 'Good Night But Not Goodbye', Ethel Merman style. The band accompanies her by playing their one and only song.

I: It looks like they were about to kick off with a big Conan-style bar room brawl, but they chose to go with another song instead.

C: I am most terribly surprised that they couldn't get Alec Guinness to appear in this. Ahem.

H: Is she singing to a giant rat at that table?

C: Yeah, he's just finished filming The Talons of Weng-Chiang.

I: If only Mr Sin would turn up now.

H: If she's supposed to be clearing them all out, she's doing a very bad job of it, singing and dancing like that.

I: Yeah, lights on, music off.

H: This sounds an awful lot like 'Those Were The Days', or something from Cabaret.

Ackmena eventually uses the power of song to conga the patrons out the cantina door. Having cleared everyone out, she is 'rewarded' with a flower from creepy Krelman.

01:20

Back in the treehouse, Lumpy pulls a clever stunt with his repaired micro transmitter and tricks the Imperials into leaving, apart from one poor stormtrooper who's left behind to wait for Chewie on his own.

H: Lumpy, that clever little scamp.

The stormtrooper catches Lumpy in his bed-

room with the transmitter and smashes it. For a moment we are worried that we'll have to sit through the repair and maintenance tutorial again, but fortunately Lumpy legs it outside instead, the stormtrooper in very slow pursuit, failing to shoot.

C: Is this one a good stormtrooper?

H: No, they haven't invented good stormtroopers yet.

Han and Chewie turn up! At last! Chewie does very little. Han tricks the stormtrooper and he falls through some shoddily-built Wookiee railing to plummet to his certain death. Hurrah!

H: What did Chewie do there? Nothing.

I: It was lucky Han got there in time. Chewie was just about to surrender.

I: Han's like, "Don't worry everyone, I saved you."

H: And Malla's all, "You're my real husband, Han."

Han: "You're like, family to me."

Malla gives him a sappy look in a soft zoom.

There is a lot of hugging and wet goat noises as Han takes his leave and the four Wookiees bond.

H: Han says, "Bye everyone. Hope you don't get executed for killing that stormtrooper."

We discuss what chores Malla has saved up for Chewie now he's back home. Possibly digging a sand pit out back.

Space Gepetto turns up again to do a bit more flim-flam and saves the Wookiees' bacon.

H: It's about time he turned up again. He's the thin, watery paste that glues this plot together.

I: The true hero of the show.

Space Gepetto makes a critical Bluff roll and somehow convinces Not-Cushing on the viewscreen that everything's ticketty-boo

at the treehouse. He may have been using a Jedi mind trick. There is yet more hugging.

I: Didn't we just have this scene with Harrison Ford?

01:28

Finally free to get on with Life Day, the Wookiees get a bunch of crappy crystal balls from the G-plan divider. The lighting dims and this show finally looks like it has a bit of style.

H: I worry that those crystals hold naked flames. That has to be a risk with all this flammable fur around.

C: I think Granpa's crystal ball has a tiny hologram of another lady.

I: "It's Joan Collins!"

Slow fade to the Wookiees all wearing long red gowns, floating in space. We have no idea. They join a procession of other space-bound Wookiees, marching solemnly into a bright white light.

C: Don't go towards to the light!

H: It's almost the end of the Star Wars Holiday Special. But wait! Surely there's more to enjoy.

01:29

Cut to some kind of dry-ice disco cave full of robed Wookiees. The sound of wet goats is deafening. Chewie and the fam can be seen filing in.

H: This is purely a Wookiee thing, isn't it? No-one else really gives a stuff about Life Day.

C: "Oh here they come, the Bacca family. Turning up once a year for Life Day after the pubs have shut."

Threepio and Artoo are there. Threepio delivers a homily about emotions or something.

Luke, Leia and Han turn up. There is yet more hugging.

Han: "All of you are an important part of my life, pal. I'm glad I could be here."

H: He's probably thinking "Only another 27 years and I can happily get murdered by my own son."

Leia gives a little sermon about freedom and love and peace and courage while constantly stroking Chewie.

H: Right on sister.

01:31

LEIA SINGS!

To give Carrie Fisher credit, she does her absolute best, and sings it pretty well. The sort-of Star Wars theme playing in the background does it no favours though.

H: Beautiful.

I: Carrie "my mum was in musicals" Fisher.

01:32

Then we get a jolly up-tempo version of the Star Wars theme as Chewie remembers better times, i.e. clips from A New Hope. Hey, at least we get to see the holo chess board.

H: Oh, I do like the 'medal ceremony' music. Do you think Chewie will get a medal on Life Day?

H: Why are they showing us all the good bits from actual Star Wars now? It's like they thought, "Hey everyone, you've sat through an hour and a half of this farrago, you deserve something decent."

After Chewie's Greatest Hits, we close with the Wookiee family back in the treehouse, holding paws and bowing their heads in reverence.

H: Are they having a séance?

I: Is this like that bit in Swamp Thing #50 where they all sit around a table and then one of them blows up?

A slow zoom out from the treehouse at night, its lights shining warmly.

H: "Goodnight John-Boy."

C: <bad Wookiee noise>

We finish with the credits and the proper Star Wars music, as those responsible are named and shamed. Director Steve Binder in particular has a lot to answer for.

H: All the good bits of this are... this music. That's about it.

H: CJ, as the... I don't want to say virgin, coz nobody's a virgin having come through this. But now that you've been blooded, initial thoughts?

(PAUSE)

H: Are you pleased that you've seen it in any way?

(PAUSE)

H: Do you have anything to take away from this?

C: The fact that I have nothing to say, and I'm normally a gobshite, tells you everything.

H: This was voted as The Worst Thing On TV many times. And it's not that it's hilariously bad. It manages to be Just. Boring.

C: It promises nothing and it delivers less.

H: How can you fail so badly with Star Wars? You need some running around, some robots, some scary bits and some death-defying bits. But "No, we don't want any of that."

I: Music... half-arsed comedy...

C: You know how at the beginning we were joking about how bad this was going to be? I can't joke any more.

I: It's just boring.

H: It's a real effort to sit all the way through it. It really is.

We then sit and watch the original trailers for A New Hope and some old Kenner toy adverts, as a sort of palate cleanser.

H: Don't worry, there's still real Star Wars.

Maisie wakes up, the only real winner amongst us.

SURVIVAL GUIDE INFORMATION: DON'T WATCH IT. JUST DON'T.



EDITORIAL

BY JAMES BACON

I didn't realise it at the time but it was a perfect ending. The gathered survivors standing around in a tree top village, dancing and celebrating and happy. The smiles, the gesticulations, the pyre, Leia and Han together in love and Luke at one with himself and his genocidal father. I yearned for more. What were the Clone Wars that Anakin flew so well in. What would happen next. Why couldn't there be any more.

Droids. I watched them with a growing disinterest. Then the Ewoks, a worse effort. I was used to the pleasure of reading toy catalogues and not having the actual toys but this was worse, it was meant to be better than this.

So it was to the imagination. To the what if. The unattainable always is imagined as tasting sweeter and I dismissed the cartoons as not movies and not indicative of what the movies would be. I remember hearing there was meant to be nine films. It filled me with joy and enthusiasm and disappointment because it was talk and not real. But the last moments of Jedi, with everyone so happy, that was real, and deserved. Hadn't they all done and lost so much.

The prequels were a squandered effort. A demonstration of how not to do something, of how it can be poorly done. The un-cheesed versions of the prequels are less nauseating. They've dumped the meta-chlorine(sic) shit and they've lost the racist version of English used by aliens and dubbed an alien language with sub titles. It's an improvement. Fans do awesome things and this is one of them. Yet they are not the blinding films they could have been. I'm not sure whether it was too soon for CGI, or a reliance on god like abilities that were really human fallibilities but it was a poor showing. There was so much that was awesome, some of the design work and ideas were up there with the actors.

And Lucasfilm were at their shittiest with fans. Hard to watch actors cancel cons at the last minute, but worse when it's an intentional pressure from on high. It's a far way since then, Celebration and fan service and engagement and acceptance of fanac is just part of the machine now.

I am also exceptionally grateful to John Coxon, whom I didn't realise was such a big Star Wars fan, until I read about his visit to Star Wars Celebration with España Sheriff, where I was myself, with Jackie and Emma. How'd I not know this. He came on board in a very serious way, and took on the layout, when Chris was utterly unable to do layout, with Vanessa unwell, and he injected the energy and input we needed to get this one done. And I love the layout. Also to Will Frank who helped us greatly getting this one going. Thanks Will.

Journey Planet is a fanzine. It is not a can of beer. This is a fanzine. This issue looks at Star Wars. This Fanzine was NOT produced by The Walt Disney Company who own Star Wars. This Fanzine is in NO WAY authorised by, endorsed by, or associated with The Walt Disney Company or their associate companies or Star Wars. This is a FANZINE. A fan produced, free magazine type thing that has existed for ages. The first Star Wars fanzine Hyper Space contained fiction and non-fiction issued in June 1977 by Mariellen and Scott Griffith (out of Indianapolis). https://fanlore.org/wiki/Hyper_Space

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ALAN HARRIS IS 'BOSSK'