

JOURNEY PLANET



Journey Planet 69—Andor

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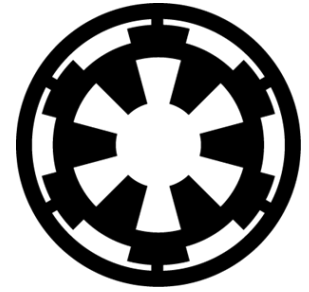


~EDITORS~

**James Bacon, John Coxon, Chris Garcia,
and Erin Underwood**



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ANDOR: The Center of the Star Wars Storyverse

By Erin Underwood

The Jedi are gone. The Galactic Republic has fallen, replaced by an evil Galactic Empire that seeks to establish its own brand of peace and order throughout the galaxy. The lives of the Jedi have ended and the Republic has fallen. From here, their stories spring into the threads of possibility: surrender to complete Imperial dominance or rebellion to restore what was lost. A Rebel Alliance rises.

Andor is the tale of the small people within the galaxy, the people who come together from unlikely places and in unlikely ways. They come together against all hope, to resist the grinding wheels of the Empire to avoid being more grist in the mill. This is the cumulative tale of their fight. It's the story of the spies who gave their lives to get the Death Star plans to the Rebel Alliance. So, really, *Andor* is the center of the Star Wars universe. It is the hub of the wheel from which the Star Wars storyverse spins. It is different from the other stories because its purpose is different.

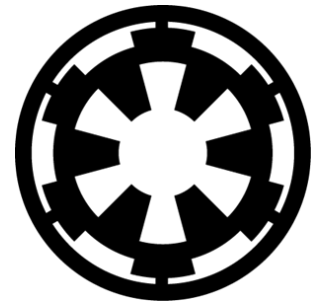
In the Star Wars series that come before *Andor*, we see the cracks in the Galactic Republic grow into fissures by the patient and devious work of Senator Palpatine – the Sith lord who is embedded in the very seat of galactic power. Through carefully chosen words and wisely made gambles, he seeds greed, distrust, and disagreement throughout the Senate. As a result, he splits the senate apart in a series of precise master strokes, breaking the power structure and redirecting power to himself even as longtime allies turn against each other until Palpatine is strong enough to don the mantle of Emperor. It all makes perfect sense as the power shifts, turning heroes into villains and turning public sentiment into paths that support the establishment of a new galactic Empire that restores “peace” and “order” through pain. All of these stories feed into the structure of the coming rebellion, and *Andor* is the origin story of the Rebel Alliance itself.

Yes, *Andor* is completely different from all the other Star Wars stories. There are no Jedi. The force is little more than a fairytale that these people don't have time to believe because they are too busy just trying to survive. The shiny fancy galaxy that we are used to seeing in earlier and later Star Wars stories is replaced by a gritty and grim existence in which regular people can barely eek out an existence.

The force is out of balance. People have been beaten down, and they have lost hope. They have, in a word, fallen *asleep* but they are starting to wake up to see the galactic bars that have erected around them, fueled by growing Imperial power. The early episodes of *Andor* are a slow, hard grind in which characters like Cassian Andor, Luthen Rael, and Mon Mothma among others have to face hard truths about themselves. In those moments, we even see the monsters that live inside of the good people who risk everything in their fight against the Empire. We see good people who do bad things in the hope that one day others will be able to live the lives they wish for but

cannot have, but really isn't that exactly what Star Wars has always been about? Hope? Aren't we just seeing the other side of the Rebel Alliance, the side that sacrifices the good for the well-being of the many?

The driving force within the Star Wars storyverse has always been the rebellion. It is the rubric upon which the stories turn from film to print, games, etc. *Andor* holds a special place within the franchise because it is the rebellion's story. It is the framework upon which the entire Star Wars storyverse rests with every film, series, book, or game spinning into or out of *Andor*.



STAR The Storyverse WARS



The first trilogy focuses on the fall of the Galactic Republic, showing the fraying edges of the senate and the waning power of the Jedi who have enforced the galactic accords that have kept the peace for so long. Their stories and failures pave the way for the rise of the Galactic Empire and the coming rebellion: i.e. their stories lead into the *Andor* series. Spinning out of *Andor*, we have *Rogue One*, the original films, and the final trilogy. Feathered within the feature film structure are all of the streaming series that fill out the storyverse.

As the connective story tissue between the pre-rebellion and post-rebellion stories, *Andor* establishes why the rebellion coalesces in the face of the Empire's "peace and order," making the cost clear of continuing to let imperial power solidify throughout the galaxy. However, it is the story of the people within *Andor* that creates such strong meaning and lends so much more meaning to the other Star Wars stories (both past and future).

Andor makes the other stories more meaningful because the stories within *Andor* itself are so meaningful. A woman saves a young boy from being slaughtered by the Empire, only to have that boy become the catalyst for the Empire's doom. A senator in the heart of the Empire's power works to hold the systems together while secretly funding the formation of the group that will tear the Empire apart. (The irony of her role now compared to Palpatine's role in the downfall of the Republic is poignant.) An antiques dealer, who has justification to travel pretty much anywhere in the galaxy, becomes the thread connecting rebels together. In sweet symmetry to Order 99 in which the Empire snuffed out the Jedi, the Empire now pulls people from the streets for meaningless and trumped up crimes to work in prison factories

that are building the very weapon that will trigger the return of the Jedi. As *Andor* develops, people realize their roles in the unfolding conflict and choose their side.

The placement of *Andor* within the Star Wars timeline is critical because of the individual stories that the series tells. And, again, none of them are Jedi. None of them are main characters. The *Andor* series and its characters are secondary, or even tertiary, to the primary Star Wars plot lines – except for Mon Mothma who is an established secondary character – but that’s precisely why they are such powerful stories. We can see ourselves in these characters so easily. So, when these regular, ordinary people are forced to make impossible decisions, they can’t help but to realize that “peace and order” are not really what the Empire is establishing. Their stories are the stories of the nascent rebellion, establishing critical future pathways for the coming Rebel Alliance. They are creating hope.

“Everything I did, I did for the Rebellion.”

BIO:

Erin Underwood is the senior event content producer for MIT Technology Review’s emerging technology events. Her areas of interest include AI, cybersecurity, cryptocurrencies, cloud & edge technologies, biotech, AR/VR/XR tech, energy & power, computing, and climate tech. On the side, she reads, writes, and edits science fiction.



Andor Season 1 - Putting faces to the Empire and a cause for rebellion

By James Mason

In Kevin Smith's debut film "Clerks" there's a great gag about there being builders, plumbers on the Death Star being constructed in *Return of the Jedi*. The conceit being that by blowing up the Death Star all the workers perished with the battle station.

I was always impressed with just how much thought and chatter that must've taken place about the Star Wars films to eventually get to that epiphany.

Andor's creator Tony Gilroy must've had a similar moment as the show is exceptionally well thought out and ever so well conceived. The world it depicts is undeniably part of the Star Wars universe we're familiar with but feels even more lived in and tangibly realistic.

We get to see a proper backwater planet and a town that feels like an industrial scrap yard and it being its only reason to exist.

This being a prequel to *Rogue One*, the Andor we meet here is not a member of the resistance, a man with a ruthless streak but one with a more personal mission and one that gets him under the gaze of Imperial and more rebellious eyes.

It's here where we start to see the people who make up the Empire and their actions on the population of wherever they're occupying/controlling. Previously, we got mainly goons in helmets and some panto level, scenery-chewing officers. In this show, we see zealots who believe in the tyrannical subjugation of the galaxy all in the name of dispensing order. But like any large force there's folks who get used to the power and influence and are only interested in their own personal fiefdoms and the comforts they've gotten for themselves.

A heady mix of self-serving greed and extreme zeal make the Empire brutish and blind to the fermenting of organised rebellion. Even the few who do are compromised by smug superiority. A smugness that even blinds their superiors when events of insurrection do occur.

One thing that I found chilling about the members of the Empire we do meet in *Andor* was the matter of fact delivery by a torture technician when talking about the method of torture they're a particular fan of. The cries of the young of an indigenous species they exterminated while deploying on a planet. This scene was played quite low key and I feel it made much more of an impact due to that.

Andor is much more a slow paced show about how clandestine the set up of the rebellion was. Assets are cultivated while others are sacrificed, ruthlessly, in order to protect assets. There's power plays and disagreements between factions on both sides. People make very personal compromises to get deals made.

The show may be a bit more pondering but any of the action beats that do happen are earned and very well executed. Using actual locations and enhancing them with some very sharp VFX makes the places in the show exceptionally realistic and lived in. Has a sense of place and history.

There may not be many space battles in *Andor* but what there is are well handled and there's a real drama and air of suspense whenever there's a TIE fighter patrol seen. And being a new show means we get to see some new ships. The standout being Luthen Rael's ship - a Fondor Haulcraft. Which has one of the coolest ways of escaping from an imperial tractor beam.

New show, new droid. B2EMO or BEE-TWO is a droid that is heart-warmingly likable and pure goodness in a shell. It's paying so much attention to character and plot that makes *Andor* a compelling watch. Putting faces on both sides of the fence makes the Empire and the Rebellion feel organic in their opposition to each other. The Empire's acts of horror are made more horrible as we see the people committing the acts with either indifference or near fanatical fervor. The Rebellion isn't perfect or pure but one would need to be more ruthless in their actions to achieve something better.

When Randal and Dante in *Clerks* were debating the mass casualties of contractors building the Death Star, they're told by a roofer about them turning down a gig roofing a mobster's house. The contractor who did take the gig was shot. The roofer tells them "any contractor willing to work on the Death Star knew the risks. If they were killed, it was their own fault."

Andor shows us that the people in the show know exactly what they're doing. Some people may call the series "Star Wars for Adults." I just think it's a great show.



ANDOR: Star Wars Finally Grows Up

By Tony Peak

Yes, you read that headline correctly. The latest Star Wars show, *Andor*, is a major step-up from what Disney – or George Lucas before it – has ever managed with the franchise. I say this as a lifelong fan, and as someone who has enjoyed most of what Disney has put forth in that galaxy far, far away (with a few exceptions, which I'll touch on).

This essay contains spoilers for the first season of *Andor*, and assumes the reader is familiar with the Star Wars saga across its various mediums.

Andor shows us the daily lives of people struggling under the yoke of tyranny. There are no lightsabers, no Skywalkers, and no cuddly alien creatures that will fuel the Star Wars marketing machine. There are no cameos for the sake of nostalgia. I adore *The Mandalorian*, but it's obviously checking those boxes. Not with *Andor*. Instead, we are given a cast of characters who dwell in the grey moral area of those using the tools of their oppressors against them. Though the action is smaller scale than previous entries, it's more visceral because it's not mere spectacle; it advances the plot. *Andor*'s tension is comparable to such dramas as *Breaking Bad*, and doesn't wince on its narrative gambles. Even the music is different: Nicholas Britell's moody, electronic-tinged score is a better fit for this material than John Williams' orchestral bombast (and I regard Williams as the greatest film composer of the 20th century).

The show's ethical complexity, emotional depth, and politically-driven impetus go beyond the franchise's typically lighter trappings, and thus illustrate a far more compelling narrative. It's not because a grimmer story is necessarily better; it's because we are more invested in these characters. Their actions have weight. Their inner turmoil tugs at our hearts. And their triumphs, though few, fill us with a real sense of achievement. There are no flippant plots (Palpatine returning in *Rise of Skywalker*, anyone?), poorly developed protagonists (I still weep for what *Book of Boba Fett* could have been), or soulless comic relief that will not age well (I'm not only referring to Jar-Jar Binks here). This is Star Wars finally taking itself seriously.

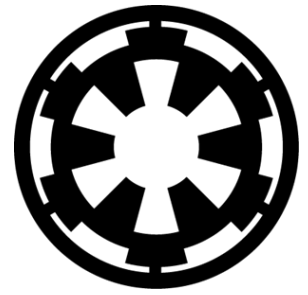
There's a brothel at the very beginning of the show. In another scene, a couple prepares to engage in sex. The dialogue isn't dumbed down with cliché declarations or cringe-worthy jokes. The violence isn't gratuitous, and it's not stylized sci-fi action meant to impress with overdone choreography. The story requires that the viewer possesses an attention span longer than thirty seconds. This is Star Wars for adults. I'm not saying the rest of the saga is solely within the realm of children's entertainment, but it's always had general audiences in mind. There is nothing wrong with that. But after all this time, it's nice to see the franchise delve into heavier material – not for one scene or one episode, but for twelve hours of consistently brilliant content.

The entire cast brought their "A" game to *Andor*. There is not a weak performance or unnecessary character. For this essay, I will highlight the story's prime movers: Cassian Andor, Luthen Rael, and Mon Mothma.

Diego Luna delivers a quiet, intense performance as Cassian Andor. He isn't afraid to shoot unarmed people who threaten him; in his turbulent life, that is the only way he's survived. There are centuries in his gaze, like he has seen so much pain and hardship in his young life. His character doesn't

try to steal the show, nor does he try to be the leader, but selects the best person for the job, and is willing to follow others to get that job done. There's no inflated ego or recklessness, just a man trying to make his way in the galaxy. He comes to the rebellion slowly: first it's selling stolen Imperial equipment to Luthen, then participating in a major heist against the Empire. Afterward, he's imprisoned by the Empire (ironically, without good reason), and realizes he can never go back to being just another faceless drifter in a spaceport. His adoptive mother's final request is that he fight such oppression, which is delivered with conviction. Cassian's not a chosen one, a dashing rogue, or any of the classic hero archetypes Stars Wars has typically used. He is what some of us would be in the same situation – a survivor. He is more believable as a result.

Stellan Skarsgård, as Luthen Rael, gives the shady rebel contact equal charm and cool indifference. He is willing to sacrifice his own people



to achieve a goal; the end definitely justifies the means with him. Luthen leads a double life, playing the part of an antiquities dealer on Coruscant, which is a front for his insurrectionist operations. In the past, the Rebel Alliance in Star Wars has (mostly) been shown as a force for good versus the evil Galactic Empire, in easily defined terms. *Rogue One*, the film which spawned Cassian's character, hinted at the shady world that we see Luthen embrace whole-heartedly. Again, there's no ego with him, but a drive to smash those that have despoiled the galaxy. His monologue on personal sacrifice to an Imperial double agent is not only one of the highlights of the show, but of the entire franchise, and will go down as one of television's great speeches. "I burn my life to make a sunrise I know I'll never see," shows us the real cost of the Rebellion that was only glimpsed in *Rogue One*.

Genevieve O'Reilly as Mon Mothma portrays the future leader of the Rebel Alliance with dignity, grace, and a palpable anxiety that her support for

the fledgling rebellion will be discovered. She is trapped by her social position and familial obligations: her husband doesn't share her ideals and could threaten her operation, and her daughter resents her and seems well on her way to supporting the very system that Mon is trying to bring down. The added tragedy, of Mon having to marry her daughter to a crime lord in order to receive his help, highlights her personal sacrifice. She reduces her own child to chattel in order to achieve a goal, to aid rebel agents she neither knows nor will ever know. Her barely-contained anguish at having to erode her own moral core is heartbreaking. It's one thing to watch the old films with all of those X-wings, blasters, and whatnot, but it's another thing to know how some of those fighters were armed. That equipment did not come cheaply, and I am not talking about the monetary cost.

With *Andor*, Disney has not only produced one of the best television shows of 2022, but easily the best Star Wars television project thus far. I would even say this ranks in the saga's top tier with *Empire Strikes Back*, *Rogue One*, and *Revenge of the Sith*. Its message is timely, given the rise of fascism across the world in the last decade - particularly in America. "Oppression is the mask of fear," Karis says on the show. Like Cassian and his allies, we must stay true to ourselves, and to each other, if we hope to defeat those who hide behind that mask.

"Losing Hope, Your Mind, Keep It To Yourself."

BIO

Tony Peak is an Active Member of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA), an Associate Member of the Horror Writers Association (HWA), and is represented by Ethan Ellenberg of the Ethan Ellenberg Literary Agency. For a list of published work, please visit www.tonypeak.net



Andor: Real People and The Rebellion

By Chelsea Mueller

The heart of Andor was more than its titular character; it was seeing the true face of rebellion. While the film properties and other extended universe streaming series have given us an increasingly expansive view of the Star Wars universe, only *Andor* worried about those who will never hold a lightsaber.

Andor allowed us to see the direct impact of the Empire's fascist regime. The story has always been political, but placing the focus on characters and policy forces the viewer to experience the Empire's oppression at a micro-level. It's no longer the millions of voices silenced in a single shot from the Death Star. The knee of the Emperor is now firmly pressing down on the backs of specific people. We see what happens when one's pushed against their rules. And, worse, what happens when the fear of not being loyal enough, of not being dedicated enough, ensures that the world goes darker. It's no longer enough for the Empire to punish those working against it. They need examples. They need workers. If you aren't in power, you don't matter.

Andor underscores that one can't simply keep their head down and come out unscathed when fascism is on the rise. You don't have to be in the "wrong" to be captured, tortured, or killed. You simply need to be *there*.

It's that understanding that's important here. While Cassian begins his journey as a thief simply looking for a way to find and protect his family, he comes to understand there isn't a way to do that while the Empire thrives. Pushing against fascism and the extremism it invites will make you a target. You can't hide a rebellion and expect it to succeed.

The tenuous trust built among newfound rebels illustrates this beautifully. Whether rebel or prisoner, those without power need one another—in both our world and in Cassian's. They have to work together to gain ground against the Empire, but the risk of being wrong about whom to trust is deadly. It's only when the prisoners understand the release date is a lie that they can commit to fighting back. They can't sense the Force to guide them, they have to hold over others. They only have the thread of hope to cling to.

Cassian's choice to put himself at risk, to offer to be taken in, at the chance of improving the lives of others, is the lesson here. This is not a Jedi finding balance. This is one man seeking hope, and realizing the only way to get there is through helping bring down the Empire.

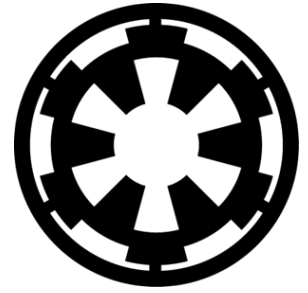
The show succeeds not only in giving viewers high stakes and excellent action sequences but also in driving the vulnerability of those who have no power—from class, wealth, power, and Midi-chlorian standpoints. The determination and uprising finding roots here deepens the impact all the attempts at thwarting the Emperor, Darth Vader, and the Sith, as a whole, have later in the timeline.

Because change is brought by real people. Revolution comes from sacrifice. *Andor* offers a glimpse into what it takes to steal back power from the Empire and opens the gate for more stories about the unsung heroes of the rebellion.

BIO

Chelsea Mueller writes gritty, twisty fantasy and thriller novels for adults and teens, including the critically acclaimed Soul Charmer series and the YALSA Reluctant Reader Pick *Prom House*. She loves bad cover songs, good fight scenes, and every soapy YA drama Netflix can put in her queue. Chelsea lives in Texas and has been known to say y'all.

For the latest updates, join her email list at ChelseaMueller.com or follow @ChelseaVBC on Twitter and Instagram.



“We’re fighting against the dark.”

Star Wars Storytelling Matures with Andor

By R. B. Wood

There is no doubt that Disney's stewardship of the Star Wars franchise has suffered from growing pains. Fan and critic reactions to the final two films of the Skywalker saga and the move away from Star Wars feature films are a clear testament to that fact. The one bright spot for Disney in the cinematic space was the one true "war film" of the franchise – *Rogue One*.

There are spoilers ahead for many of the Star Wars properties. You've been warned.

Rogue One follows the exploits of Jyn Erso, a strong-willed woman with a checkered past (and daughter of the lead architect of the original Death Star project) who leaves her history behind to fight the Empire. During her onscreen journey, we are introduced to a cast of marvelous characters, including rebel spy Cassian Andor.

Rogue One ends as one would expect a war movie prequel to end for all the characters never mentioned in any other properties. The beauty of the storytelling in *Rogue One* is that, as a seasoned and obsessive fan of Star Wars, I knew how the movie was likely to end for the characters we meet in *Rogue One* – and the writing was so good, their foregone conclusion did not take away from the enchantment one bit.

Maintaining story tension for two hours for a tale where the audience already knows the outcome is no mean feat – see the Star Wars prequels for an example of a missed opportunity.

The (in my not-so-humble opinion) mediocrity of the prequels was the reason I was nonplussed when it was announced that Disney would be producing a prequel series to *Rogue One* called *Andor*. Would they ruin a spectacular film with another missed opportunity prequel story?

The short answer is that the House of Mouse got it right.

Disney brought in the writer for *Rogue One*, Tony Gilroy (whose credits include *Beirut*, *Proof of Life*, and *The Devil's Advocate*, to name a few), as showrunner. The result is a story unlike any other told in the vast Star Wars universe: a slow-burn, character-driven show with superb acting, poignant writing, and political intrigue. It showcased the absolute horror of a fascist regime and the sacrifices those who revolt against such a government must make to eventually win.

Andor takes place five years before *Rogue One* and follows the returning Diego Luna's titular character for his own journey from rogue to freedom fighter. But this fight is not a solo endeavor, as we also are reintroduced to the eventual political leader of the rebellion, Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly), and the expert in subterfuge and antiquities, Luthen Rael (played by the brilliant Stellan Skarsgård). Through their eyes and actions, we witness the birth of multiple insurgencies that, as we know, eventually come together to form the Alliance of Leia, Luke, and Han.

But *Andor* is not a black-and-white story of good versus evil. This is a gritty story of sacrifice, lies, and murder – more often than not carried out by the heroes of the story. While Cassian Andor's journey is like that of *Rogue One*'s Jyn Erso, it is the interaction of the characters that drive this story. To-

ny Gilroy takes his time to properly set up the pieces on his chess board, an act done with great care. Oh, there are still explosions and Star Destroyers, but they are used sporadically and only when a necessary part of the story.

Andor is telling a story about regular beings in a complex universe who are facing extraordinary and deadly choices within the framework of a tyrannical government exerting its power and control to obliterate individualism and freedom. The scenes within the Imperial Security Bureau (ISB) – analogous to the German Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS) or the Soviet Union’s Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) – show the Empire’s attempt to quell the movements of Mon Mothma, Luthen Rael, and others. As the twelve-part series unfolds, we are shown that both sides of the galactic conflict break the rules of basic morality and law to achieve their goals. There are no white and black hats – green versus red lightsabers – to be seen. All hands are dirty, and Tony Gilroy shows it with great finesse. There are brilliant speeches and monologues to underpin the passion that the various factions feel about their chosen paths (Fiona Shaw’s speech as Maarva Andor will make the viewer shed a tear). But the triumph of *Andor* is taking a story with a known ending and making it both entertaining and relevant for the times we live in.

While telling a poignant Star Wars tale with nary a lightsaber to be seen, I cannot wait to see where *Andor* goes in season two.



**“That’s
what a
reckoning
sounds
like.”**



BIO

Former technologist and world traveler, storyteller R. B. Wood is an MFA graduate from Emerson College and a writer of speculative dark thrillers. Mr. Wood, via Crystal Lake Publishing, recently released his novel, *Bayou Whispers*, and is working on his next book, *The Daemon of Flatbush*. His shorter, weird stories have appeared in multiple anthologies and online magazines. R.B. and his wife Tina adore animals and are self-professed “crazy cat people.”

Andor: Faced with Violence By Brenda Noiseux

The beauty of Andor is that it follows the journey of everyday people. The horror of *Andor* is that all of these regular people have experienced the violence of oppression. Though most are slow to fight for change, peaceful or otherwise, they cannot escape the violence.

Rather than focus solely on Cassian's journey to the rebellion, *Andor* provides a multitude of perspectives throughout the season, as characters step in with stories of how they are trying to live their lives and how the systemic oppression of the Empire failed to let them do it.

Clem Andor tries to calm a group of protesters right before armed Stormtroopers open fire on them. Kino Loy counts the days left in a prison designed for maximum cruelty, but still believes if he serves his sentence, he'll be free. Timm Karlo reports a lead on Cassian, then gets shot and left for dead in the street for his trouble. Wilmon Paak is a young man left alone without answers after his father is taken and tortured at the hotel. Gorn fell in love with a local Aldhani woman who was killed by the Empire.

Places also hold their own as character. They all display practices that have not popped up overnight. From Ferrix's primitive community alert system to the painstaking details of a cruel maximum security prison, these places show the scars of oppression that have been enacted and endured over many years.

Through Cassian's belief that he can escape the reach of the Empire, we see every world, every town, every ritual requires permission, but that permission doesn't exempt anyone from the possibility of violence. It's seen in the continual intimidation of the ingenious Aldhani people walking through heavily armed checkpoints to witness their sacred celestial event, the permission needed to hold Maarva Andor's funeral, and even on the holiday planet where even tourists can be arrested and sent off to prison.

Andor shifts our perspective on how oppressed people and communities are involved in the violence of change. Through peaceful protests that turn violent, unintended deaths that are attributed as murder, and chosen violence of hand fighting when people are cornered or have nothing left to lose. It's unimaginative to think its message is in favor of violent revolution rather than a reflection of our own complicated world.

When you're shot in the street with no repercussion;



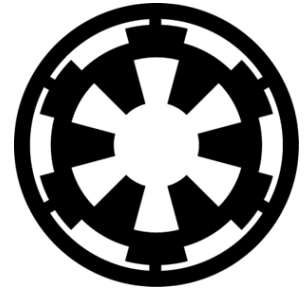
when you're taken from your home, tortured and murdered;

When you're profiled and arrested for a crime you didn't commit;
when the sentencing laws change at the whims of politicians;
when the prisons are designed for maximum cruelty;
when cheap prison labor outweighs the cost of your life;

When profiling leads to surveillance;

When peaceful protests are met with fatal fire;
when innocent bystanders are killed and made examples of;
when your funeral rites need permission;

When you keep your head down and play by the rules;
when you wake up to find you never mattered.



Soon enough, these days will end.

BIO

Brenda Noiseux is a lover of stories and storytelling. You can listen to her shenanigans interviewing authors for the New Books in Science Fiction podcast or find her creating accessible art. Visit her work online at www.brendanoiseux.com.

Vive la résistance!

By John C. Foster

It all really happened.

Kind of.

There are many reasons to love *Andor*. *The storytelling is complex and adult. The performances are pitch perfect and the characters are full of surprises. But my favorite, by far, is that this is a story of the little people that make a revolution happen. The ones who sacrifice without expectation of remembrance. There is nary a Jedi in sight and instead of the clear distinction between good and evil, between the dark and light sides of the Force, the rebels in Andor exist in a shadow world of murky morality.*

In the series, Cassian's dubious motivation and gradual transformation is the spine of the show. I think, however, this sacrifice of decency and clarity is demonstrated most perfectly in the series by the manipulative Luthen Rael. Masterminding. Sacrificing fellow rebels like pawns for the cause. His flaws, his ego laid bare, entirely aware of how deliberately he must compromise whatever morals he has left. It takes an actor of Stellan Skaarsgard's prowess to walk this road and if his speech in episode 10 didn't shake you...well, watch the damned thing again.

But this has all been discussed elsewhere...

What isn't discussed often enough is how accurately the series reflects the real world resistance efforts during World War II, and I cannot watch an episode without thinking of those real world heroes. There were merchants like Luthen Rael, young women like Bix Caleen and Cinta Kaz, bitter veterans like Saw Gerrera. They operated right under the nose of the Nazis, sometimes in full view, just as the rebels do with the Empire. And like in the series, the resistance movements began as fragmented, often conflicting efforts that gradually became unified in their cause.

Picture this: striving for the utmost secrecy, an operative is inserted by air behind enemy lines to carry out a covert operation. I'm not, of course, referring to Cassian Andor's participation in the assault on Aldhani. Instead, I'm thinking of Andree Raymond Borrel, code named Denise, the first woman from the secretive British Special Operations Directive (SOE) inserted into occupied France by parachute in 1942. *As with the Andor's street level rebels, Borrel worked without a safety net. A courier, she helped funnel weapons and equipment to resistance groups. After years of carrying out vital work she was captured by the Gestapo and executed at the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp in 1944.*

Returning to Cinta Kaz, silent, smart, able to stay invisible right out in the open, more spy than fighter, but fight she can. I think of young women in occupied Paris and the Dutch countryside who wielded lipstick like a weapon, luring German soldiers into the woods or alleys where the eager young men met a blade or a bullet.

Simone Segouin was one such young woman. Recruited into the French resistance, her first mission was to steal a German soldier's bicycle. As the war dragged on, she progressed to increasingly dangerous missions, destroying rail lines and bridges. Near the end of the war she was part of a resistance unit that captured 25 German soldiers in one day. Women and men like Segouin also played a vital part in laying the ground work and providing intelligence for the D-Day invasion.

Just as we have different rebel groups in *Andor* who operate with different skills and goals, we saw that the Dutch Resistance was less focused on guerilla operations than their French cousins and specialized in smuggling people to safe zones outside of occupied territory. They were vital in helping downed Allied pilots escape capture and return to the fight. They were also instrumental in helping Jews avoid capture by the Nazis and it was a Dutchman named Jan Gies who famously smuggled food to Anne Frank while she was in hiding.



Much as the Star Wars universe focuses on the larger-than-life people, Luke and Darth Vader, Princess Leia and Kylo Ren, history focuses on the likes of Patton and Montgomery, on the epic stand at Bastogne and the Ranger assault on Pont-du-Hoc. But it was the average Joe who greased the mighty wheels of war and without those small people, the outcome of the war might have been very different. In the Star Wars universe, if we didn't have the nameless folks working in the shadows, the rebellion never would have acquired the Death Star plans and the outcome of their war would have been quite different.

In the series, of course, it's easy and natural to romanticize the "little guy" and Cassian is a perfect archetype. It takes nothing away from him, however, to say that one of my favorite characters is not a small timer, it's Senator Mon Mothma. She conducts the most dangerous and critical sleight of hand in full view of the Empire and her scenes fill me with incredible tension. She is as brave as she is famous and vital to the cause, all without ever letting her mask slip.

While not a perfect one to one comparison, Mon Mothma's fame brings Josephine Baker to mind. The famous Jazz Age entertainer had moved to France before the war. After France was occupied by the Nazis, Baker (aka the "Creole Goddess") used her celebrity to gain access to high ranking Axis officials and mine them for intelligence to pass on to the Allies.

Right under their nose.

Overall, it's the tone of the series that most clearly brings the resistance movements to mind. The characters are clever and sneaking, even skulking. Their victories will not be celebrated by parades, their graves will likely be unmarked and their motives are understandably and even messily human.

At the risk of turning this into a history lesson, I'd encourage people to seek out information about the various resistance movements and here are two links to get started. Be warned, however, rabbit holes await and it's all too easy to spend hours diving into the fascinating and dangerous history of the resistance.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Resistance#1941:_Armed_resistance_begins

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_resistance

Long live the rebels!

BIO

Horror and crime writer John C. Foster is the author of *Leech*, *Rooster* and *Mister White*. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife Linda Jones and their dog Coraline.

Based On By Peppard Saltine

I have complicated and conflicting opinions about *Andor*. On one hand, I feel it is perhaps the best live action Star Wars television show to date, because it has internal consistency, the story is straightforward, simply told, and well executed. It moves at a fairly slow pace and little happens in it that could not happen in a WWII or cold war spy story. You could sit down with your folks who don't dig science fiction and watch *Andor* with them. They will recognise the archetypes and follow along – no problem – since there is little in it that will confuse them. Very few aliens, space-ships, robots or other distracting elements are there to take them out of their comfort zone.

On the other hand, *Andor* is the least Star Wars-feeling media ever released under the franchise banner. It's got the Empire, and for the most part they look like the Empire – the uniforms are pretty good, the couple of Empire sets have the right aesthetic, and the anthropocentric nature of the show does not adversely affect the representation of the Empire as they were always a human-only club. (Or mostly human, perhaps?) But the rest of the universe is "off." The rebels are now also 99% human, and in fact the show is at least 99% human overall: no pesky rubber suit actors here. Practically no droids, aliens or cyborgs to be found. (Okay, I know there are a handful of token aliens here and there scattered throughout the show.) I think there is only one actual character who is an alien (Benthic Two-Tubes), and he was established in *Rogue One*. The same goes for cyborgs: Saw Gerrera is (I believe) the only cyborg character in the show, and you would be forgiven for not noticing that he is a cyborg. That there are no Jedi (okay, perhaps Luthen Rael is a Sith), but I have no problem with that. It's good to have a lightsaber-free story for a change because that works within the context of the Star Wars timeline.

In watching *Andor*, as a Star Wars fan, you have to pretend that the universe is as it always was and that we simply don't see any of the elements that make it Star Wars. It's all happening off-screen, and for me that is a big stretch.

If you have ever seen a documentary about Star Wars (or indeed any behind-the-scenes footage), you will see that making a Star Wars film is very challenging – especially the early films. The costumes are complicated, there are unreal elements that must be filmed in specific ways in order to sell the illusion of reality. Included in these mix are puppets, droid suits, and operators as well as models, sets, and costumes. All of this is before you even get into the visual effects shots and post production. With *Andor*, most of these challenges have been removed in one fell swoop. Why rise to the challenge of selling such fantastic ideas as reality, when you can simply ignore them and move on with the story.

The real question is do we need those elements? Were you disappointed when the Dhanis turned out to be theatrical itinerant humans? Or when Mon Mothma addressed the Senate and there was not an alien in focus in the whole assembly (or indeed anywhere on Coruscant for that matter)? Didn't you think it was strange that in an entire prison facility there were no non-humans? With the obvious excess of power available through hydrogeneration on that particular planet, the use of human labour over droid labour seems contrived. Surely droids would be more reliable too: you don't have to police them, there is no chance of an uprising or data breach, they never have to sleep, and you don't have to waste energy electrifying the floor. For me, the whole prison story was a bit too much. "Electric floor

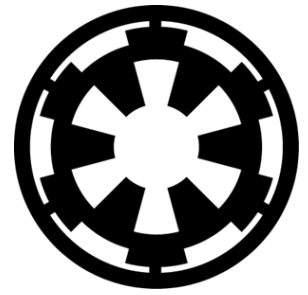
prison” is an interesting sci-fi idea, sure. I mean, I like *Fortress* and *Wedlock* and I’ll buy a contrived concept that facilitates a high-concept prison break, but I really felt that the whole setup kinda breaks Star Wars. If you have to have a character say human labour is cheaper than droids in a universe that has proven otherwise time and again, surely you can see the concept is off?

I also found that the rebel cell that Cassian joins for the heist was too human. Could we not have had an alien rebel or two? Oh well... While I’m nit-picking here I might as well go the whole way and say it’s obvious they saved money and time on location by setting Cassian’s backstory (when he was a child) in the same forest where the rebel cell hangs out. The goats looked like regular goats, the Dhanis’ shrine was the most uninspired design in the entire franchise.

Sorry, I just had to get that out of my system. There are quite a few more weird things but I’ll just assume you saw them and had the same questions I had and we’ll move along before this becomes negative, because in reality I enjoyed *Andor* while I was watching it. (And I certainly enjoyed it far more than *Obi-Wan Kenobi*, which I had to stop three episodes in before it became a hate watch.)

If you have to suspend your disbelief in order to believe you are watching Star Wars and not some other less fantastic science fiction show, perhaps you are not watching Star Wars. Perhaps you are watching a show “based on Star Wars”. If you look in the credits you will see that this is the case. If you watch a film based on a true story you don’t expect to get an actual depiction of reality, you expect a fictionalized version with all of the shortcuts, shorthand and archetypes used in drama to facilitate storytelling. So why did I expect *Andor* to be set in the exact incarnation of the Star Wars universe I’m used to seeing? It’s not as if most other franchises don’t have different versions. Look at Star Trek, Batman, Lord of the Rings, etc. and you will see plenty of instances of conflicting depictions of key elements. Even Star Wars itself has “Caravan of Courage” and “Battle for Endor,” which obviously take place in a sub-universe of Star Wars. So it’s okay that a different vision of Star Wars exists. It is a simpler version though: the “Grand Vision” is gone and the worldbuilding is reduced to background static, something treated as a hindrance to storytelling rather than an integral element which facilitates loftier concepts and fantastic ideas.

There was a lot to like in *Andor* if you can take what you are given and accept it for what it is. I liked that there were some elements and designs that had *Blake’s 7* in their DNA, but transposed onto the Star Wars universe. (I wonder if Toby Haynes is going to get tapped for the allegedly upcoming *Blake’s 7* reboot?) If *Empire Strikes Back* is the double espresso of Star Wars, then *Andor* is the decaffeinated soy latte, no biscuit on the side. I mean would you rather be a brick or a Force ghost?



**“The time
has come
to force
their
hand.”**

We Always Knew There Was More to Star Wars by Carrie Vaughn

So, I was asked if I wanted to write about *Andor*. I said yes, clearly.

But instead, I'm going to write about West End Games' Star Wars: *The Roleplaying Game*. And no one can stop me! Hahahaha! Here we go....

See, my grading rubric for the live-action Star Wars TV shows is really simple: How much does this show make me feel like I'm playing the West End Games Star Wars RPG? With *Andor*, the answer is: all of it. 100% feels. Here, let me demonstrate.

GM: Okay guys I've got this friend who wants to join the campaign. I've picked out a character template for him—

Vel: But we've already been playing for months, we're just getting to the big heist. We can't fold someone into the group now!

GM: No, it'll work, trust me.

Vel: We're having a hard enough time scheduling, and now you want to add another player—

GM: The group's weak on firepower, you said it yourself.

Vel: So what is he—Smuggler? Outlaw? Brash Pilot?

GM: Uh... He's a Merc.

[Aside: these are all actual character templates from *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*.]

Vel: A Merc! We're supposed to be idealistic Rebels—

GM: He joins the group or I quit.

Vel: FINE.

See? That's what I'm talking about.

My friends, I need to tell you about the Dark Times. It was the early 1990's. The original trilogy was a decade in the past. A few novel spin-offs were floating around, and the Marvel comics series had wrapped up years before. Other than that: no official new Star Wars content. Hard to believe now, but it's true. The prequel films weren't even a whisper of a rumor, and the vastness of the Expanded Universe in books and comics hadn't yet manifested.



Whatever Star Wars we wanted, we had to make ourselves. And we did, with *Star Wars: The Role-Playing Game*.

And it was *glorious*.

I'm only going to say a couple of things about the RPG, because I really do want to talk about *Andor*. Ask anyone familiar with the game and they'll tell you the two really genius things about it.

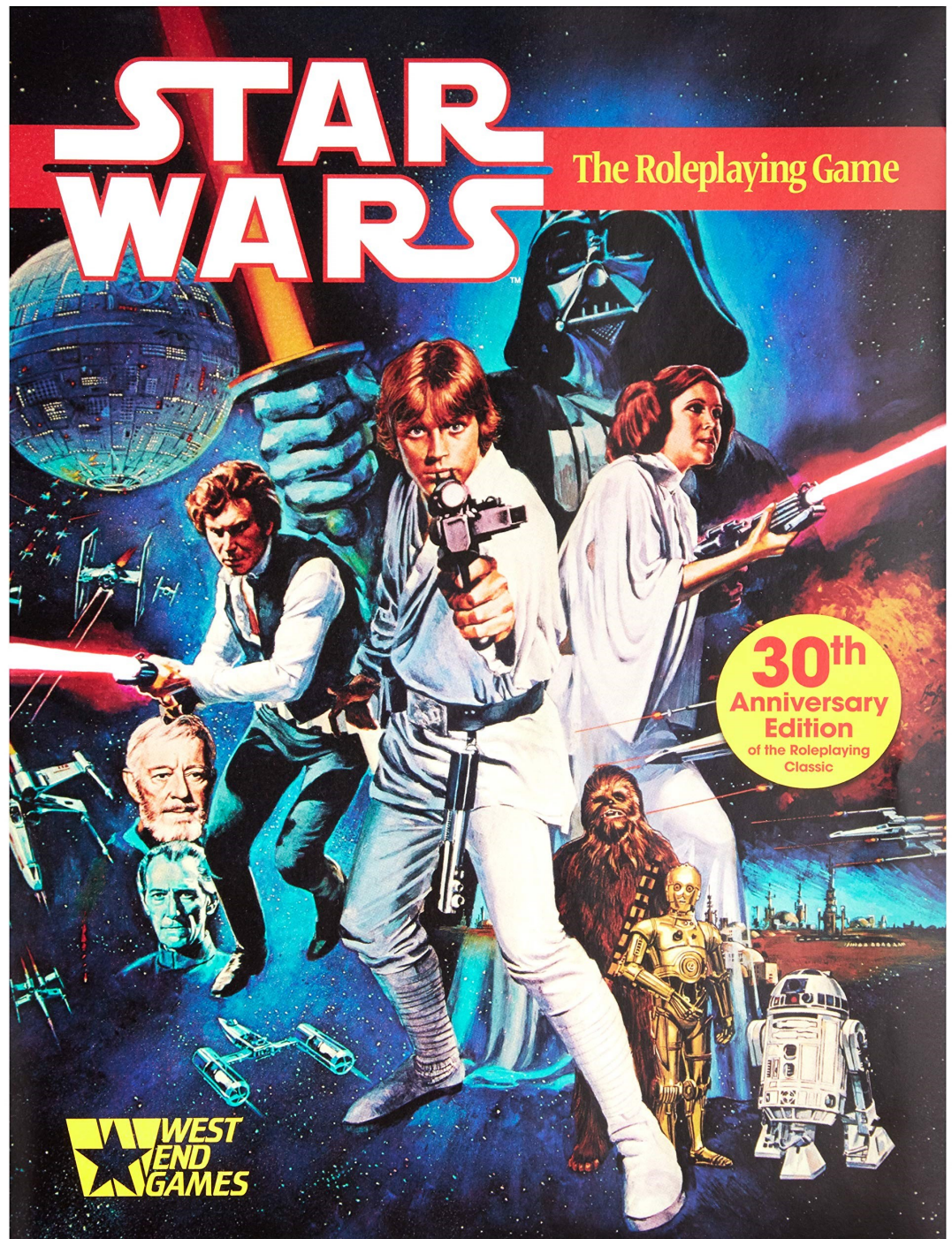
First: it only uses six-sided dice. Regular dice. The higher your ranks and skills, the more dice you roll. There's never been a simpler, more intuitive system, all in the service of facilitating fast-paced storytelling. This game wanted to replicate the experience of watching the movies.

Second: the Force Point system. Every player, Force user or not, gets a couple of Force Points. Players can spend those points whenever they want—but ideally they'll do so at the most exciting, pivotal moment in the story. Like when they have to hit the exhaust port of the Death Star with one torpedo, for example. The beautiful thing about this is the underlying philosophy of how the Force works: the Force is present in *all* living things. You don't have to be a Jedi to have a moment of incredible, even supernatural luck. You just have to be alive. Especially if it makes for a good story.

Conversely, the game also has Dark Side Points. Force choke a few too many sentients, and well... You lose your character sheet to the Dark Side.

The game's character templates were inspired by the movies: Kid. Smuggler. Young Senatorial. We know who they are. But they were also inspired by character types *implied* by the movies. Old Senatorial. Quixotic Jedi. Retired Imperial Captain. Tough Native. The game encourages players to think in terms of archetypes—once again, to facilitate fast-paced storytelling. It's not about relying on clichés; it's about using a shared language.

Those of us who've been fans of this world since the beginning always knew the movies were just scratching the surface, that there was a whole universe just waiting to be explored. Did you know the word "Mandalorian" is never mentioned in the original trilogy? And yet, the brief appearance of Boba Fett inspired an entire culture and branching storylines. The word "Corellian" is mentioned only once, and in context might as well have meant "Ford" or "Chevy." But what that one word does is add a layer of richness to the whole world. Han doesn't just have a ship—he has a specific kind of ship with an implied history and cultural cache that he expects people to know about. That single line of dialog implied so much more, and subsequent creators ran with it. The Empire's vast and complex military contains a whole set



of stories. The existence of a Senate—even though we never saw it directly in the original trilogy—suggests a saga’s worth of political machinations. I haven’t even gotten to the Jedi and their implied stories yet. An ancient order of mystical warriors, now vanished...oh my gosh, so many stories. But as *Andor* demonstrates, you don’t need Jedi to tell a good Star Wars story.

In my games we broke into countless Imperial facilities, stole all sorts of equipment and vehicles, helped Imperial officers defect, inspired local settlements to rise up in rebellion—

How absolutely, divinely lovely it is to watch *Andor* and realize we weren’t the only ones with those kinds of stories bubbling up in our hind-

brains. I get the feeling a lot of the current Star Wars creators grew up playing the same scenarios I did.

The escalation in *Andor* works like an RPG campaign. Here's a character with a secret backstory trying to lie low, but with a long-term goal that drives him: looking for his sister. Then he lands in precisely the wrong place at the wrong time, and the dominoes start to fall. He'll get out of this fix, but finds himself in an even bigger one, getting drawn into a wider conflict than he ever intended. He makes connections. And maybe, against the odds, he starts to care. This is how a one-off turns into a campaign.

All these implied stories: Of course the Empire has destroyed worlds. Of course they have dystopian prisons where cruelty is sterile and technological rather than brutal. Of course there are turncoat officers, senators working in secret, and aristocrats practicing insurgency in disguise. The Corporate Sector (I actually have the WEG Corporate Sector sourcebook, I cannot begin to explain how verklempt I got seeing something like it in the show) and its bureaucrats trying to have things both ways. Hardscrabble workers just trying to get by, who rise up to defend what they love. All of this playing out on a dozen fantastical planets with jaw-dropping spaceships and action set pieces that might just require a Force point or two to make them work.

And the moral questions: If you can't save everyone, who do you save? Who do you sacrifice? Do Imperial officers really believe in the rhetoric or are they in it for the power? What happens if they start questioning? What does living a double life and lying all the time do to your psyche?

I'm telling you, we did all of that in the game.

For me, as a very old-school fan who wrote three hundred pages of fanfic about my long-running Brash Pilot character Doni Ravick (no, I haven't posted it anywhere, sorry not sorry), watching *Andor* felt so, so familiar in the best way. The show validated what I've always known about Star Wars: there's just so much here. So much world, so many stories.

I've always known it. This potential has always been there. Now, finally, everyone else knows it too.

BIO

Carrie Vaughn is a bestselling, award-winning science fiction and fantasy author. If you want to know how big a Star Wars fan she is, ask her about her Nomi Sunrider cosplay.

**“The man
who sees
every-
thing
is more
blessed
than
cursed.”**

Shaping the Conflict: The Ominous Geometry of Andor

By Hannah Strom-Martin

Long before it appears like a sinister punctuation mark at the end of this remarkable season of television, the Death Star haunts the landscape of *Andor* in a series of visual foreshadowings. There are lots of circles (and heptagons!) in *Andor* and all of them are terrifying. Even charming B2EMO, the most lovable droid since BB-8, has a large, reddish eye lens that recalls the dreaded HAL of Kubrick's *2001*. It took me a while to trust the little guy, and I'm sure this was intentional. The production design on *Andor*, its characters constantly framed by polygonal doorways, rounded tunnel mouths, and severe, low-ceilinged hallways is meant to make you feel paranoid. While the camera does take the occasional majestic sweep across a planetary surface, the go-to aesthetic of *Andor* is enclosure. Which is exactly right for a story in which all the characters are trapped.

Consider the most wretched of our antagonists: the sniveling Imperial wannabe, Syril Karn. Syril, for all his vast ambition, lives in a tiny apartment, crushed under a million other tiny apartments, deep in the middle of the "planet city," Coruscant. (Learning this about him inspires some of our only sympathy—or maybe just understanding: "Aha! *That's why!*") High strung and low-class, he is literally under pressure and is later literally penned in at an Imperial desk job. As he sits in seething dissatisfaction, the camera cuts back, and we see this isn't just one cubicle, but thousands, all shiny, metallic walled heptagons that, from a distance, hide the human element from sight.

The heptagon-as-a-symbol-of-oppression gets a lot of play in *Andor*. It's the shape of the porthole young Kassa breaches to investigate the suspicious ship-crash on Kenari. It's the shape of the Imperial prison his older self escapes. It's, significantly, the shape of every door in Mon Mothma's apartments, a visual reminder that she's undermining the system from within. Passing continually through these symbolic portals Mon is both trapped by them and (with all those close tracking shots) *observed*, which adds to the tension of a pivotal scene where she clandestinely enlists a new recruit at a cocktail party. "Smile!" Mon, who is indeed being surveilled, admonishes him. And he has to. The Empire is in the goddamned architecture.

Why a heptagon, however? You'd think the orderly, rigid Empire would prefer a nice even number of sides. But the seven-sided heptagon also suggests instability and, if you look closely at Mon's doorways, there's a strut of some kind supporting the apex of the shape. Like so much in *Andor*, this is perfect. As the revolutionary Nemik tells us later: tyranny is both unnatural and unstable. *Andor's* creator, Tony Gilroy, has baked the mission statement into the sets.

Anyway, I was going to talk about circles. With the exception of The One Ring, the Death Star is the most potent circle in fantasy. It's also Cassian's destination, *Andor* being a prequel to the prequel *Rogue One*. This very fact should loosen the tension of the show, but I've rarely experienced a work of art so taut. Even if you don't know Cassian's fate, you do know that the Death Star is a major component of Star Wars, and the way Gilroy and Co. hint at its presence makes it another supporting character.

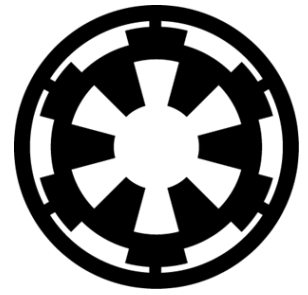
The first thing we see Cassian do in *Andor* is walk down a red-light al-

leyway. The alley contains a row of striking pod-like windows in which various sex workers writhe and beckon. It's a revolutionary moment in *Star Wars*: finally, acknowledgement that the Galaxy fucks! But the environment is dark save for sizzling neon lights, and those globular windows are weirdly intrusive—so large Cassian almost has to weave around them.

Later, when Cassian returns to Ferrix, the circle/globe motif proliferates. A cylindrical bell tower dominates Cassian's hometown, its façade bowing outward like the view through a fish-eye lens. The public thoroughfares are full of circular arches. A port-hole style window fronts Maarva's (Cassian's adopted mother) apartment. Once we enter Maarva's living space there's hardly a shot that doesn't have a circle or a sphere in it. Maarva, who has made a living salvaging parts and people from the Empire, is often foregrounded with circular windows behind her. Cassian too, keeps encountering them. In one of the show's most dramatic moments (Episode 7: Announcements. "That's just love!"), Maarva is outlined by her "greenhouse" window: a huge circular window bisected by lines that make it look like a target. This is the moment she tells Cassian that she's decided to fight the Empire. Cassian, futilely attempting to outrun the conflict and "find someplace they haven't ruined," keeps stepping in front of another circular window, this one with two smaller circles branching off as if to suggest tipping scales or a misaligned scope. It would make sense that Maarva gets the huge, decisive window, and Cassian, still transitioning into full rebel, gets the less certain collection.

Maarva's apartment is also packed with spheres and cylinders. Freeze-frame any shot and they leap out at you: a circular light, fastened to a wall, the huge, clear dome of a water heater, a bedroll, a skylight, another enormous brick arch. Circles within circles. Tchotchkes resembling planets. There's even a circular pitcher in an earlier apartment scene that I took for a Death Star-shaped cookie jar. I had to get close to make sure it wasn't. Still, the shape remained suggestive—and in a show as meticulous as *Andor* the suggestions are intentional.

So, what *is* the show suggesting? I posit that the circles represent fate. After all, isn't Cassian ultimately moving towards the Death Star? Isn't fate a kind of trap and revolution of a wheel? Those of us who miss the mysticism of the Jedi and the Force in *Andor* may have been staring at it all along. Fate is stalking Cassian in the form of portentous circles like the one he'll enable Luke Skywalker to blow into smithereens. Luke himself, let's remember, is also connected with circles: not just the Death Star, but the twin suns of Tatooine. Cassian's first mission takes him to the planet Aldhani which has two moons and a "celestial event" known as the Eye. Cassian is a much different hero than Luke, but he's operating in the same mystical territory. That he gets two moons instead of suns is perfect: he does his best work under cover of night. And, at the end of Episode 6, he escapes Aldhani by flying the getaway ship through the iris of the Eye. This recalls Luke, taking his shot at the Death Star. A central target. No instructions. Luke is guided by the Force and Cassian by the certainty of his friend Nemik—which is to say: by faith and luck, which is also The Force.



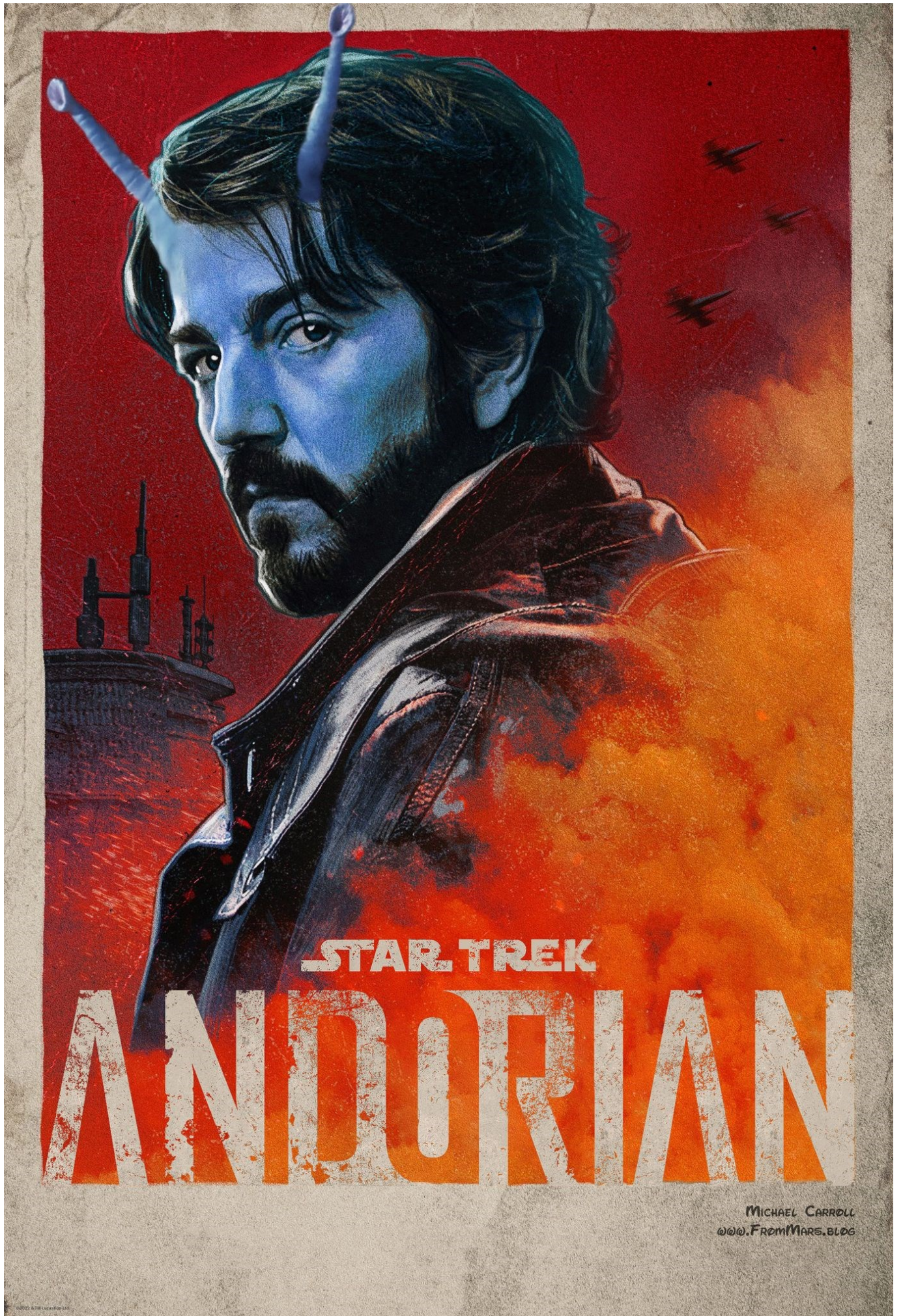
In the end, while *Andor* staunchly avoids any mention of the mystical, the struggle between dark and light is still very much in play. The visual cues imply the existence of the conflict without anyone having to whip out a lightsaber—at least, not yet.

We'll have to see if this remains Gilroy and Co's *modus operandi* as, in Season 2, Cassian's journey comes full circle.



BIO

Hannah Strom-Martin is a Star Wars obsessed fantasy writer based in California. She just finished a dark fantasy novel based on the French Revolution.



The Complexities of Revolution in Andor

by Rich Horton

I am one of those who saw *Star Wars* when it first came out – I was 17, I had read about it as a forthcoming movie in Baird Searles' *F&SF* column, I went in with high expectations that were thoroughly satisfied. This was the sort of thing I had so much wanted to see on the silver screen! I've watched every *Star Wars* movie since then (though not all the TV series). My reactions are more or less in line with received wisdom – I liked the first trilogy (*The Empire Strikes Back* best), I was sorely disappointed by the "prequel" trilogy, and I was dismayed by some of the revisions in the re-releases of the first trilogy. (I.e., of course Han shot first!) I have had mixed reactions to the post-Disney work: *Rogue One* was solid, *Solo* less so, the third trilogy was mixed on the whole but with a totally botched conclusion, *The Mandalorian* has been fun, *The Book of Boba Fett* was less successful. In the *Star Trek*/*Star Wars* debate, I am definitely on the side of *Star Wars*. That said, even in 1977, I could not place *Star Wars* (*A New Hope*, if you insist) at the very summit of SF movies – that spot was reserved already for *2001: A Space Odyssey*. And in that vein I continue to look for movies that have the sense of wonder component – the great special effects, if you will, plus the space operatic setting – that *Star Wars* has, plus great writing and complex and ambiguous questions, either moral, political, or scientific in nature, that *2001* (and certainly other movies before and since) have featured.

In *Andor*, the *Star Wars* universe has at last found a vehicle to present a politically engaging story, with heroes at least in shades of grey. The villains, to be sure, are still portrayed with fairly broad strokes, though there is some depth to their characters, and at least the Stormtroopers can shoot! In deciding what to write about the series, I had a few ideas. Some frivolous – such as wondering how they found an actor who looks just like Kyle MacLachlan to play Syril Karn, and did they insist he change his first name? But I had some good ideas too! I wondered why non-human characters are nearly absent from *Andor* – though we know this future is stuffed with aliens, who serve alongside humans in government? And I wondered if the series really needed to be set in the *Star Wars* universe – could it (and a perhaps slightly revised *Rogue One*) work better independently? But in the end I wanted to explore the moral ambiguities arising from this story of rebellion. And I think a particularly interesting angle is to focus on two of the older characters in the series, and how their participation in the rebellion is particularly morally fraught.

These characters are Mon Mothma, played by Genevieve O'Reilly, a Senator who is secretly supporting the just forming Rebel Alliance; and Luthen Rael, played by Stellan Skarsgård, a smuggler and seller of curios who is also a recruiter and organizer for the Alliance. Mon Mothma as a character appeared in *Return of the Jedi* way back in 1983 (played then by Caroline Blakiston), and has since been played by O'Reilly, first in a deleted scene in *Revenge of the Sith*, then in *Rogue One* and the animated series *Star Wars Rebels*. Luthen Rael is a new character introduced in *Andor*.

Both Mothma and Rael are quite wealthy, very privileged, characters. On the face of it that makes them unlikely rebels. Mothma, to be sure, was presumably part of the ruling class of the original Galactic Republic, and as

such surely opposed Palpatine's declaration of Empire. She is still, however, part of the Senate, and is also very wealthy. I will say that the simplistic politics of the first six Star Wars movies are an issue here: a more subtly presented transformation of Republic into Empire, with a more interesting depiction of what I assume to have been an existing rot in the Republic would have given *Andor* a more solid back story. This is a reason I wonder about *Andor* as an entity separate from Star Wars. I also note that not only does *Andor* nearly lack non-human intelligent species – it lacks the Jedi and the Sith and indeed any mention of the Force. I confess I wish *Andor* had been willing to complexify its polity by showing more aliens – but I am happy the Jedi and Sith are not present. I think too much of the central conflict in the first six movies is Jedi vs. Sith – and I'm more interested in the political conflict we see in *Andor*. (And, yes, I know, the Jedi were outlawed, and mostly killed, in *Revenge of the Sith*, so their absence is not an inconsistency.)



As for Luthen Rael, his position as a dealer of expensive curios appears to make him a lot of money, and certainly gives him access to many powerful people. But his business seems built to an extent on some dodgy trading; and I suppose his business may also be largely a front to support his rebel activities. Still, he is not necessarily what one thinks of as a typical rebel. There's a story to be told, I dare say, about how he got to where he is in life.

I think both actors are wonderful, and both deserve Emmy nominations in the Supporting Actor category, in my view. And one reason they show so well is the writing, which foregrounds their difficult moral positions. Genevieve O'Reilly shows Mon Mothma's cool in a situation fraught with stress from all sides. She is fighting a losing battle in the Senate, trying to moderate the Empire's increased oppression of its people. She is married to a man with a gambling problem, a man who does not seem involved in their marriage, nor interested in the issues that consume her. She is maneuvering to finance the Rebel Alliance even as her transactions are under scrutiny. Her cousin Vel is an active fighting member of the Alliance and though their relationship seems good there is a sense that Vel might believe Mon is a fraud – living in luxury while she is directly risking her life.

Most wrenching is the devil's bargain Mon is forced to make with a gangster. He's able to "launder" her transactions to keep the Empire distracted from their real purpose. But the price is very high – Mon must, in essence, sacrifice her teenage daughter: the gangster wants her to be set up with his son, presumably with the eventual aim of marriage, and a sort of whitewashing of the source of his family's money. O'Reilly's control of her character is beautiful – her face and her voice are modulated to show the stress when she can, and to conceal it when she must.

(I should also give a shout out to the costume designer. The clothes for most everyone are beautiful and appropriate, though I'd quibble that the uber-fascist stylings of the Empire's functionaries are a tired cliché. But Mon Mothma's dresses are lovely, and well portray both her riches and her semi-captive state. The other characters are well-handled as well, from the work-



ing people Cassian Andor grows up among to the inhabitants of the various planets they visit and to the rich people with whom Mothma mixes.)

Luthen Rael is another character forced to make bargains with himself, for what he feels is the greater good. Skarsgård's portrayal is excellent, and the character comes off both unlikable and admirable. It is clear from his first interactions with Cassian that he doesn't care about the other man's comfort, or needs, but just about what Andor can do for the Alliance. And Skarsgård is showing Luthen not as a secret hero exactly, but as a man who knows what he wants done and doesn't care (or feels he can't care – or cares deeply but hides or suppresses that side of himself) who gets killed, who gets betrayed, or who turns to the wrong side as long as his goals are met. And what it really means is laid out in a magnificent speech to Lonni, one of the men Luthen has trampled on the way, who is asking to be released from his role. Lonni asks "My sacrifice ... it means nothing to you, does it?" And Luthen answers:

"Calm, kindness, kinship, love. I've given up all chance at inner peace. [...] I yearned to be a savior against injustice without contemplating the cost, and by the time I looked down, there was no longer any ground beneath my feet. What is my – what is my sacrifice! I'm condemned to use the tools of my enemy to defeat them. I burn my decency for someone else's future. I burn my life, to make a sunrise that I know I'll never see. No, the ego that started this fight will never have a mirror, or an audience, or the light of gratitude. So what do I sacrifice? Everything!" Followed by another killer line: "You'll stay with me, Lonni. I need all the heroes I can get." And it's clear that Luthen is saying that, knowing he doesn't get to be a hero.

We've seen Luthen scheming. We've seen him playing the elegant dealer to the rich. We've seen him pushing people to work for him. But we've never seen his soul until now. And Stellan Skarsgård inhabits the man perfectly, and shows us his soul.

In the first Star Wars movie there are no second thoughts (well, maybe a hint of them from Han Solo). There is no question who the heroes are. There is no doubt of their triumph – and the movie ends with them getting medals. And, hey, I loved the movie and I'll still rewatch. But here, in the grimy and unrewarded, even punished, moves that Mon Mothma and Luthen Rael have to make, we see real cost, real pain, real people. It's powerful stuff. And Genevieve O'Reilly and Stellan Skarsgård are actors who I can't take my eyes off of while they're on screen. That's a big part of why *Andor* is the best Star Wars show to date.



BIO

Rich Horton was a short fiction columnist for Locus for 20 years, and edits an annual Best of the Year anthology for Prime Books. He contributes reviews and essays to F&SF, Black Gate, Journey Planet, and many other venues, as well as his blog, Strange at Ecbatan (rrhorton.blogspot.com).

Droid Boy

by Alexis & Kenneth Taylor-Butler

Ever since I was little, I've respected authority. Rules and regulatory bodies are what keep our society in balance. They keep us healthy, and give us the advantages we have over other star systems. It's what makes the vast, scattered values of the galaxy fair. What I think makes the Empire, quite bluntly, beautiful. Even as a young child, I knew this. Some may call it overzealous, but without rules, what are we but a bunch of ravaging anarchists?

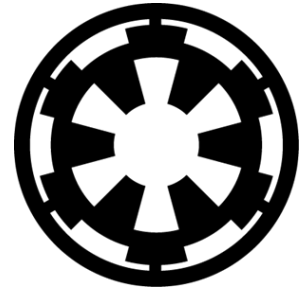
Growing up, my mother respected rules. It was...an admirable quality that I sought to emulate. I would often accompany her and Father to events for Empire Day and the like. Mother would dress me in my best tunic, perfectly pressed, buttons shined to rival a freshly commissioned droid's chrome plating. Father would always fuss and pull at his collar, both at home and during the marches; he would constantly be complaining about some policy or other that the Empire had just announced. But where he saw a closing fist, I saw loopholes that could no longer be exploited. Mother saw that ambition, and cultivated it in me.

Father often came home late from his factory work, slurring his incomprehensible rants of conspiracy theories against the Empire, smelling of Death sticks, drink, and perfume. I hated that smell. I could tell Mother did, too. He would rarely get violent, but when he did, Mother would spend the later part of the evening on the com-link with her brother, my Uncle Harlow. From what I understood then, and know now, he's the paragon of order and has been promoted many times for it. He knew how to be helpful.

I enjoyed the uniformity, the order, the synchronized steps of the troopers as they marched through the streets; I knew then that I was destined to be a part of such a perfect system of absolute order and control.

I knew I would have to start small. After all, Coruscant wasn't built in a day. So I studied. I found every rule that I, and my classmates were expected to follow, and memorized them all. To the letter. I was sure that records of my exemplary adherence to rules and order would be held as an example for others to follow, and yet... I was ridiculed as a snitch, a tattler, a common rat. Why couldn't they see that I was only trying to help them maintain order for their own safety? A girl in my class was quite clever, but utilized her talents in all the wrong avenues, in my honest estimation. During an examination, I happened to see a small droid in her pocket; it was feeding answers into her com-panel. Not wanting to cause a fuss, I calmly approached the examination proctor and explained what I had witnessed.

The resultant response from the proctor was appropriate. He removed the girl from the examination. The other children did not seem to understand the importance of the examination being a fair test of our knowledge. Despite my irrefutable logic of why the girl's actions caused her to be disciplined, the others defended her actions; claiming some flaw in her learning style, something about letters getting mixed up. The droid was only spacing out the prompts for her to see better. I defended my position, steadfast in my assertion that any accommodations for some supposed 'deficit' should have been made known well before any drastic measures needed to be taken. That was when the nicknames started. Stiff Collar, Lapdog, Kane the Rulebook, Protocol Droid, Sy-Borg. The most common was Droid Boy. I learned to carry the names as badges of honor.



Throughout my academic career, my adherence to the rule of law made me a useful asset, a true part of the Empire. My skills propelled me near the front of my class and I was given a top job where I could demonstrate my usefulness. I have always known how to be useful unlike my father, who my mother called a galactic waste of space.

He did not seem to care if anyone found him useful or not. He went to the factory to work every morning and to the Sabacc table nearly every night. He was not very good at the game; he would lose money nearly every night. He brought me with him once in a while, under the pretense of some reward for my successes in schooling. It was always loud, chaotic, and filthy. The rules of the games of chance were convoluted and rigged towards the House. The few times Father included me in placing bets, we did make a few extra credits, but I still didn't see the appeal. Father acted as though I was 'good luck', but all I did was predict the predetermined outcome.

Apparently, one of the Sabacc girls took a liking to him. Not all that surprising, considering their entire purpose is to encourage gamblers to spend more of their money. She seemed to believe his tall tales of how the Empire was the entity holding him back from advancing in his position. She listened to his stories and was convinced that he would be someone important someday. She was wrong.

One day, he came home from the gambling table with the Sabacc girl on his arm. He was trying to talk down to Mother with that woman in our home, and then Mother called Uncle Harlow to help her. I would never talk to Mother that way. The argument between the 2 men soon became physical. Uncle Harlow trounced his brother-in-law, my father. He strongly encouraged Father to leave - not just the homestead, the whole sector, and then the whole planet.

When he left with the girl on his arm, propping him up, I said, "Good Riddance." I will never be like my father. I will be useful.

The vision of my drunk father's departure mirrored that of two Ferrix citizens escaping the blaster fire during the funeral of Cassian's mother. One held his side applying pressure to a wound. The other supported him as they both fled the Empire's justice.

All of these memories rushed through my mind as I hurried Imperial Commander Meero to a safe alcove off of the main square of Ferrix. (- Her Commander's hat had been knocked off of her head by the Rebels. They showed no respect for her authority. She lost her hat just like I lost my position as Deputy Inspector. -) The blaster fire from Rebels and Stormtroopers alike filled the air with dust and screams.

I wasn't supposed to be here. I was supposed to be at my post on Coruscant, working the job Uncle Harlow found for me. I was supposed to keep my head down and work my way back up. But I'm not at my post. Because of her; because of Meero.

She understands order. She was the only one who saw the pattern in the chaos of Rebel activity. She brought me into an interrogation where I was vital to the investigation of the murderer, Cassian Andor. She knows how much of a threat Andor truly is to the Empire's order and control. She is the key to finding Andor. She is the key to my proper return to station.



BIO

Ken & Alexis Taylor-Butler are a Kansas City father-daughter duo, who have been Star Wars fans since its inception. The expanded universe gives them more ways to share their joy.

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty, six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,
SEAN Mac DIARMADA, THOMAS MacDONAGH,
P. H. PEARSE, EAMONN CEANNT,
JAMES CONNOLLY. JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

Andor—a rebellion

By James Bacon

Andor feels different from its outset. It did feel part of the Star Wars world but just, and while feeling more real with the worn look that Lucas had desired, it also felt a little removed from the Jedi, aliens, and Vader as if the epic films were just over the horizon but still out of sight. We are offered a longer and interconnected theatre, a different drama, thoughtful and considerate. The series was worked out clearly, allowing the stories to intertwine and ensuring the words would have impact, not the explosions. It gave the mind something to think about, to be excited over the acting and potential actions.

In that so much is different – the pace, the timing, the length of time for us (as mere viewers) to see the characters develop, the time for viewer anxiety, the building apprehension – it gave us time to see a Rebellion for what it is, a terrible thing, a terrible beauty.

With every episode, I was left thinking.

The enjoyment of each episode was there for sure, but then I felt compelled to rewatch, to consider what was going on and noting what was ringing sound for me. It made me think about the connections to historical rebellions, bringing to mind the one historical rebellion that I have a bit of a grasp of, the Irish Rebellion against British Rule of the early 20th century.



“England's idea was to make Ireland an English province. For her purposes Irish civilization was to be completely blotted out. The Gael was to go. Our lands were to be confiscated and given to aliens. Our industries were to be effectively destroyed. Everything that tended to remind us of the past, everything that tended to retain our Irish outlook, everything that helped to keep us a distinct people, everything that tended to keep alive in us our memories of our Gaelic civilization and of our Irish nationality, freedom, and prosperity, was to be obliterated.”

Gen. Micheal Collins.

Rebellion marks you, you know, like a drop of ink spidering out along the unseen lines of the skin. No matter how ambivalent you might be or how removed and separate, it is a constant, continuous, and shared history – the legacy, the pride, and the stories. It is no stain. It is an artwork of desire and determination, of dedication and death, of rebellion and freedom. You grow up in its legacy, road names and places, images and words – all surrounding you.

I decided to look at commonalities, comparisons, and contrasts. What was missing? Where possible I offer quotes that resonate or present what (for me) was fortunate serendipity from the perspective of what I would like to write about. I have approached it in a linear way, in that I have tried to follow the story of Andor's first season, rather than grouping situations together to find more commonalities.

Star Wars was fabulous, fantastic, upbeat. For sure there were aspects that were a little dark (Grand Moff Tarkin, Vader of Course, the sound of the droid hovering with a syringe), but it never felt like a ground up rebellion. For sure the Empire was evil, Luke was a moisture farm hand, Leia was a Fighting Princess, Han was a rascally fellow and while an utterly delightful and wonderful story, it felt like a western rather than a gritty war story. The deaths were largely removed; they were not up close except for the blooded arm in the Mos Eisley bar, Alderaan's tragic end (an explosion that Leia's and Ben's reactions help us comprehend the true monstrosity of such an action), and of course Ben's death on the Death Star. Still, it was fairly mild for a rebellion story.

Rogue One threw a wobble at that idea, as Cassian Andor shot his informer, Tivik, who had been serving as a mole within Saw Gerrera's Partisans, and he self-justified it against Tivik's inevitable capture, torture and consequences otherwise.

In *Andor*, the grittier feel and realistic portrayal of those in the fight (from a variety of quarters) is captured well and I liked the representation of differing levels of rebel, from the aristocratic elite to the worker, the funder to the informer and spy, and the fighter, the defector. There were so many different types of characters, all with a variety of motivations and reasons, some stories were left opaque and unexplored but there to see for the viewer to consider and to ponder on. Successful rebellions aren't built with just one or two classes of people. Cassian himself goes through multiple phases: ambivalent thief and mercurial; oppressed, prisoner, escapee; and fighter for friends, and then finally committed rebel. Within Cassian's transitions, we see other aspects of his life, hearing about and seeing a variety of past experiences that shaped him.

The Empire in *Andor* feels right. It feels like the oppressive and harsh regime it should be, and the violence is portrayed more realistically. Adding to the oppressive feeling is faceless, while administrative bureaucracy that keeps people down and just steamrolls everything.

We quickly see that Cassian is capable of killing a sentry, lest he be identified. While that act was connected to him seeking his sister, it demonstrates his ability to kill quickly and professionally, even though there is little conviction or justification, just efficiency. The scene shows the grim choices available to an ordinary citizen when faced when shaken down by corrupt security guards. The rules of survival become fluid.

Rebellions are untidy, messy, violent, they upset the 'normality' of whatever lives those who suffer under oppression have carved out for themselves. Tom Barry Officer Commanding, 3rd (West) Cork Brigade, Irish Republican Army: "I always attacked people who were boastful about it, that we had 700 years struggle for independence, we had not! We had every 60, or 70 or 100, or 120 years an effort made by a small handful of men and these handful of men, the real patriots... were a very very limited crowd, one in twenty thousand of our nation, and even then, let us be honest about this, that their efforts were made in a most impractical way... inefficient... The question of Leader-



ship of Military Leadership was one of the blots in our history."

It is hard and rare to fight. People want to get by however they can, and taking on a fight is a massive undertaking where all can be instantaneously lost and those about you might suffer horrendously. It takes commitment and personal sacrifice that most people can only reach after being pushed beyond their limits to the point where sacrificing everything you hold dear is the only choice left. We see this in *Andor*, the connections and the loss. We see that Cassian has lost his sister, his planet, his family; we see that Maarva and he lost Clem, that Cinta lost her family, that Gorn lost his partner, and all of the tragedies. These cumulative losses are unbearable, serving as both cause and motivation for these characters to find a reason to fight. Finding their reason is not instantaneous, it builds over time and that is important, that compares well to real life.

Those fighting the Empire kill and get killed, under martial law or a death sentence without a trial is still murder, and torture, internment, and attacks against family and friends are all blunt tools used against insurgencies. Empires intimidate and coerce; they strike hard with mercilessness. In such situations, there are informants and people who can divulge 'intelligence' and how that is seen, traitor or hero, depends on the perspective.

I am most pleased that a historical accident in the original films has meant that today there is an inherent backstory of discrimination in the portrayal of the Empire and its officers. Even in the 1970s, it was noticeable. In our modern times, *Star Wars'* lack of diversity among the Imperials, the meeting of officers in the Death Star with Grand Moff Tarkin, demonstrate a homogeneousness, and of course no shortage of English accents in the Empire -- an unfortunate consequence of filming in 1970s England. Now, some forty-five years later, this seems so advantageous, as in *Andor* we see the Empire in a slightly earlier time frame, carrying out appalling acts of Colonial abuse such as pillaging (on a planetary scale) for the resources they need, utilising companies to maintain security and policing the locals while they take whatever they want. It all feels so fitting and appropriate.

The unspoken but inherent lack of diversity (or plain racism, it is not truly explained), the lack of aliens, the sound of fine clipped English spoken by Imperials -- it all speaks strongly to what has occurred in our own histories. It is fortuitous that the Empire portrayed is so similar in personnel to one of the worst modern Empires that people have suffered under, the British Empire.

Cassian Andor's past is unveiled a little and this helps us understand him and what he has gone through, giving us space to empathise with him, his losses, his home planet. Still there are stories we have not fully explored, no one survived from his home planet, we see it mined for resources and assume the humanity likewise was used and discarded.

Where that personal history places Cassian at the beginning of the series is excellent, getting by as best he can, is a long road that takes him

from someone who has people to lose despite his dislike for the Empire to hating the oppressors through a series of personal losses where he finally turns into a freedom fighter against them. His first actions are self-centred and mercurial, with no loyalty or idealism about him. *Andor's* slow burn allows Cassian the time his character and the story needs to develop, and this is one of the series greatest strengths, so far.

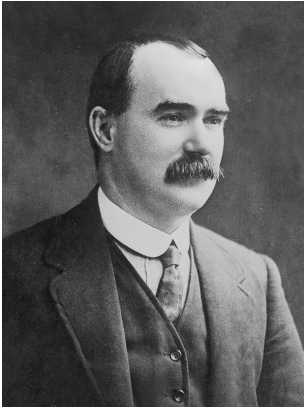
The inability to prevent tragedy, the way that we see the young Cassian forcibly separated from his sister on Kanari (albeit for the best of intentions by Maarva) and the way we go see his dad hung, will continue to build throughout the series as we see him pushed around until he is ready to stand firm.

Treachery is strong in *Star Wars*. We see Lando Calrissian hand over Han Solo to the Empire only to later become a general for the Rebellion until he, too, is pushed too far. It is Darth Vader who kills the Emperor to protect Luke, not a rebel. Then we have Finn, a stormtrooper who just didn't fit into the Empire's mould. *Rogue One* had a more sinister and less straightforward approach. Galen Erso was coerced into building the Death Star, Bodhi Rook was complicit in Galen's efforts to stop it, and this theme of changing sides is deeply explored, as are other themes that really shine in *Andor*.

Cassian is able to fight, and is able to kill coldly, calculatedly. The first to die are two security sentries, who work for the Pre-Mor Authority, as they attempt to bully and extort money out of Cassian just because they can. The underlying evil that is Pre-Mor Authority—that corporations, companies are working hand in glove with the governing power—is brilliantly evoked in this first scene. It continues to build upon the *Star Wars* world, ranging from the Trade Alliance to the Corporate Guild, and the systems of governance that are inherently brutal, working to oppress and willing to use force to succeed. *Andor* is more personal, more in your face, and more like a brawl in a dark rainy alley. It's fabulous.

Ferrix is a place where people get on, they work around the Corporation, and the Empire leaves them alone. Bix's boyfriend Timm Karlo informs on Cassian out of petty jealousy while drunk, and with that act he brings down the authority upon a settled and calm working town, but he too suffers the consequences of his action, indicating that any interaction with the Empire runs a risk for informants and suspects alike.

Into this we see the headstrong Cyril, determined to show his loyalty to the corporation, keen to have a smart uniform and do what he thinks is right. He sees himself as the hero, supporting the government that is in place. We see him as one of the many people who work hard and provide for the Empire. It's something that Maarva mentions in her funeral speech on Ferrix who they are all mindlessly working for the Empire and its corporations, and this slight at capitalism is important. People are pushed hard and, while not as obvious as some themes, it really resonated for me, for the control of money can be as brutal as the control through weapons.



"If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle., unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts will be in vain. England will still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs." James Connolly.

As Cyril goes beyond his authority, he recruits Sgt Mosk of Corporate Tactical Forces. The situation is portrayed to the squad to be more serious than it is. So they go in, armed and acting like a military, prepared for escalation, primed for something to go wrong, while looking out of their depth for a military action as well as over-hyped and fired up for a simple police arrest. They are only corporate security, but they are proud that they can be 'the Empire's first line of defence'. This is brilliant, and inevitably it all goes horribly wrong. Such forces often misjudge, fail, but as we see the squad of 12 in landers evoking the imagery of the Storm Troopers in *The Force Awakens*, we know they are not up to it.

Ferrix, they are overbearing, (grabbing and silencing Maarva violently) and deploy unnecessary brutality. A heavy hand. The treachery becomes known, and then the local alarms going off - the locals using their own warning system, resonating with the working class women of Belfast who banged their bin lids to warn of a British Army raid.

I had hoped that the Corporate Tactical Forces would be made up of veterans, a more brutal rather than incompetent crew, showing a comparison to Black and Tans or Auxiliaries, but they are just a corporate enforcement of the Empire. Think, rent-a-cops.

The Black and Tans were constables recruited to the Royal Irish Constabulary from Britain, totaling some 10,000 men, many who were ex soldiers, and wore mixed uniforms of RIC dark green and Army khaki. Hence the nickname, and they were brutal. They carried out arbitrary reprisals against Irish civilians, burning homes and business, looting shops, doling out violent beatings, and conducting extra judicial killings. Another group formed at the suggestion of Winston Churchill, The Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary, known as the Auxiliaries or Auxies. These were former officers of the British Army, over 2,000 of them and they were specifically units tasked with counter-insurgency actions, a strike force against the Irish Republican Army. They were independent of the RIC, but worked with the RIC/The Black and Tans. The British "corporate" forces against Ireland were a significant contrast to Andor's use of corporate security.

When Cassian meets Luthen Rael we see an enigma of a character, brilliantly portrayed, complex and opaque. Then we hear how they both speak of the way the Empire sees things:

"I went in and stole this myself. You just walk in like you belong. A uniform, some dirty hands and an Imperial tool kit. They're so proud of them-

selves. They don't even care. They're so fat and satisfied, they can't imagine it. That someone like me would ever get inside their house, walk their floors, spit in their food, take their gear." Cassian Andor

"The arrogance is remarkable, isn't it? They don't even think about us."
Luthen Rael



'The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but, the fools, the fools, the fools! - They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.' Comm. Gen. Pádraic Pearse leader of The Easter Rising in 1916, oration at the funeral and grave side of O'Donovan Rossa, 1st August 1915.

Does Luthen really prefer Cassian more than the technology that Cassian wants to sell? Is this a way to get Cassian onto his side? It becomes clear that Luthen only cares about the cause and he sees Cassian as a tool to be used in the fight against the Empire. During their escape from the corporate security team, Luthen is happy to leave the stolen box, and he later will be happy to dispatch Cassian if he becomes a liability. Luthen says some strong words, but it is what is needed for the cause, and they make their mark on Cassian. Luthens' words to Cassian are truly manipulative, first he deploys praise, then shows solidarity, then he makes mention of Cassian's father, and finishes by imploring Cassian to fight, "Don't you want to fight these bastards for real?"

This is cracking stuff. Cassian seems to laugh away the idea of attacking the Empire, but the commitment we see from Luthen is remarkable. Is he a spy as Cassian says? Is he something else? We don't ever really get to know.

The innocent suffer, and the strong righteousness of fighting against an oppressive power eventually smashes against the wall of ethics and morality that most rebellions stand for, and Luthen has creased those comfortable feelings and morals, bending and breaking them in the search for a winning outcome.

'People should not go into war, not go into revolutionary action where men's lives are involved unless they are going to see it through, that they are working without sentiment and without sentimentality...' Tom Barry.

Timm loses it all. While he risks losing Bix by his informer actions, there is worse to come, as the forces he called down on Cassian act barbarically and inevitably cause his own death as he ran to the woman he loved. His love and betrayal cost him everything, unlike Gypo Nolan in Liam O'Flaherty's novel *The Informer*, where Gypo betrays his friends but finds redemption in the end. Timm finds no forgiveness and no solace, just gone, with no idea

**"It don't
matter
what you
tell me or
tell
yourself.
You'll
ultimately
die
fighting
these
bastards."**

what happens to Bix.

The soldier who killed Timm, admonished in no words, his rifle taken away, and sent to one of the ships, his own comeuppance moments away. Marva mentions the banging noise of Ferrix to the security guards, noting how 'It gets to you', a wise statement, and then her threatening and intimidating comment, *"It's when it stops. That's when you really want to fret."* Marva is strong and powerful in herself, making one think of the mighty women who fought for Ireland, with over 300 involved in the Easter 1916 rising-70 of them interned afterwards, all determined to fight in whatever way they could.

The story weaves together so amazingly, as we see the consequences, the thoughts, Maarva crying, Cassian on the speeder so determined, the hiding place, the ship that he slept in, being the one that saved him, and the connections between people. As he leaves, we see memories of him leaving his home planet, the strings of the violin, playing to the heart, and with that we just had the first phase of Andor. The first act perhaps.

Next, comes the heist.

A heist makes sense, raising funds for a Rebellion and getting weapons are matters that are deadly serious. They're always part of a rebellion, to find the tools of war, to raid a magazine, or steal them. The money for them is just as logical. And so Luthen gives Cassian a bit of both, 'Put a real stick in the eye of the Empire and get paid for it,' It is interesting, amazing acting as Luthen challenges Cassian's assertion that he was two years on Mimbar and six months on the ground. Then, at 16, we see how Cassian remembers it, and how he ran. It says so much. The implication of the disjointedness is also there. *"Alliance, Sep Guerrilla, Partisan Front"* again there is encouragement and praise and so Cassian is convinced to go in a payroll heist.

The Imperial Security Bureau (ISB) headquarters on Coruscant are so clinical and so imposing just like Dedra Meero powerfully striding down the hall in her trench coat uniform and high boots. She exudes a level of Imperial fashionability and style in terror uniforms that only Hugo Boss could aspire to. She is good at what she does, as she says, *"We're here to further security objectives by collecting intelligence, providing useful analysis, and conducting effective covert action, sir."* Of course we see how sinister, insidious the ISB really is as described by the director, *"We are healthcare providers. We treat sickness. We identify symptoms. We locate germs whether they arise from within or have come from the outside. The longer we wait to identify a disorder, the harder it is to treat the disease."* It is beautifully sinister, and terrifying.

The ISB. It could be Military Intelligence Branch Five (MI5), The Dublin Metropolitan Police G Division (G-Man), The Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Combined Intelligence Unit, or any force tasked with counter insurgency in Ireland, with spies, informers, infiltrators, interrogators.

As we sweep over Aldhani, I was minded that this could be Guerilla country, but of course air power would negate any land battle or ambush. Still, it is lovely to see the mountainy green terrain, and then the interesting dam. Vel Sartha again represents the strong female fighter, leader of this group that includes an ex-stormtrooper. While her privileged background is hidden and her emotional connection with Cinta Kaz allows personal development, her own determination, and of course fear and doubt are shown well. She comes through both as a leader and fighter.

Stealing weapons and sourcing weapons was ongoing for Irish rebels. Indeed, the Irish War of Independence was marked as starting with an ambush led by Sean Treacy, Dan Breen and Séan Hogan of the Irish Volunteers from the 3rd Tipperary Brigade when they ambushed a gelignite consignment from Tipperary Town Barracks to the Quarry, on 21 January 1919 at Soloheadbeg, or Solohead as I knew it growing up. And so we see another incredible comparison, for Dan Breen said, *"Treacy had stated to me that the only way of starting a war was to kill someone, and we wanted to start a war, so we intended to kill some of the police whom we looked upon as the foremost and most important branch of the enemy forces... The only regret we had following the ambush was that there were only two policemen in it, instead of the six we had expected."*

Gorn who helps the Aldhani crew, while a Lieutenant in the Imperial Army hides a tragic loss, that of his partner, at the hands of the Imperials, sowing not just disillusionment but quiet hatred sufficient to allow him to help the assault and theft. Taramyn Barcona was an early recruit to the stormtrooper programme, and he eventually went over to the side of the rebellion.

James Connolly spoke of a form of conscription: *"Economic conscription, or the policy of forcing men into the army by depriving them of the means of earning a livelihood."*

And I wonder what drove people to serve the empire.

Many Rebels fought for the Crown Forces in the First World War, Martin Doyle from New Ross County Wexford won the Military Medal and Victoria Cross in the First World War, and joined the IRA in 1920 to fight in the War of Independence, possibly in East County Clare as an intelligence Officer. So seeing this is no surprise, the fact that Gorn is actively in the Imperial Service is totally believable.

I love how Aldhani is a distribution hub. All empires need the same things to oppress. Ireland had its Railway and Garrison Towns, and Aldhani is an Imperial Hhb, just as Coruscant is the Imperial centre of power, far removed.

We see Mon Mothma and she is strong, obviously funding Luthen, but also aware of the pressures and those watching her. Strong women are crucial to any rebellion. As previously noted, it is reckoned that at least 300 women took part in the Easter 1916 rising. *"I have always hated war and am by nature and philosophy a pacifist, but it is the English who are forcing war on*



Dan Breen (seated) with Sean Hogan in Chicago



Republican Máire Gill
armed with a pistol

us, and the first principle of war is to kill the enemy.” Capt. Countess Markievicz’s advice to fellow female rebels taking arms in 1916. The story I was told was that Markievicz took an officer’s rank, as officers were issued pistols, to ensure she was armed.

Lieutenant Meera perfectly personifies the efficiency and effectiveness of intelligent determined Imperial officers. She cuts skillfully through the internecine politics of the ISB, albeit at risk, but she has a different background and I wondered what ‘enforcement’ meant. Was she too once a stormtrooper? *“You came here from enforcement.”* I am reminded of Bgd. Gen Sir Ormonde de l’Épée Winter, known as “O” who was recruited as Chief of Intelligence in Dublin Castle by Winston Churchill for the last 14 months of the War of Independence. He was organised, structured, and very clever. He was also keen on intelligence and ordered over 6,000 raids seeking documentation and photographs, but he was a fighter and when ambushed, he shot his way out, killing an IRA assassin in the process. He was in charge when appalling atrocities occurred, and after Ireland joined the British Fascists. The viewer may feel some sympathy for Meera until we see her for what she is, a brutal fascist, a torturer and vile human. Killing Kryger’s man.

The discriminatory remarks about the Dhani are standard, all people who are oppressed are denigrated and put down, their true ability and capacity undermined and dismissed. We see Commandant Jayhold Beehaz explain that, *“The Dhanis, they’re a simple people. They breed a sad combination of traits that make them particularly vulnerable to manipulation. On a practical level, they have great difficulty holding multiple ideas simultaneously. We’ve found the best way to steer them as we’d like is to offer alternatives. You put a number of options on the table, and they’re so wrapped up in choosing, they fail to notice you’ve given them nothing they thought they wanted at the start.”*

The Irish were consistently portrayed as the Celtic Simians, as ape-like drunkards, in Victorian caricature and written of terribly: *“...the existence in particular districts of Ireland of a class of peasants who are scarcely civilised beings, and approach far nearer to savages than any other white men; and the other is their extraordinary and exceptional gloominess of temper. In remote places of Ireland, especially in Connaught, on a few of the islands, and in one or two mountain districts, dwell cultivators who are in knowledge, in habits, and in the discipline of life no higher than Maories or other Polyne-sians.”* (The Spectator. 18 November 1882.) I would prefer to stand next to any Māori than a Spectator reader, even today.

Wulf Yularen sets out the reprisals, they are administrative, but the consequences are felt by so many. When Dedra Meero says, *“We’re playing straight into their hands...the rebels. This is exactly what they want. We’re treating what happened at Aldhani like a robbery.”* We see that she is insightful. Repeatedly, we see her as effective and intelligent, and even though she dislikes the approach taken, she skillfully uses the opportunity to find the data she needs. Data and intelligence is everything.

Meanwhile, Cyril is recruited by the Bureau of Standards and encouraged to chat to lifetime employee—the cubicles, the uniformity of them, the

never-endingness of them is a different kind of oppression, that of the work system. The oppression of the system is notable, but in a way that resonates with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is he a Prole, or even moreso, *Brazil*. As modern day office workers can attest, there is much in the way of accentuating the concept of being chained to a desk and stuck in someone else's system.

"We cannot conceive of a free Ireland with a subject working class; we cannot conceive of a subject Ireland with a free working class. But we can conceive of a free Ireland with a working class guaranteed the power of freely and peacefully working out its own salvation." James Connolly.

In many ways, I felt that Dedra Meero's story, Mon Mothma's Story, and Vel Sartha's story were overlooked. Mon Mothma though, has so much going on.

Mon Mothma would later be a leader of the Rebellion, although it is interesting how in *Rogue One* she spoke so lowly of Saw Gerrera, yet in this series, she is heartbroken at where her daughter may be headed. Will she allow her daughter to be utilised as chattel in an arranged marriage, to ensure she can escape the Empire herself? Or is it a bluff as she continues the fight against the Empire? If ever there was commitment and determination this feels like it.



I am minded of Countess Markievicz. Born into a wealthy family, Constance Georgine Gore-Booth fought for the poor of Dublin. She was a suffragist and a socialist. Constance joined Sinn Féin and Inghinidhe na hÉireann the "Daughters of Ireland", she formed Fianna Éireann, a scouting group, joined the Irish Citizens Army, and during the lock out she supported the poor, buying food to feed those who were desperate, and selling her own jewellery and belongings to fund it.

A captain in the 1916 Easter Rising, she was armed with a revolver, and was sentenced to death which was commuted to life imprisonment. She said to this, "I do wish your lot had the decency to shoot me." She was released in 1917. Constance was the first woman elected to Westminster Parliament in 1918 along with 72 other Sinn Fein MPs, but did not take up her seat and she was in prison again and then elected to the first Dáil, appointed as the Minister for Labour - the first woman to hold a ministerial post in Europe. She had wanted to be an artist: married in 1900, her husband was a Polish aristocratic landowner, Casimir Markievicz, and he left Ireland in 1913, although their relationship continued through correspondence.

It is interesting that when Mon and Vel discuss Leida, there is consternation about her taking up the old ways. I found it interesting how those who would eschew it find the next generation sometimes embracing it. The performance of Genevieve O'Reilly as Mon Mothma comes across so well. The passages where we see her watching her daughter, contemplating her potential loss to a culture and faith that appears to us as misogynistic ... and

"The first principal of war is to kill the enemy."

worse, possibly to a criminal's son in the form of a marriage that gives their family legitimacy, is brilliant. Mon Mothma's oppression within the senatorial system also comes across as she explained to Perrin that his dinner guests are those who oppose her as she speaks to a distracted senate, that the Public Order Re-sentencing Directive (PORD) act is not opposed—it all demonstrates multiple levels of oppression, of being trapped in a system even for those in power.

There is so much hurt portrayed when Cassian and Clem are watching the Clone Troopers, the sound of the marching creating a flashback for Cassian. It must be so horrible to lose your dad, who was a genuinely good man, innocently caught trying to disarm a situation. Caught in the sights of the Clone Troopers under the order of an Imperial officer and subsequently then hanged, his death impacted Cassian, as well as Maarva who walks a different way. When Maarva speaks of rebellion with Cassian, he lacks awareness of what part he has played, in the heist is interesting. Her unwillingness to judge Cass is kind and loving, but she also underestimates him. How many fought and could not tell their family, and how many fought and would have been lost without it?

The consequences and the reprisals for Aldhani are brilliant. The fact that Cassian gets swept up in a random act of authority while being totally innocent of any wrongdoing is superb, as was the revelation that the prison was effectively a hard labour camp. In one sense, Cassian becomes a leader, while he wants his own freedom, he also fights for everyone's freedom against the utter oppressiveness of the prison system—a system where you will never be free. It's a horrendous realisation.

Here I was mindful of prison and imprisonment of republican volunteers, a shared experience but also potentially productive. Frongoch in North Wales was a POW camp and after Easter 1916 was turned into an internment camp, but it was also known as the *ollscoil na réabhlóide* - "University of Revolution". Culture, the arts, drawing, writing, learning Irish and learning tactics were the order of the day. Many British prisons held men and women prisoners, Wandsworth, Lewes, Reading all held prisoners. What is missing here are songs, folk songs, poems, stories, these items are sorely absent from *Star Wars*. It is true that songs have not been the most memorable throughout *Star Wars*, but this cultural aspect is not included at all. "*The Irish prisoners were driving him crazy with their incessant singing and dancing late into the night*" of Matthew Loan steward of Reading Gaol Autumn 1916.

The unusual relationship between Cyril and Dedra is one that perplexes. He is a bit of a stalker, but she is a torturer well able to have him murdered and makes that clear. He is promoted just because he came back on the same day from the ISB and was helpful. Thus indicating how corrupt the imperials are, how they see favour through the forces of brutality, but there is a bravery about Cyril. He exudes a fanaticism that presents a solid contrast to those in the Rebellion, and it is important to see a civilian so committed to the Empire because people are as committed to fascism as they are to freedom. What I am surprised at is that Dedra Meero does not make use of

him more but this works out well. Cyril has fully bought into everything that the Empire is and is part of those who are accepted in society.

When Luthen tries to get Saw Gerrera to work with Anton Kreegyr, we hear about the variety of people fighting against the empire: "Kreegyr's a separatist. Maya Pei's a neo-Republican. The Ghorman front. The Partisan alliance? Sectorists. Human cultists Galaxy partitionists. They're lost! All of them, lost! Lost!" and to this Luthen has a very strong response. "I am a coward. I'm a man who's terrified the Empire's power will grow beyond the point where we can do anything to stop it. I'm the one who says, "We'll die with nothing if we don't put aside our petty differences."

There were a variety of Rebel groups involved in the Easter 1916 rising, Irish Republican Brotherhood, Clan na Gael, Fianna Éireann, Irish Citizen Army Irish Volunteers and *Cumann na mBan* which *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* the Daughters of Ireland had merged with. After the War of Independence there was a Civil War. As Saw listed various groups some in disdain, I thought of how Eoin MacNeil must have been. He formed the Irish Volunteers but was against an armed insurrection, and had to be duped to support one, and then when he realised he put an advert in the Sunday Independent calling off the planned "Manoeuvres" effectively reducing how many would show up for the rebellion. Kathleen Clarke wrote that Tom, her husband and one of the leaders, said the day before his execution, *"I want you to see to it that our people know of his treachery to us. He must never be allowed back into the National life of this country, for so sure as he is, so sure will he act treacherously in a crisis. He is a weak man, but I know every effort will be made to whitewash him."*

The sequence of torture in the commandeered Hotel on Ferrix is brutal. The mind is such a precious thing and when we see Salman Paak, and how Dedra uses him to frighten Bix, it seems sinister, but then we learn what Dr. Gorst is going to do to Bix and we know what the consequences are, it's beyond appalling. Dedra is at her most potently evil at this point, a level of dastardliness that we do not get at any other stage, and we see the consequences and she turns the audience against her as they realise that she is appalling. Denise Gough is utterly brilliant in this role, and she continues to impress.

When we learn and see that Lonni Jung is a deep mole for Luthen, it is an amazing interaction that strengthens Luthen in the viewer's mind. He is so determined and willing to give it all.

As Luthen says *"Even as you say the words, you know it's impossible. We can't let you go, Lonni. We can't spare you. We've been grooming you for too long. And yes, you've been alone, but your career has profited greatly from information that we've provided. Information that cost me dearly. You love your daughter. Kreegyr's men will be dying to make sure she has a father. You're trapped, Lonni. There's no pleasure in saying it but you're going nowhere."*

The importance of spies, of infiltrators to a rebellion is huge. Micheal



Irish Republican and member of *Cumann na mBan* Rose McNamara circa 1916

“They had gone in the mire to destroy us and our nation and down after them we had to go.”

Collins had many spies, but he had a number in Dublin Castle who were of great importance. David Neligan joined the DMP in 1917 and he also joined the Volunteers. He was made a detective in short order and worked in G Division as a counterintelligence G-Man. He left with the encouragement of his brother but was met by Micheal Collins who persuaded him to go back and be a mole and then was pleased that he was asked to join MI5. Collins had many moles, Sgt Ned Broy, was a clerk in the detective office of the DMP and Lily Merin was a typist at the British Army Intelligence Centre in Parkgate St. who recreated communications from the carbon paper used.

We see Luthen talk about what he has lost. his is brilliantly delivered by Stellan Skarsgård: *“Calm. Kindness. Kinship. Love. I've given up all chance at inner peace. I've made my mind a sunless space. I share my dreams with ghosts. I wake up every day to an equation I wrote 15 years ago from which there's only one conclusion, I'm damned for what I do. My anger, my ego, my unwillingness to yield, my eagerness to fight, they've set me on a path from which there is no escape. I yearned to be a savior against injustice without contemplating the cost and by the time I looked down there was no longer any ground beneath my feet. What is my sacrifice? I'm condemned to use the tools of my enemy to defeat them. I burn my decency for someone else's future. I burn my life to make a sunrise that I know I'll never see. And the ego that started this fight will never have a mirror or an audience or the light of gratitude. So what do I sacrifice? Everything!”*

“You'll stay with me, Lonni. I need all the heroes I can get.”

“They said I was ruthless, daring, savage, blood thirsty, even heartless. The clergy called me and my comrades murderers; but the British were met with their own weapons. They had gone in the mire to destroy us and our nation and down after them we had to go.” Tom Barry.

Luthen has charisma and determination, people are drawn to him, and this made me think of James Connolly who welcomed women to the ranks of The Irish Citizen Army, and as I saw Vel and Kleya Marki loyalty and how Mon Mothma was supporting Luthen, I noted the importance of Women to the Irish Rebellion and how Connolly welcomed them.

When Luthen is presented with the difficulty of warning Saw off the Anto Kreegyr attack as it is compromised, he himself has to admit he is compromised. He shows his hand, acknowledging that he knows Kreeryr will lose 50 men, but he sees it as an affordable loss in order to avoid revealing how deep and wide the rebel network is growing.

Luthen is a smooth talker, but Saw can see through the velvet words. Although panicked, it takes a moment of daring for Luthen to ground him. The attack being defeated, a spectacular event going astray, may be seen as galvanising those who fight.

In the months before the Easter rising, secret meetings, and duplicity among rebels in Ireland occurred. Eoin MacNeil was persuaded to allow the Irish Volunteers to be involved when presented with a forged letter by Pearse and Connolly. W.T. Cosgrave testified that he “had never heard of the

rebellion until he was in the middle of it... that when he marched out on Easter Monday, he thought he was merely going out for a route march.' He went on to be the Irish Premier.

I was impressed that Wilmon Paak would avenge his father and make a bomb, a character who had appeared a number of times, but quietly to the side. This was a brilliant bit of drama, as was the band. As soon as I heard the band I thought of Brass Bands, not perfect but very good, and it was a real sight to see the 'Daughters of Ferrix'

As mentioned *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* were the Daughters of Ireland, formed by Maud Goone in 1900. This was a fairly radical Irish Nationalist women's organisation, and was subsequently merged with *Cumann na mBan*. "Our desire to have a voice in directing the affairs of Ireland is not based on the failure of men to do so properly, but is the inherent right of women as loyal citizens and intelligent human souls." Maud Goone.



I thought that Dedra Meero's view on the Kreegyr situation was good, when she said, "We get nothing from a dead body" the response from Major Partagaz: "You're missing the point. Today was about wiping the taste of Aldhani from the Emperor's mouth." was excellent, it showed that ego and not strategy was what this was about, that the hurt feelings of the emperor were more important than an actual victory.

Maarva: "I'm honored to be a Daughter of Ferrix, and honored to be worthy of the stone. Strange, I... feel as if I can see you. I was six, I think, the first time I touched a funerary stone. Heard our music, felt our history. Holding my sister's hand as we walked all the way from Fountain Square, where you stand now, I've been more times than I can remember. I always wanted to be lifted. I was always eager, always waiting to be inspired. I remember every time it happened, every time the dead lifted me... With their truth. And now I'm dead. And I yearn to lift you. Not because I want to shine or even be remembered. It's because I want you to go on. I want Ferrix to continue. In my waning hours, that's what comforts me most. But I fear for you. We've been sleeping. We've had each other, and Ferrix, our work, our days. We had each other, and they left us alone. We kept the trade lanes open, and they left us alone. We took their money and ignored them, we kept their engines churning, and the moment they pulled away, we forgot them. Because we had each other. We had Ferrix. But we were sleeping. I've been sleeping. And I've been turning away from the truth I wanted not to face. There is a wound that won't heal at the center of the galaxy. There is a darkness reaching like rust into everything around us. We let it grow, and now it's here. It's here, and it's not visiting anymore. It wants to stay. The Empire is a disease that thrives in darkness, it is never more alive than when we sleep. It's easy for the dead to tell you to fight, and maybe it's true, maybe fighting is useless. Perhaps it's too late. But I'll tell you this... If I could do it again, I'd wake up early and be fighting these bastards ...from the start. Fight the Empire!"

"I have always hated war and am by nature and philosophy a pacifist,

but it is the English who are forcing war on us, and the first principle of war is to kill the enemy." Maud Gonne.

"It is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands.... I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms. We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them." Padhraic Pearse. The coming revolution 1913.

"That valiant effort and the martyrdoms that followed it finally awoke the sleeping spirit of Ireland" Gen. Micheal Collins on the Easter 1916 rising.

When Xanwan gets shot by a StormTrooper, the camera lingering on him, ensuring we see that he is dead, and just staying that bit longer ensured that we saw it for what it was.

I thought then that the ISB officer Corv (who had been spying on Maarva) was cornered and got knifed by Cinta was brilliant, an excellent moment in the episode, which just added an edge.

"There is no crime in detecting and destroying in wartime the spy and informer. They have destroyed without trial. I have paid them back in their own coin." Gen. Micheal Collins

The moment when Luthen is listening to the Massacre on Ferrix, one can see his mind is changing, apart from losing his target, Cassian. You could see from his visage that this moment was something that could become legend, that here were regular people, listening and rising up, honest in their protest and gunned down in an appalling moment. This was a true rebellion.

"If you strike us down now, we shall rise again, and renew the fight. You cannot conquer Ireland; you cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed." Patrick Pearse barrister, poet, teacher and CinC and General in the Easter Rebellion.



Republican prisoners being lead away after the Easter 1916 rising

"It was regrettable but inevitable," Comdt. Sean Treacy.

Karis Nemick is amazing. His performance, like so many others, is strong and his words are powerful, if subtle, and of course at all times reflecting on the oppression of the Empire. Here I bring together the passages that were presented, both as words he uttered and the manifesto that is read. I felt that while there was much to both, it might be worth reading them, and then contemplating the 1916 Easter Rising Proclamation and the 1918 Sinn Fein manifesto, although these are different documents, and there is something of the stage about what Karis says that is perfect for the screen.

Karis said: *"Old and true. And sturdy. One of the best navigational tools ever built. Can't be jammed or intercepted. Something breaks, you can fix it yourself. "Hard to Learn" Yes, but once you've mastered it, you're free. We've grown reliant on Imperial tech, and we've made ourselves vulnerable. There's a growing list of things we've known and forgotten, things they've pushed us to forget. Things like freedom."*

"Few more ideas. It's so confusing, isn't it? So much going wrong, so much to say, and all of it happening so quickly. The pace of repression outstrips our ability to understand it. And that is the real trick of the Imperial thought machine. It's easier to hide behind 40 atrocities than a single incident. But they have a fight on their hands, don't they? Our elemental rights are such a simple thing to hold, they will have to shake the galaxy hard to loosen our grip."

This is loaded with insight, loaded with obvious double meaning and lets the viewer see his thinking, all of it is aligned to the cause. Yet he is thoughtful and crafty as a writer, a gentle person more attuned to literature perhaps, but willing to hold the rifle.

"It is absolutely impossible to slaughter a man in this position without making him a martyr and a hero, even though the day before the rising he may have been only a minor poet." George Bernard Shaw on Pádraig Pearse, after 1916.

Atrocities mentioned makes me consider The Black and Tans, and The Auxiliaries and the Croke Park massacre. On the 21st of November 1920, Micheal Collins had a group of his men, known as The Squad, shoot and kill men of 'The Cairo Gang' (British undercover intelligence agents) and 15 were killed. As a reprisal, the RIC, Black and Tans, Auxies and British Soldiers went to Croke Park, and indiscriminately opened fire on players and spectators, murdering 14 civilians, and injuring over 60. One of those civilians killed, Micheal Hogan, was playing for Tipperary in a Gaelic football match against Dublin. Thus, this year's Octocon took place in the Hogan Stand, in the suite of rooms known as the Hogan Mezzanine, where much discussion of *Andor* occurred.

Karis said "Surprise from above is never as shocking as one from below."

"No revolutionary movement is complete without its poetical expression." James Connolly.

While I would love to say there was poetry about Karis line, there is not. It is just well uttered, and this is something that is remiss. There is no culture per se, we do see the culture of Ferrix to a degree, but it doesn't feel like a cultural revolution. There is a lack of graffiti and singing, poetry, and stories.

Karis "The Role of Mercenaries in The Galactic Struggle for Freedom." My conclusion is simple. Weapons are tools. Those that use them are, by extension, assets that we must use to our best advantage. The Empire has no moral boundaries, why should we not take hold of every chance we can? Let them see how an insurgency adapts. (Sighs) Well, you're half right. The Empire doesn't play by the rules. And how am I wrong? (Sighs) They don't care enough to learn. They don't have to. You mean nothing to them. Perhaps they'll think differently tomorrow. Be careful what you wish for. So you think it's hopeless, do you? Freedom? Independence? Justice? We should just submit and be thankful? Just take what we're given? Do I look thankful to you? No. But I'm glad that you're here. No matter what the reason. Don't worry. You'll be fine. You'll sleep when it's done.

Then we have the manifesto, and this is very strong, and speaks to the struggle:

'There will be times when the struggle seems impossible. I know this already. Alone, unsure, dwarfed by the scale of the enemy. Remember this. Freedom is a pure idea. It occurs spontaneously and without instruction. Random acts of insurrection are occurring constantly throughout the galaxy. There are whole armies, battalions that have no idea that they've already enlisted in the cause. Remember that the frontier of the Rebellion is everywhere. And even the smallest act of insurrection pushes our lines forward. And then remember this. The Imperial need for control is so desperate because it is so unnatural. Tyranny requires constant effort. It breaks, it leaks. Authority is brittle. Oppression is the mask of fear. Remember that. And know this, the day will come when all these skirmishes and battles, these moments of defiance will have flooded the banks of the Empire's authority and then there will be one too many. One single thing will break the siege. Remember this. Try.'

"We forgot our freedom. We forgot our language. We forgot our own native Irish ways. We forgot our Irish love and veneration for things of the mind and character, our pride in learning, in the arts for which we had been famous, in military skill, in athletic prowess..."

We became the degraded and feeble imitators of our tyrants... we cast off everything which distinguished us as Irish and the success with which we imitated the enemy who despised us. And slavery still exists." Gen. Micheal Collins

"Come show your hand, you have boasted for so long, How you would crush this rebel band with your armies great and strong" - Comdt. Sean Treacy 3rd Tipperary Brigade of the Irish Volunteers

The contrasts, or matters that I was sorry about were that there were not oppressed aliens, or advocates against the PORD at Mon Mothma's party. That workers, and worker organisations, unions or other organisations did not play a larger part, that socialism was not a larger factor. There could have been more rioting and civil disobedience, and then more incursions and raiders. The mentioned veteran soldiers would have been good, while there was definitely a feeling of chaos in Ferrix after Merva's speech. However, I felt that the soldiers themselves did not lose control. They just did as they were ordered on Ferrix, and I would have liked it a bit more chaotic.

Overall though, there were so many elements that reminded me of the Irish Rebellion. I note that in the little short time I had for this article, I had a huge amount of time reading, and researching and could probably continue and refine and improve and find better quotes, and expand my own thoughts, and seek more commonality and I shall wonder whether Dan and Tony Gilroy, whose grandfather is described as Irish-American would know their history well enough.

End



Cumann na mBan protest outside Mountjoy Prison during the Irish War of Independence. Placards read Mother of God, open the prison gates; Release our Fathers and Brothers; and Mother of Mercy, pray for prisoners.

Andor: An Awakening

By Edward Lazellari

Andor is multilayered and needs a dedicated book to unpack all its symbolism and character arcs. Rooted in Earth's historical authoritarian regimes (mostly Nazi Germany), the series illustrates more successfully than other Star Wars properties (save *Rogue One*) the Empire's boot heel on the necks of its citizens; it also demonstrates the compliance of so many to not only tolerate an illegitimate state, but to try and prosper within it. Andor is not a story of wizards and knights, but of middle managers and a labor force. The Star Wars saga needed this perspective to fill out George Lucas' vision – shining the familiar through a prism to expose deep trenches in the society. What's revealed heightens the stakes and lends gravity to Obi Wan, Luke, and Leia's efforts to defeat the darkness in their galaxy. *Andor*, by way of Ferrix's brick and mortar, retroactively inserts a vital foundation under the house of Star Wars after it has already been built.

The opening on Morlana One is a red herring; the search for Cassian Andor's (Diego Luna) sister never resolves itself. Eventually, I realized this story is a road trip through the empire...a map of its reach, demonstrations of corruption, and testament to suffering under the boot of Emperor Palpatine. Each planet has a purpose. It's an argument for heroes big and small.

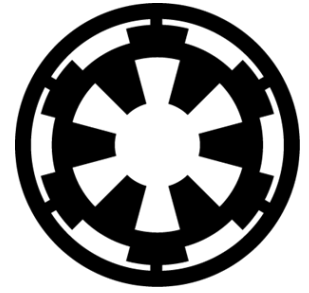
Morlana One is a polished corporate world where the ambitious go to climb the ranks. Off-duty security grunts take umbrage to Cassian gaining the attention of a nightclub hostess away from them. Andor's actions did not actually constitute a great offense; he spoke to the hostess briefly looking for a lead, and then left the club peacefully. But such were the guards' notions of entitlement on this world that they followed Andor to an alley to shake him down, only to end up dead at his hands. One could argue this set in motion the events of the series, but I don't believe that. The corporation's chief inspector recognized the crime for what it really was and instructed his subordinate Syril Karn (Kyle Soller) to let the matter rest. But the chief underestimated his deputy's ambition (an eager fascist to the bone), and the ramifications of Karn's insubordination set in motion the events for the rest of the series.

What the show runners did well as Cassian tried to stay ahead of the law was give each world a unique personality and illustrated how the Empire marred it.

Kenari, Cassian's home world, is a lush jungle reminiscent of Brazil with scars of the empire's strip-mining operations and their abandoning the planet. Its inhabitants, slightly feral children living in camps, are detached from whatever culture had been there pre-Empire.

Aldani is a colonized world of valleys and pastures, its indigenous mountain tribes subjugated and removed from ancestral lands (and it's the location of one of the show's best episodes).

Niamos is a pleasure resort where the wealthy go to escape the empire, except that it was not spared the decrees to fill the empire's labor camps. The lesson here: one cannot escape corrupt officials even in paradise.



Narkina 5 is a sci-fi Soviet Gulag (a labor camp where people are enslaved to strengthen the empire's stranglehold) with no hope of parole.

And, of course, Coruscant – the endless canyons of glass and steel like gyri and sulci on a giant evil brain where immoral machinations are hatched and few care about the consequences on the lives of billions across the galaxy. The brilliance of this show is that it depicts the Empire's squeeze on the ruling class (as has been the case in every totalitarian regime on Earth). Those indifferent to the suffering on other worlds (I'm looking at you Perrin Fertha) need only wait until the Empire's attention turns to them.

At the center of it all is Ferrix, a world whose bricks and mortar have visceral connections to its people's history. This is a world of laborers and techs...the galaxy's smelting pot where old ships come to die. Think *salt of the Earth* when it comes to its people. If Coruscant's the brain, then Ferrix is the galaxy's heart, and it's here that the rebellion we come to know in Star Wars starts to gel. Even Luthen Rael (Stellan Skarsgård), the scheming and paranoid founding father of the rebellion who came there to kill Cassian, found his greatest asset on Ferrix.

Cassian spends most of the series in a state of denial. He prefers to run than fight, to live a lie, than stand up for the truth. Each world he visits is one piece of his education in despotism, building the inevitable desire to strike back at the galactic empire. *Andor* is the story of Cassian's awakening. The education culminates with his mother's funeral and her call to arms, though the savvy watcher probably believes he'd already decided before returning to Ferrix. Once he secured his friends' safety, he offered the rest of his life to Luthen and the cause.

Andor, the series is an odd bird. Full disclosure, I had not planned to view the series again and begrudgingly viewed it a second time to write this piece. But as the episodes went by, I was surprised at how much more I liked it on the second viewing. There are too many slow parts to pull off in half-hour installments. However, when bingeing, the slowness is less noticeable. The character-building episodes (i.e., slow) are like the mortar that holds the meaty brick episodes together. If you converted *Andor* to six one-hour

shows from 12 half-hours (though the finale was longer), you'd eliminate the "slow" episodes altogether, as each of the shows would now have an exciting element in it.

This series brings maturity to *Star Wars*. It's closer to real science fiction when you remove the black knights and wizards. But it does not detract from the movies we love. Instead, it crystallizes the stakes Luke, Leia, and Han are fighting for because we know what's going on in the corners of the galaxy - something that is not seen in the films. Luke really must defeat Vader and the Emperor for the sake of Bix Caleen, Cinta Kaz, Kino Loy, or Tay Kolma. Because of *Andor*, we know who they're fighting for.



BIO

Edward Lazellari is the author of the Guardians of Aandor series from Tor Books (No relation to Star Wars). He's written for Marvel Comics, *Playboy* Magazine, and currently lives in New Jersey with his family.



Less Fan-Service or Better Storytelling? by John Coxon

Andor is the best Star Wars live-action television show so far by a country mile. Everyone is in agreement on that; there's widespread acclaim for the show which is well-deserved. Ditto *Rogue One*, which is beloved by many fans of the franchise and again, rightly so.

I do find a lot of the arguments about *why* somewhat bewildering, though. One argument I keep seeing is that the reason *Andor* and *Rogue One* are good is because they have less fan-service, and a lot of these arguments focus on cameo appearances from the rest of the *Star Wars* universe.

This seems a little bizarre to me. I'd argue that *Andor* brings as many characters in from the rest of the universe as many *Star Wars* shows do; we get a couple of brief appearances from Saw Gerrera, who first crops up in *Clone Wars* before appearing in *Rebels* and *Rogue One*; we get Mon Mothma as a main character; and we get Wulff Yularen, who it's lovely to see appearing in something like this. I audibly squeed at the fact that we *finally* get to see the ISB being, well, the ISB, after years of never seeing them in action on-screen. In turn, *Rogue One* featured Grand Moff Tarkin, Princess Leia, and Darth Vader. *Rogue One* gave us KX-series droid and Shoretrooper action figures, and *Andor* will undoubtedly give us B2EMO toys and models of Luther's spacecraft. This isn't an exhaustive list.

Compare and contrast to the other live-action shows that have been made. *The Mandalorian* was Disney's first live-action *Star Wars* show. We get Baby Yoda and an IG-series droid, which I think are the two core pieces of fan-service in terms of referencing the rest of the universe. The second season of *The Mandalorian* introduces more characters that we know from the wider universe – Boba Fett, Bo-Katan Kryze, Ahsoka Tano, and (finally) Luke Skywalker, each of which feels more directly like fan-service than the first season. (I'll agree that the final scenes of the second season do feel a lot like fan-service; they also feel like a direct reference to the final scenes with Darth Vader from *Rogue One*, and I would argue they're one of the better parts of the season.) Kryze, Tano, and Fett's appearances all make as much sense to me as Mon Mothma or Saw Gerrera appearing in *Andor*; *The Mandalorian* is a tale of a Mandalorian and a potential Jedi navigating the universe, and so bringing other Mandalorians and other Jedi into the story makes sense in the same way that *Andor* is a tale of the Rebellion, and so bringing in members of the Rebellion makes sense.

Obi-Wan Kenobi also has some fan-service, but again, that fan-service takes the form of seeing a prequel to *A New Hope* and the way in which the period between the trilogies unfolds, very much in the same manner as *Andor* and *Rogue One*. This time the fan-service is spending time with Leia, Obi-Wan, Owen, and Beru. We also get the Inquisitors, who make an appearance from *Rebels* and *Jedi: Fallen Order* but I'm not sure how you tell a tale of Jedi between the prequel and original trilogies without including the Inquisitors, who are, after all, explicitly there to hunt the remaining Jedi. (This seems analogous to using the ISB in *Andor*.) I enjoyed *Obi-Wan Kenobi* more than I enjoyed *The Mandalorian*, but it still wasn't great; the people in it

are doing good work, but the overarching plot doesn't make as much sense as it should and it shies away from some of the truly interesting analogies it draws. For instance, in the same way that *Andor* is showing us the realities of colonialism and imperialism, *Obi-Wan Kenobi* could have talked about the slave trade with the Underground Railroad; it doesn't. If it had, it might have been a much richer piece.

This brings me to my central point, which is that the reason I like *Andor* better than *The Mandalorian* and *Obi-Wan Kenobi* (and, for that matter, the reason I like *Rogue One* better than *Solo*) is nothing to do with the fan-service or with the cameos. It isn't the fact that we get to see Saw Gerrera or a Y-Wing/HWK-290 Ugly or Wulff Yularen. It's because it's a tightly-told story about interesting, complex issues which really focuses on extremely interesting characters played by supremely talented and well-directed actors. It uses the Star Wars universe, with all its texture and worldbuilding, and it gives us a story in that framework that tells us something about the world we live in, and it does it in an utterly fascinating and captivating way. Every character, even the ones that we find repulsive on an ideological level, is completely compelling to the audience in a way that has not been true in any of the other live-action *Star Wars* shows. Saw Gerrera's appearance is better than Ahsoka Tano's appearance not because using Saw is less fan-service than using Ahsoka, but because Saw's character is portrayed interestingly on the screen and Ahsoka is portrayed much, much less interestingly — a real shame, because as we saw from the final stages of *Clone Wars* and *Rebels* that's a character with a lot of potential!

So I would argue that *Andor* isn't better because it has less fan-service and fewer links to the rest of the galaxy. *Andor* is better because it elevates the entire universe to be better through storytelling on a level superior to possibly any previous *Star Wars* content, and it elevates its fan-service to that level, too.



**Do you realize what you've set in motion?
People will suffer.**

Jack 'Gunner' McCarthy and Captain of Intelligence

Mary McGrath

By James Bacon

While conversing with *Journey Planet* stalwart, co-editor, copy editor and contributor Pádraig Ó Méalóid, I mentioned that one of the characters from *Andor* had served the Empire and then the Rebellion. In *Andor*, we have Taramyn Barcona who was a Storm Trooper and was a rebel involved in the Aldhani heist. I had noted that I wanted to compare Andor to the Irish Rebellion, and Pádraig recalled for me how his maternal grandfather John McCarthy had served in the British Army and also in the Irish Volunteers or the Irish Republican Army.

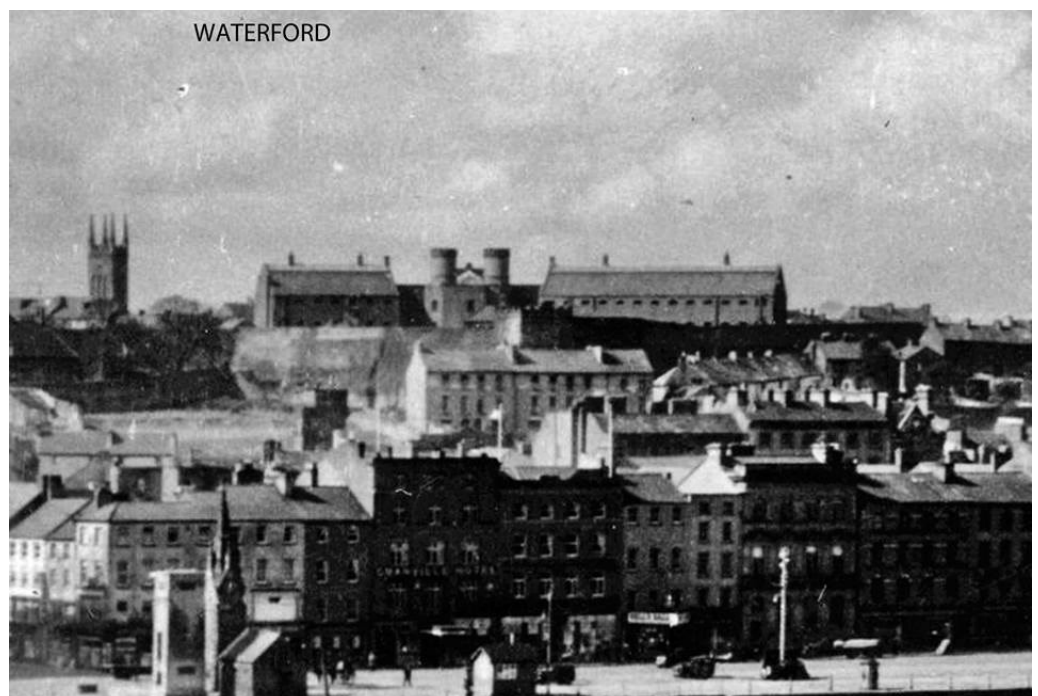
Wedge Antilles, Biggs Darklighter, Bodhi Rook, Finn, Han Solo all served the fictional Empire and then fought on the side of the rebellion. Various *Star Wars* wiki pages list over two hundred and fifty such characters. *Star Wars* has thousands of publications, beyond the films, but it is noticeable that many characters have seen the Empire for what they were.

Born on the 1st July 1899 in Waterford, John McCarthy, known as Jack, went to Wales at the age of 16 to work in a steel mill, and subsequently joined the 1st Rifle Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment. Jack fought in the Third Battle of Ypres, also known as the Battle of Passchendaele, which took place from the end of July until mid-November 1917, with huge loss of life and a gain of ultimately five miles. Jack was stationed in Germany in 1919 as part of the occupying forces and I assume was demobilised and he returned to Wales.

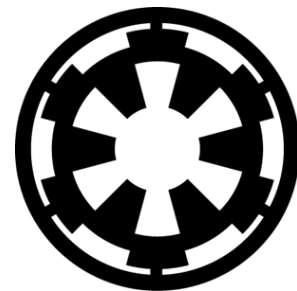
He joined the Irish Republican Army (known now as the Old IRA) in 1920. Here is what he had to say about that:

"In 1920 to March 1921 I was engaged in collection of arms and funds."

I pause here, to note that while we are talking about comparisons to a TV series, this simple line explains a lot. I take from his next statement that he was doing the previous in Wales or England. Let's just think about that and how it compares.



Jack continues "From the time I landed in Waterford in March 1921 I placed myself at the disposal of my officer and was ready for any action. Walter Cullen was my company officer and it was to him that I reported. For a period, I instructed in Machine Gunnery at Dungarvan and Waterford and formed a machine gun section at both places." The importance to the IRA of men who were trained and able to train in the use of weapons and warfare cannot be underestimated.



The fight for Independence saw a win that many did not feel was acceptable, that of the partition of Ireland, with an Irish Free State of 26 counties and the remaining 6 counties separated and formed into Northern Ireland, a constituent part of the United Kingdom. This was a difficult time, as those who had fought for freedom now were tasked with deciding whether they were happy with the treaty and Free State or those against it who had wanted a free Ireland, all of it a Republic. It split the country in a most ferocious way.

Jack sided with the Anti-Treaty IRA, The Republicans. This put him at odds with the Free State Army who had been armed by the British, who had withdrawn. Waterford underwent a siege in July 1922. The city is protected by the River Suir, a wide river, and at the time there was a 700 ft long bridge, with an 80 foot-wide lifting mechanism operated on the Cantilever Schertzer system.

Jack was stationed with a Machine Gun in Ballybricken Jail and a battle occurred, involving shelling and sniping that started on Tuesday 18th July and ended on Friday 21st. The position in the jail was one of the last to fall. Jack McCarthy escaped, and was involved in other incidents, before being arrested at Butlerstown Castle. He met Mary McGrath, who was the Captain of Intelligence in the Anti-Treaty Cumann na mBan, and they subsequently married.

The 'Gunner' became a name he was known by, because of 'how fiercely and bravely he fought in Waterford in Ballybricken Jail' and this was what he was known as.

Jack's own words are that he "fought with machine gun during Siege and other places until captured in arms and imprisoned."

End.

Waterford Women of the Revolution. Chrissy Knight-O'Connor and Eddie Cantwell <https://www.facebook.com/revolutionarywaterfordwomen/>

Shadows from the Trenches: Veterans of the Great War and the Irish Revolution (1918-1923). Emmanuel Destenay

Shadows of the British Empire

By Dan Hartland

Andor depicts colonialism on a number of levels and across a range of analogues, but in especially the first season's sixth episode, "The Eye", we witness interactions between Imperial officers and local populations – as well as between Imperial officers and each other – which evoke very strongly the positionalities of the British in India. When we first meet the Aldhani garrison's Imperial Commandant, Jayhold Beehaz, he is delivering a lecture on the Dhani people to a visiting engineer from the colonial metropolis, Coruscant: "The Dhani," he intones, "breed a sad combination of traits that make them particularly vulnerable to manipulation." This perniciously evil form of racism is familiar. In India, the British practiced a formal policy known as *divide et impera*, believing the fruits of their brute con-artistry to be the just desserts of their intellectual superiority. A group of Dhani are, as Beehaz speaks, making a pilgrimage to the sacred temple that sits at the walls of the garrison. As Pankaj Mishra has noted, the British, too, "allowed [the Mughals] to hold shows of pomp and pageantry" without respecting the customs and traditions to which they were nominally attached (Mishra, *The Ruins of Empire*, p. 34). This contempt is itself rationalised using that same racism; Beehaz, for example, is obsessed with remarking upon the "stench" of the Dhani.

The Imperial officers also bicker amongst themselves. In the arc's second episode, "The Ace Forgets", Tigo begs his superior, Blevin, to name him Prefect – not for the pay but the prestige. Similarly, Beehaz is desperate to impress the visiting engineer (for whom the garrison has been mapping the valley, another echo of the British Empire's ruthless enthusiasm for cartography), since the latter has the power to promote the former. ("You won't charm him," Beehaz is told by the double-agent Lieutenant Gorn; "It won't be for want of trying!" comes the shameless reply). Beehaz is particularly keen to achieve advancement because his wife – who lives at the garrison – "whines" about the unglamorous "provincial" posting. This was another common, and contemptuous, trope of imperial life in the Raj.

Yet, in its choice of name for the people over whom Beehaz claims suzerainty, *Andor* signals their dignity: "Dhani" is Hindi for "the rich." As Angus Maddison demonstrated for the OECD in 2006, India was when the East India Company first arrived on its shores incomparably wealthier than the odd little backwater of Britain; culturally and historically – if not, thanks directly to colonial rule, economically – it would remain so. The Dhani embody this status in their very name. And in convincing one of the most sympathetic actors of his generation, David Hayman, to play the Dhani leader – a part with a half-dozen lines spoken in a fictional language – the show works to grant an unsailable authority to a people whom the Empire are seeking to rob.

For theft is at the heart of the colonial project, and *Andor* happily reverses this in its rebels' mission to steal the sector's quarterly imperial payroll from under Beehaz's nose. This is where the series most clearly breaks with a focus on the colonisers, which has until recently been perpetuated by the literature of "British India" in particular. It chooses instead to foreground the colonised. Alas, Vel's band of rebels are not Dhani themselves. But the loot they seek is all that the Empire's presence on Aldhani is meant to produce; taking it back is an act of profound resistance. In the first episode of

the arc, “Aldhani”, Vel tells Cassian that there were once 40,000 Dhanis on the now-deserted hills around the garrison, but they have all been forcibly relocated to the lowland “Enterprise Zone”. This echo of the Highland clearances also mirrors the Indian experience – which, as Shashi Tharoor has put it, “stripped farmers of their ownership of the lands they had tilled for generations” (Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*, p. 2). When the Dhani arrive for their ritual, they undertake it under the watch of Imperial guns. This is how colonialism works: displacement, enforced “pax”, extraction.



In interviews, Tony Gilroy has insisted that *Andor* lifts references from across history: Cassian is a young Stalin robbing banks in Georgia, the Senate is Rome deploying units of legionnaires to far-flung and distant provinces, the Rebellion is the Continental Congress. This lack of specificity can blunt the force of *Andor*'s analysis, but as we can see in the Aldhani arc there is a clearer precedent for the action. Even on Ferrix in these three episodes, we see a privatised agent of empire subsumed by the nervously greedy state, as happened to the East India Company following the *Ghadar* (or Mutiny) of 1857; when Beehaz tells Gorn that he'll “hang” for his treachery, in what botched system of retribution are we located but imperial Britain's?

In the context of Western SFF TV, this placement of the colonised at the heart of a story feel fresh and vital. *Andor* has its limits – in the figure of Luthen, for instance, it is probably overly invested in the Great Man theory of history – but on the subject of how empire works, what it is, on the thought processes that power and are shaped by it, the show is unusually engaged. To be sure, Vel's Aldhani cell uses an indigenous ritual as cover for their work, themselves instrumentalising the Dhanis to further a cause alien to them. But the cell's members are neither space wizards nor their sidekicks. They have themselves been colonised: Cassian's planet overrun, Cinta's family murdered, Taramyn dragooned into service, Nemik's manifesto emerging from the fight against authority imposed by fiat. It matters that the casting is multi-racial here, and it's significant that both Imperial rebels – Taramyn and Gorn – are of colour. *Andor* consistently spotlights the action of the subjugated against the subjugators. The Cambridge academic Priyamvada Gopal has argued persuasively that “we can re-vision colonial subjects as agents” (*Insurgent Empire*, p. 25). In *Andor*'s star war, the colonised have come to fight the Empire.

Oppression is the mask of fear. Remember that.

Bio

Dan Hartland is Reviews Editor at *Strange Horizons*.

The Sounds of Andor

By James Bacon

I love what Nicholas Britell has done with the music of *Andor*, and the soundtracks are somewhat important to me. Following on from John Williams and Ludwig Göransson cannot have been easy, but Nicholas goes about his work on *Andor* with a level of brilliance and difference that really pleased me. The series has three soundtracks, and I was eagerly awaiting them in turn. I was impatient as we came up to the expected release date at the beginning of December; I found a video of Britell playing the music from the last episode on the piano, talking about how the soundtrack would be ready soon, and it was amazing.

I watched and listened again to the music, but to form a cohesive understanding, I will use the titles of the tracks as I speak about them.

See—<https://twitter.com/i/status/1598382865955405824>

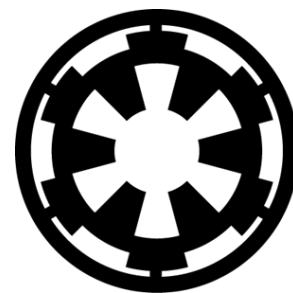
The synthesiser sound, followed by increasingly loud strings, building up to more sorrowful strings, is a great start to *Andor*. I felt that it was different to Star Wars, and then it eased into the sound of rain and synthesiser as it eased into the darkness. “Niamos! (Morlana Club Mix)” was very atmospheric: the back alleys with globe windows, the seedy side of an industrial town, and a man entering a brothel, looking for his sister. The futuristic dance music had a harshness, a dirtiness and heaviness to it, but with a lift in the synth at the end, a steady dance beat. In between the music did a lovely job, extenuating the situations, heightening the tension. There was continually something to it. Even Rix Road had a very beautiful yet possibly sad sound (was it cello and then strings?) and then again building, and coming to silence, with other unidentifiable instruments easing out. Yet the Episode 2 theme had fewer drums and more strings to it and Episode 3 had plucking, a more echoey sound with strings present alongside other percussion. How could it be that every episode's theme was slightly different, yet was complementing the work of all involved? Episode 4 had percussion, electric guitar, electronica sounds, cello, strings, and drums: each was different.

There was something reminiscent of *The X-Files* in the sound of the ISB. Maybe it was the four notes, even though I am not sure what those notes were played on. It didn't have that percussive sound or hardness to it: maybe it was a vibraphone with the pulsator off, or maybe it was a marimba. Anyhow, it held that different sound alongside the strings – possibly not as sinister as I would have liked. Yet, when a variation of it was later used for “Where's My Starpath Unit?” there was definitely a lot more percussion going on and it was sinister, deeper, darker, and heavier on the strings.

“Luthen of Coruscant” is a beautiful piece, full of sadness and at times even hope. It is a crafty piece of strength and emotion. This contrasts with the modern feel to “Syril Suite”, which definitely has some interesting percussion and woodwind going on: quickening at the right moment, bringing in a faster pace and again rising in strength.

Yet it is the sound of the guitar against the strings for the “Mon Mothma” piece which blew my mind. It is such a piece, building in strength and the

frenetic strings and noise increasing and suddenly as it builds, just falling off the edge. This is possibly my favourite piece. It feels so precarious, on a knife edge, full of drama and apprehension: anxiety, even. I loved it, and it says so much for one of the best actors in this series: it is hard to know whether Genevieve O'Reilly or Denise Gough gives the more impressive performance. You know when you want to applaud the baddie, nay, when you want to boo the baddie, that it is a performance beyond worth. How Gough manipulated so many to empathise with Dedra Meero, and then reneges on that so beautifully as we see Meero for the monster that she is, a brutal torturer and heartless Imperial. It is hard to know whether O'Reilly or Gough captured me more; both are so strong in a cast which are supreme actors,



"The Valley" is a fabulous piece, riffing off the theme tune that seems to permeate through it. It has a slow rise, but it rises, and quickens and builds and creates excitement and even as it falls away, it does so gently. By the Episode 6 theme we have stronger strings, definitely a xylophone and other unusual percussion creating a clock ticking sound at the end, another variation, but so effective. "Kleya" sounds so different, mixing a hand-played rhythm with synth and other sounds: it's hard to know what Britell was using when he made this.

The second use of Niamos!, in "Niamos! (Coruscant Lounge Mix)", caught me off-guard. It's as if it is a lounge mix of the previous very hard Niamos! club mix, and then we get "Niamos! (Galaxy Mix)" which veers into electronica; it's a much heavier, electronic beat full of feedback. I was just so impressed that the same tune was be utilised in very different settings and so well.

"Narkina 5" had this slightly off-kilter feel to it, yet oppressive, and slightly militaristic and fitted the idea of prison so well, as it rose to a finality.

By Episode 9 we have a very electronic and synth based main title theme, not so much of the classical to be heard at all, unlike Episode 10 which starts with strings and synth again. It has a very heavy cello but it falls off really nicely and softens with a little afterward.

"My name is Kino Loy" is a fabulous piece, again for a fabulous acting performance. There is a level of gravitas and presence to the piece: the strings, the drum beat, the horns trumpeting and rising victoriously before





giving way to the synth and beat. It gives a little sense of efficiency and industry which for me was everything about Kino Loy and Andy Serkis. Serkis is a performer who has always impressed, but here just made his mark. I was gutted when he said he could not swim: was this to be the end of Kino Loy? But the orchestral sounds – the wide and huge sound that he got – give us one hope that there is a chance, as the strings chase and quicken, that he escaped.

I loved “The Daughters of Ferrix”, soft to start, thoughtful, present easing in. “Your Mother is Dead” utilises the *Andor* theme, but slowly – very slowly – with heartfelt strings, and a sad pace.

Episode 12 of course has that odd sound, that as soon as I heard, I loved. A drum beat and then the horns, which I felt sounded like a brass band – a marching band, a workman’s band – it sounded familiar in its slightly imperfect but wonderful sound. It reminds me of bands I have enjoyed, be it the Egham Band, the Royal Holloway Brass Band, or the Great Western Railway Military Band: I just was surprised but immediately liked it.

Episode 12 has some amazing pieces. “Clem’s Stone” is so solemn, low and sad, but like all the songs that start low it rises, like *Andor* it climbs, climbs, climbs. It makes you wonder how imbued Britell became in the series, how he knew exactly what was wanted, what was needed here? This was sadness. “Manifesto” seemed to have a hint of the theme about it, but as I watched, as I heard the sounds of the band, we came to “Forming Up/Unto Stone We Are”. It was powerful, a funeral dirge that paced slowly with the sense of grief and lamentation coming through. The instruments ever so hard in points – the drums and brass, and then suddenly the pause and change and horns. Jesus if the soundtrack of the whole bloody series is not the tune then being played. It made me feel so much all at the same time – hopeful, for the moment, that all that was about to happen would come off – but it was also a sad piece. Upon watching Bix, it was like it suddenly changed to a pipe band, a marching pipe band with gusto and strength: challenging, no longer sad, but ready.

“The Rebellion Suite” at the end is an amazing finish. Again the full orchestra feels like it is being deployed. It is not like “Emperor’s Throne Room” from *Return of the Jedi*: it is not a truly triumphant piece, even though we have a triumphant set of horns. It sets itself apart by falling down to piano and strings and reminds us that the battle is only beginning and then it brings in those drums and percussion and reminds us that this is a war and it goes again to the width of a full orchestra and we feel the hopefulness and light and the building of triumphant strings, but it evens out and falls away into silence.

The music was just one part of an amazing and brilliantly choreographed and acted drama, an incredible TV series, with fabulous acting and writing and directing that we could only have dreamed of.



What did you find most compelling about Andor as a series?

Joelle Renstrom: The grittiness and authenticity. Some other Star Wars series could be accused of pandering to fans and of consisting of a fair bit of fluff, but Andor represents a departure from that and a commitment to real storytelling and plot/character development. I initially was skeptical of this show because I barely remembered the character from Rogue One. I'm sure I'm in the minority on this, but I found the personality- and dialogue-less character of the Mandalorian impossible to invest in, and I was worried that was happen in this show. But I was totally wrong. As with Rogue One, viewers can't assume their favorite characters will live, can't expect a cameo from a Jedi, and can't expect happy endings. That's my kind of show!

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: This is a hard one because there's so much to love about it. The dialogue and monologues, especially Stellan Skarsgard's monologue in episode 10. Gave me goosebumps. There were so many quotable quotes. Also, the MC, Cassian himself, his mistakes to be precise. The way he stumbled from bad decision to bad decision. It was executed in ways that seemed so reasonable and believable, and understandable. I could easily see him being any one of us. It wasn't the wild, unbelievable errors of characters lazy writing creates so we can have drama. It was good writing.

Who are your favorite characters in Andor? Why?

Joelle Renstrom: I love Maarva, largely because Fiona Shaw is a goddess. I was hoping she had faked her death to stoke a revolt, but she had another trick up her sleeve for that finale. I love it when older female characters kick butt like that. I also love Syril's mom, Eedy. She reminds me a bit of Avarsarala on the Expanse. She's chipping away at Syril, ensuring his position as the "low" character versus Meera's "high" character, thereby guaranteeing that the Syril and Meera will intersect and likely flip in status. I think Syril will end up as a criminal mastermind who exemplifies, among other things, the cruel ways childhood/parental mistreatment can manifest.

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: Cassian. For reasons mentioned above. I could relate, understand, condone his mistakes. His growth was measured and reasonable. His desperation was real. He was well written. Mon Motha was great. In over her heard, desperate but brave. And Luthen Rael (Stellan Skarsgard, brilliant), beautifully ruthless. Just what was needed at a time like that. Oh and I loved the Cassian's mother's droid. Cuz it was unbelievably cute. *tears*

What were some of your favorite easter eggs in the Andor series?

Joelle Renstrom: The bit-by-bit building of the Death Star before that final after-credits reveal! There were many shots of bots working on a bigger project, and I had my suspicions throughout but we didn't know for sure until the very end.



Was there a key moment in the series that most resonated with you? Why?

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: Luthen Rael's (Stellan Skarsgard) monologue. It defined him so strongly and the show. Also, lots of pivotal moments with Cassian. When he was thrown in jail, it proved so much how you can't escape a bad system by laying low. You have to fight it. The moment Kino Loy decided to break out with Cassian. These were all intense, pivotal moments for those characters, they encapsulated what the show was about, the moments where we make the inevitable shift from survival to resistance. The peak of the journey there.

What are your top 3 predictions for Andor Series 2?

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki:

1. Cassian is a Jedi apprentice.
2. Stellan Skarsgard is a Jedi

There's a Sith figure hiding somewhere in all this. Come on, it's still Star Wars.

Maarva's speech never speaks of hope or rebellion. Did it resonate for you within the greater context of the Star Wars universe?

Joelle Renstrom: One doesn't have to use those exact words for listeners to know just what they mean. Someone like Maarva would know that certain words would trigger retaliation or persecution, so she deftly avoids those while stoking passion and fomenting rebellion. Her wisdom is so evident in her word choice. I also appreciate the Leia projection reference; just as Leia's warning via R2D2 set a series of events in motion, so too did Maarva's words.

Are there any parallels or issues in Andor that relate to our current world? If so, how and what are the potential implications?

Joelle Renstrom: There's the obvious, overarching parallel that all humans know and sometimes fight against their version of an "evil empire." Whether that's an oppressive regime, a invading army, government-sponsored genocide, or the confining capitalistic systems we have in place, viewers know what it's like to fight an uphill battle against an unfathomably powerful force. Similarly, we all have to reckon with the question of how much we as individuals, or in groups of like-minded citizens, can change those systems. We all have to decide whether it's worth it to fight, protest, boycott, etc, or whether to take the path of least resistance.

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: Andor resonates with me on a very strong level, as I suspect it will with most colonised people. And Africa is possibly the most colonized continent on earth. The elements of empire were so familiar. The erasure of culture, theft of land and resources; The Ferrix, the Kenari. How the people were exploited and used for labour in the prison is reminiscent of the prison industrial complex of today that swallows Black people whole and spits out their bones after their bodies are mined of all labour. The way that facism forces people to leave their homes in an attempt to find a semblance of peace, away from it all. And how the horrid, grinding machinery still finds and crushes their hopes and freedom, how they eventually realize at the last that there is no escape, they must fight this.

Other things as well, how evil is largely enabled by normal, everyday people who are cogs in the machinery, regular people embroiled in a job of maintaining the crucial elements of empire. They aren't the people firing the blasters or pushing the buttons on the death star. But crucial nonetheless. All the different groups of people in a system like this; those trying to keep their head low and get paid, those looking to benefit from the system, and advance in it, all the different kinds of perpetrators and victims, sometimes so intertwined you can't tell one from the other. All these were elements I was unfortunately familiar with being from a place that's been subjected to centuries of slavery, colonialism and neo colonialism. My late grandfather was hiding from colonial tax collectors because he was too poor to pay the colonial tax. It wasn't so long ago, in my parents' lifetimes, that Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule. And due to ongoing neo colonialism and economic/social subjugation, the empire is still very much with us. These are the things that make Andor so real, so relatable and profound to me and people like me. It tells our story, in such a beautiful way. It sees us.

What was your first Star Wars experience? What impact did it have on you as a fan, creative, or professional?

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: I read the Star Wars novels long before I watched the films. The ones about Mon Motha, Mara Jade, Princess Leia, Admiral Thrawn. I especially liked the Jedi Academy series by Kevin J Anderson. *Andor* brings us in contact with some of those characters and tells one of the earlier stories in those works we don't see on screen. One of the reasons I like it so well. It goes beyond the swashbuckling, into true, old, well-wrought Star Wars lore. Something Hollywood and big screen works don't do so much of.

Is this the first Star Wars series that you really liked? If so, why is that and what appeals to you most about *Andor*?

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: Oh I liked a few others. *The Mandalorian*, *Obiwan* and *Boba Fett*.

Do you have another favorite Star Wars series? How does *Andor* compare to it?

Oghenechovwe Ekpeki: I liked *The Mandalorian* and *Bobba Fett*. But none has the heart and soul that *Andor* has.

Bios for Instant Fanzine Contributors:

[Joelle Renstrom](#) is a science writer for publications such as [Slate](#), [Wired](#), [Undark](#), [Aeon](#), and others. She teaches writing at Boston University.

Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki is a Nebula, Otherwise, Nommo, British and World Fantasy award winner. Multiple Hugo, Locus, Sturgeon and British Science Fiction award finalist. CanCon 22 and ICFA 23 Guest of Honour.

A Grown-up Galaxy Far Far Away

By Derek McCaw

Conversations about Star Wars, part one:

"Should I be watching *Andor*?" a friend asked. "It was so slooow in the first episode." As enthusiastically as possible over an instant message, I answered yes. My enthusiasm went so far as to comment it may be the best *Star Wars* series yet. As I thought about it, though, I had to admit that the first episode had given me the same feeling as my friend. Yet I kept with it after [the first three episodes](#) (all dropped at once on Disney+), mainly to see if in the second week it would pick up.

It did, sort of. More likely, it drew me in. Something about it just felt different than other series set in a galaxy far, far away. For instance, *The Mandalorian*, where the protagonist doesn't say much, but what he does say matters. In contrast, characters on *Andor* talk a lot – and seemingly about a lot of nothing. They're mostly concerned with getting through the day, not the galaxy.

Characterizations are different, more lived in, more real. Our heroes, such as they are, aren't flat or easily defined – "roguish pilot," "naive farm-boy," "nervous droid," etc. Diego Luna's Cassian Andor might one day be more roguish – it's a valid interpretation of his character in *Rogue One* – but for now, he's many things. Mostly, he's just trying to get by in an increasingly oppressive system. If anyone in *Andor* is aware of Order 66 and the fall of the Jedi, we have no idea. Shockingly, after several hours of television spent with a wide range of characters good, evil, and somewhere in between, we've never even heard someone talk about the Force. This is Star Wars?



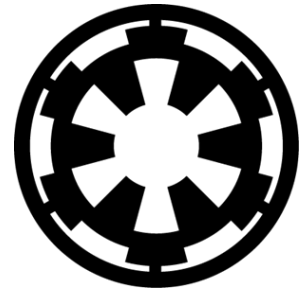
Conversations about Star Wars, part two:

"...*Star Wars* and similar films of the seventies made it possible for the electorate to sort of put their minds on hold and go with their feelings, more than they ever had before. It was a real turning point in American culture."

– [Howard Chaykin, Fanboy Planet interview, May 26, 2004](#)

I had grown up in awe of Howard Chaykin, the artist for the first 7 issues of Marvel's original *Star Wars* comic book, the first 6 of which adapted the movie. It was his later work that had gotten to me: the prescient social satire *American Flagg!*, the confusing (to me) but gripping *Time*², along with wild

takes on *The Shadow* and *Blackhawk* for DC. When I sat in the audience at a WonderCon panel in 2004, and Chaykin said he didn't care about *Star Wars*, I knew I had to have a conversation about it.



Though Chaykin's work helped cement the beginnings of the Skywalker Saga into popular culture, it was an assignment, not a passion. He thought he was too old to be swept away by it, and it was a simplistic story of good vs. evil. Go ahead, go back and watch what is now *A New Hope*. It's exciting, but simplistic. Though George Lucas played a bit with the perception of black and white, that was in color schemes, not in actual morality. Though it may be a story with "[...aliens from a thousand worlds](#)," the characters we follow are recognizably human and mostly American. Deep down, the good guys are red, white, and blue, except for their milk. That's just blue.

Chaykin had a point. Lucas later muddled things a bit with the prequel trilogy, and Disney at least nodded to diversity with the sequel trilogy, but those main 9 movies are still simple. (Credit to *The Last Jedi* for trying to push a bit, and to *Rogue One* for showing there's a real price to be paid in a rebellion.)

The Disney+ TV series have been attempting more complexity. Both *The Mandalorian* and *The Book of Boba Fett* gave more respect to the indigenous peoples of Tatooine, both Jawas and Tusken — known in the movies only by the epithet "Sand People." For years, comics and novels had done what they could, but none of those works had the cultural reach of movies and TV.

We've spent almost fifty years visiting a galaxy far, far away, and *Andor* feels like the first time we've been given time to explore worlds and cultures, to learn rituals that are explained over time, and to understand what it means to be under the thumb of a remote but rising fascist government. How long do you just go along until you realize that you no longer have a choice?

Conversations about *Star Wars*, part three:



One night, I came home from running errands to find my wife on the couch watching the season finale of *Andor*, which I'd seen earlier. She was fighting back tears. "*Andor* is so good," she said. I nodded, and stood by the couch, not wanting to break the spell of an actor delivering a rousing speech about why the people of their world need to stand up to the Empire. (It was the second of two rousing monologues given to stellar actors whose presence simmered for several episodes before these magnificent gut punches.)

Once it was over, my reaction was "none of these characters should be action figures." But of course they are, because it's still *Star Wars*. [Cassian Andor](#)

[himself has been cast in plastic](#) by Hasbro a few times, but the foppish Luthen Rael (Stellan Skarsgård) isn't a character we want to imagine kids want to pretend to be. Though I'll stop pretending; in another sense, Chaykin didn't go far enough in realizing that *Star Wars* opened the door for us to keep our toys longer than previous generations. They just got more intricate, fragile, and expensive.

But the people – and they are *people* – in *Andor* aren't playing. We experience them in their mundanity. It's not that they don't want to get involved; most of them don't understand there's anything in which to be involved until it might be too late. If they keep their heads down and their noses clean, eventually these times will pass. But series creator Tony Gilroy reminds us that times don't pass as a natural order of things. Someone always has to get involved; someone always has to make sacrifices.

We see it in a younger Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly), navigating her culture and her role in an increasingly powerless Senate to secretly fight for freedom, or at least fund it. We see it in Luthen Rael, a chameleon spy-master who buries his guilt as easily as his alter ego. We see it in Bix Caleen (Adria Arjona), a friend of Cassian tortured just because she's a friend of Cassian – even though the Empire already has imprisoned Cassian and doesn't know it. The fledgling Empire is omnipresent, evil, and stupid. But they're winning.

Obi-Wan Kenobi told Luke to trust his feelings, which was fine for a tribute to kiddie matinees. (Sorry, but that's what *Star Wars* originally was, and we weren't wrong to love it.)

But *Andor* doesn't allow us to put our minds on hold. It builds. It shows us (fictional) real lives and the consequences of them.

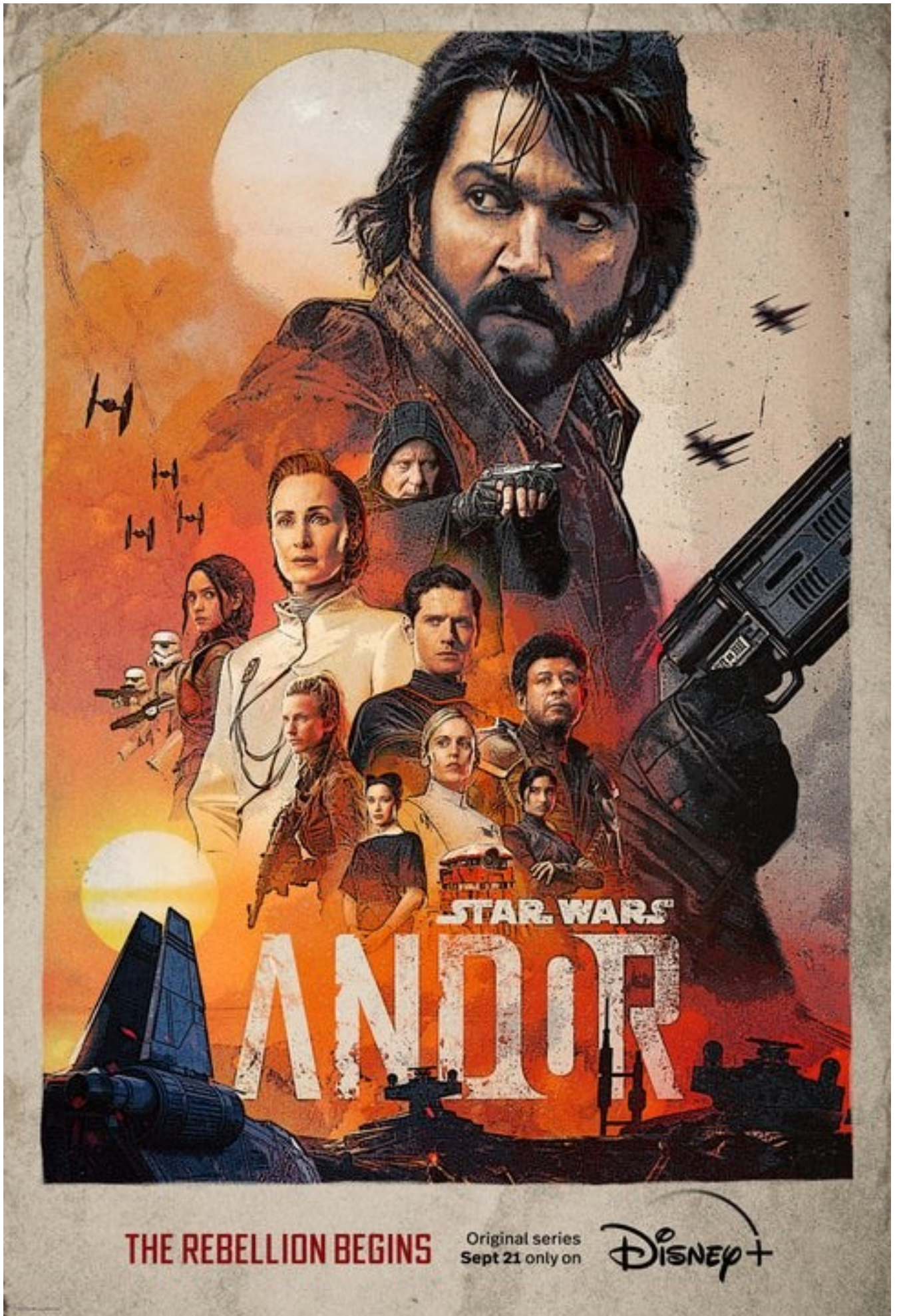
I talked with another friend about it just before Election Day. (Coincidental but germane, perhaps.) I told them that *Andor* really demonstrated how easily fascism can take hold, with people not even realizing they're cooperating. My friend answered back, "I came here from Nicaragua. I already watched it happen to my country. I don't need to watch *Andor* to be told how it happens."

Maybe you don't, either. If you're a *Star Wars* fan, you already know how it all ends – with fireworks in the sky on a thousand worlds, and Ewoks singing and dancing. *Andor* reminds us there isn't a happily ever after, really. There's only people, doing the best they can. Sure, it's fiction. But the best fiction makes us think.

With *Andor*, you can't put your mind on hold.

BIO

Derek McCaw is a writer, actor, podcaster, and genius, as well as the editor of FanboyPlanet.com. This work also appears at https://fanboyplanet.com/a-grown-up-galaxy-far-far-away/?fbclid=IwAR00uMMsffSjfa_s-E596rDi3AFX3JUGxKWYLYPwmlxz_u0xa9zZQsXz184



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Editorial

By James Bacon

Here we are, at the end. I should put on The Doors as I write. OK. Can I write this editorial in the 11 minutes that Jim and the gang can play their song? Well, my fingers sure are typing. (Nope, it went onto John Barry's *Space Lazer Battle* and *Capsule in Space* and then onto *Aces High*, *Battle of Britain*, *The Dam Busters*, *Where Eagles Dare*, *A Bridge too Far* and then *Hymn to the Fallen*, which is a lovely song to end on and I just might.)

It has been an interesting year, we have had much success, and I am grateful that you felt we were worthy of a 2022 Hugo Award nomination in the Fanzine category. I was grateful that Chris and I could be there with Erin and Chuck and Jean and Sara and Vanessa and Steven; and wasn't that all just nice? Although it would have been even more lovely if all co-editors could have made it to Chicago for Chicon 8.

2022 was busy, and we had seven issues. Although two of those were originally going to be 2021 issues. Indeed, we have four issues that were planned for this year and will now be published in 2023; our end of year deadline was a bit of a squeeze.

I am grateful to all our co-editors this year: Sara Felix; Jean Martin and Chuck Serface; Pádraig Ó Méalóid; Alissa Wales; Steven H Silver; Amanda Wakaruk and Olav Rokne; Regina Kanyu Wang; Arthur Liu and Yen Ooi; and finally, here for the *Andor* issue, John Coxon and Erin Underwood.

Chris has worked harder than ever, and I think his approach to layout has been amazing. We really have benefited from co-editors and also occasionally wondered about the whole thing, contemplating matters when it becomes ever so existential, as only an odd piece of fan paraphernalia like a fanzine can.

Next year we will have part two of our dual-language Chinese SF issue. We will also have a wonderfully artistic issue – a perzine of sorts – as we confront a fannish personality. We use the old leaf blower to clear the mist and fog of fandom war: a very specialised matter that is fifty years old, but serious and worth reading about. So that's four in the pipeline, and I am pretty confident they will come to fruition in short order.

The Vietnam issue has hit a weird hiatus of hard brick wallness. Despite support from a number of fans and permission to use some incredible work, I have to admit I am finding it difficult, for no good reason. I am tempted to go to Vietnam and see if that can clear out the block and get the brain working on the matter. It's one of the issues due early next year, and I started on it about 13 years ago, so it's been a long and slow burn. Yet that is 20,000 words ready now and some incredible images.

We need art. Yes, we need art badly. We appreciate that art takes time and time is money (especially for artists!), but for those of you reading, if you feel like you want to be an artist, *Journey Planet* awaits your efforts with glee. Fanzines are a great way to see your art published, if you have the time and inclination. If any artists feel like they can contribute, we would love to hear from you, and we are happy to share future projects in case you have a piece that fits. We've been very grateful this year for some incredible art.

Here we are, at the end. I should put on Te Doors as I write. OK. Can I write this editorial in the 11 minutes that Jim and the gang can play their song? Well, my fingers sure are typing. (Nope, it went onto John Barry's *Space Lazer Battle* and *Capsule in Space* and then onto *Aces High*, *Battle of Britain*, *The Dam Busters*, *Where Eagles Dare*, *A Bridge too Far* and then *Hymn to the Fallen*, which is a lovely song to end on and I just might.)



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Artists Bios:

The Andorian by Michael Carroll

Despite his great age Michael Carroll is still physically capable of demonstrating his ability to resist public opinion and so continues to write comics and books and stuff. www.michaelowencarroll.com

Cover by Iain Clarke— (<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/iainjclarkart>)

Andor tote bag by Alissa Wales

Alissa won a Hugo co-editing *Journey Planet* in 2015, and is currently an editor of *The Drink Tank*.