SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

STAR WARS INSIDER



FORCE-FILLED FINAL ISSUE!

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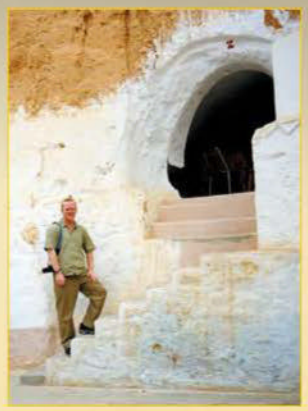
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"Hello There!"



I lost track of how many issues of *Star Wars Insider* I've edited, so I recently took myself off to a quiet corner and counted them up. It turns out to be ending on a pleasingly round number—60 issues!

Now that the adventure is over, I can only take solace in a synchronicity that echoes the words George Lucas used to describe the storytelling of the prequel trilogy: "It's like poetry. It rhymes."

The saga began for me with a birthday trip into central London to watch *Star Wars: A New Hope* with my parents. Decades later, I returned the favor by taking my mum and my own kids to an early screening of *The Rise of Skywalker*. This final issue under my stewardship arrives in the tenth anniversary year of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, a movie that dovetails with the film that started it all and will always hold a special place in my heart. From my point of view, the circle is now complete.

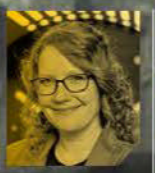
But "No one is ever really gone." As far as *Insider* goes, there are plenty of back-issues available to complete your collection. Just buy one every few months and it'll be like we never went away! A huge amount of care and love has been poured into the pages of *Star Wars Insider* over the years, by contributors too numerous to thank individually here. Enjoy some of their recollections as we celebrate the magazine's long history in the pages of this very special issue. And as *Insider* rides off into the twin sunsets, remember:

The Force will be with you, always.



Christopher Cooper
Editor

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS...



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



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STAR WARS INSIDER

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STAR WARS INSIDER

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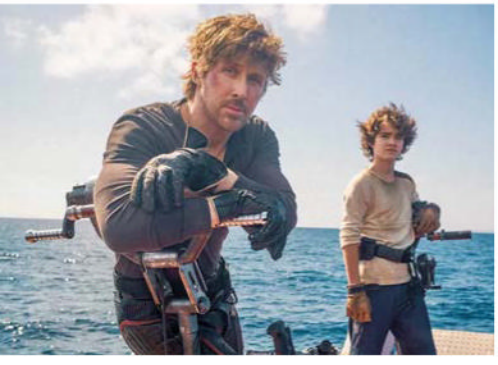


Always In Motion

Looking forward to the future of *Star Wars*





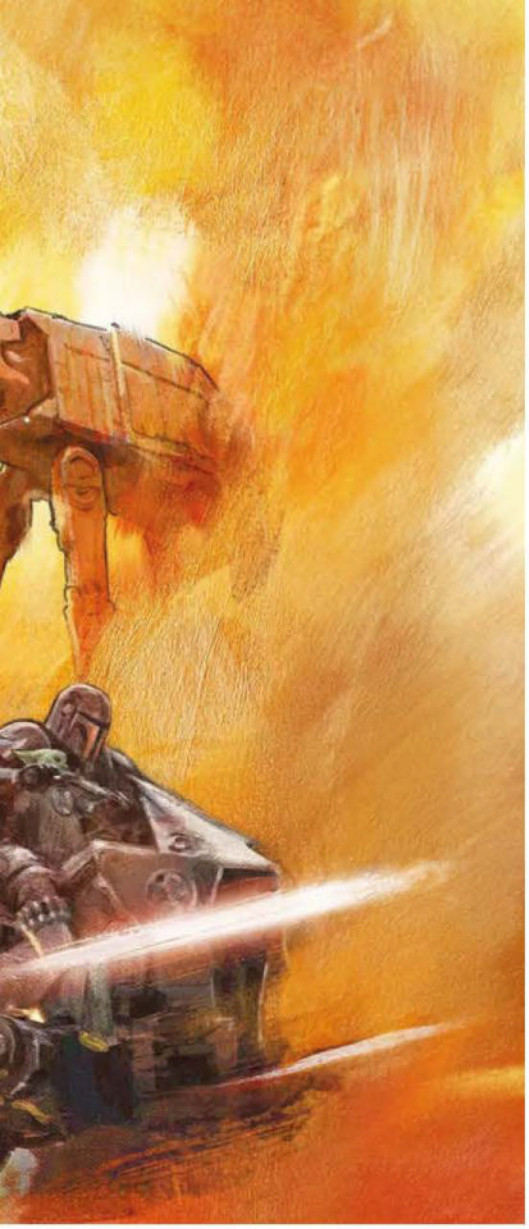


With the imminent arrival of *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu* in theaters on May 22, the season finale of *Maul: Shadow Lord* looming, and May the 4th celebrations just around the corner, it's a bright time for fans.

Star Wars Insider may be becoming one with the Force, but there's plenty to look forward to coming soon from the galaxy far, far away. Along with the above mentioned movie and animated series, a second season of *Ahsoka* is due to drop on Disney+ later this year. Starring Rosario Dawson, we'll find out what happens to the former Jedi on Peridea, and finally learn what Grand Admiral Thrawn has planned for the New Republic.

In the world of videogames, *Star Wars* Zero Company from BitReactor and Electronic Arts, in collaboration with Lucasfilm Games, will take players back to the Clone Wars in a turn-based tactics game in which they will command an elite squad through a gritty and authentic story. *Star Wars*: Galactic Racer will also zoom into view, courtesy of Fuse Games and Secret Mode, in collaboration with Lucasfilm Games, giving players the hi-octane thrills they've come to expect from a *Star Wars* racing game. Both videogames will be available on PC, PlayStation 5, and Xbox Series X/S.

And watch out for a teaser trailer for 2027's big release, *Star Wars: Starfighter,* sometime soon. The movie will arrive in theaters almost exactly 50 years after *Star Wars: A New Hope* first graced the big screen, the original version of which will also get a rerelease (including on IMAX screens) to celebrate that big anniversary.





One in a Million

Harrison Ford Award

Legendary Hollywood actor Harrison Ford was honored with the 2026 Screen Actors Guild Lifetime Achievement Award at a glittering ceremony in Los Angeles on March 4.

The Han Solo and Indiana Jones actor was presented with the prestigious award by Woody Harrelson (Tobias Beckett in *Solo: A Star Wars Story*), who described Ford as "a timeless American treasure."

In his heartfelt acceptance speech, in which he thanked George Lucas and Steven Spielberg for casting him in his breakout roles, the 83-year-old star joked that it was "a little weird to be receiving a lifetime achievement award at the half-point of my career. It's a little early. Isn't it? I'm still a working actor."



Check StarWars.com for breaking



Extra Edge

Batuu and Beyond

From April 29, 2026, *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* in Disneyland, California, shifts into a new phase as the ever-evolving experience expands to include more characters than ever before.

Along with established visitors to Batuu, including Ahsoka Tano, the Mandalorian, and Chewbacca, guests visiting the land will now get to mingle with iconic figures from the Galactic Civil War and New Republic eras in Batuu's Black Spire Outpost. Each era will be represented in different locations, to preserve their separation in the galactic timeline, as Michael Serna of Disney Live Entertainment explained when the updated visitor experience was announced. "They will be staying in their respective storyline," he revealed. "[It's] very important to us to make sure that you don't have a crossover that gets very confusing."

Near the Rise of the Resistance attraction, guests will be able to find Rey, while heroes and villains from the original trilogy including Han Solo and Princess Leia will be found close to the *Millennium Falcon.* Luke Skywalker will roam the outpost, as he seeks Jedi knowledge all over Batuu, and Darth Vader will be joined by Imperial stormtroopers as they seek the elusive master.

Seven years into its existence, this expansion into original trilogy characters is what Asa Kalama, VP of Walt Disney Imagineering said was always imagined for *Galaxy's Edge*. "That's part of the reason we designed this neutral, Wild West, space town, because it allowed it to be a framework under which we could project different stories," he confirmed. "With *The Mandalorian and Grogu film* coming, and then next year being the 50th anniversary of *Star Wars,* it felt like a wonderful time to focus on this classic era of *Star Wars* storytelling."

As Disney's *Star Wars* lands continue to evolve, there may be some nuance between the coasts, and no changes are planned for Walt Disney World at this time. As Serna explains, "We're always reevaluating what might be something that guests want, and what do we think the guests need, and trying to balance those two commitments. We work very closely with Imagineering and Lucasfilm to ensure our storytelling within this amazing experience is alligned, so that *Galaxy's Edge* feels cohesive with the experiences you get from *Star Wars* books, magazines, comic books, movies, and TV shows."

Lucasfilm's Matt Martin added that new and old *Star Wars* stories and tie-ins will continue to evolve both lands. "[Ideas] revolve around what's coming out in the world elsewhere, what's hitting Disney+, or what films might be getting released in theaters. And we are working so far in advance, so we might be sharing with Imagineering some things that won't be out for years to allow them to develop something that needs time."



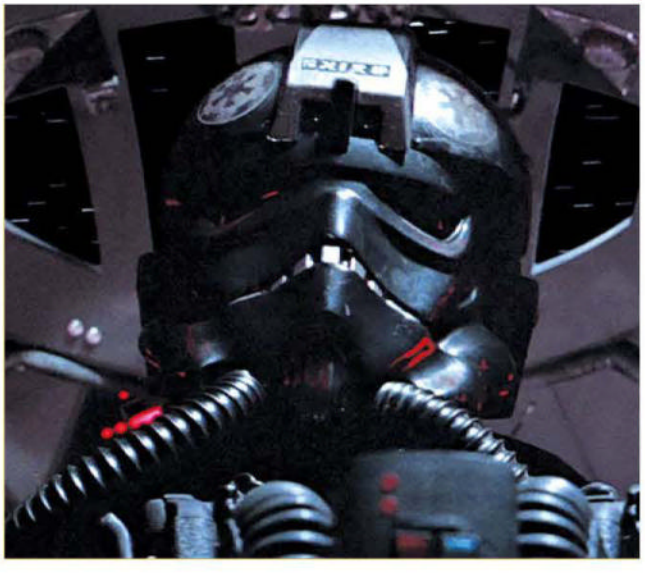
Pilots on Patrol

"Lock S-foils in Attack Position"

***Star Wars: Star Pilots* is a new book coming this fall from DK that recounts the adventures of Wedge Antilles and others during the Galactic Civil War.**

Written by Dr. Chris Kempshall, who previously authored *The Rise and Fall of the Galactic Empire,* the new book takes the form of a memoir in which Wedge and fellow pilots retell their experiences of the struggle against the Empire and the battles they fought. And the reflections won't just be restricted to the Rebel Alliance's perspective either, as Imperial pilots will also get a chance to have their say too.

Available for pre-order now, *Star Wars: Star Pilots* will be in stores on October 6.



PRODUCTION DIARY

Star Wars movies and streaming series from a galaxy far, far away....

NOW STREAMING

STAR WARS VISIONS ビジョンズ

Volume Three, Disney+

STAR WARS YOUNG JEDI ADVENTURES

Season Three, Disney+

STAR WARS MAUL SHADOW LORD

Season One, Disney+
Starring Sam Witwer

IN THEATERS SOON

STAR WARS THE MANDALORIAN AND GROGU

Starring Pedro Pascal and Sigourney Weaver
Directed by Jon Favreau

POST PRODUCTION

STAR WARS AHSOKA

Season Two, Disney+
Starring Rosario Dawson

STAR WARS STARFIGHTER

Starring Ryan Gosling, Flynn Gray, and Amy Adams
Directed by Shawn Levy

The TK Takeover

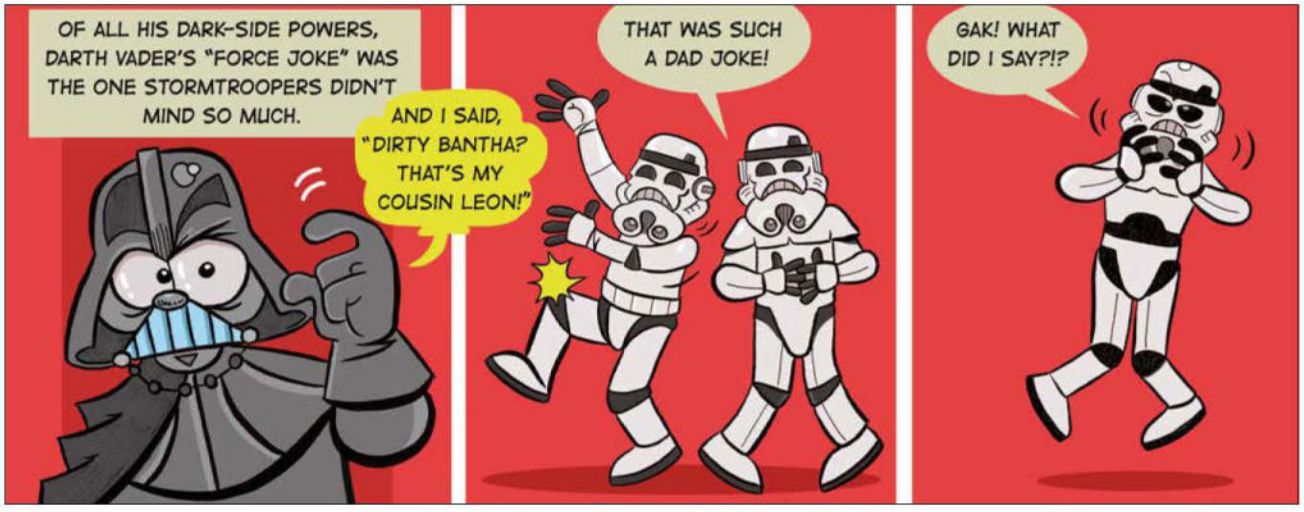
Enlist in the Empire's ever-growing army with this highly collectible figure

As the Galactic Empire shifted its focus from clone troopers to volunteer recruits, TK stormtroopers became a more common sight at Imperial facilities and throughout the fleet. The TK Stormtrooper Sixth Scale Figure (Collector Edition) from Hot Toys is priced $235, and captures the Empire's newest soldiers in action with 30 points of articulation, six pieces of interchangeable gloved hands, a blaster carbine and rifle, one thermal detonator, and a breathing device with tubes. A Special Edition of the figure, priced $270, also features a pair of goggles and an armored poncho with detachable sleeves. Due to ship in early 2027, you can pre-order the TK Stormtrooper Sixth Scale Figure now on **Sideshow.com**.



THE LIGHT SIDE

By Jamie Cosley



Boba Fett's Beskar

Reclaim the Fett family armor by donning this life-sized roleplay helmet

Boba Fett pursued Din Djarin all the way to the planet Tython to make a very specific request: return his armor… or else! Once reacquired, Boba Fett's beskar soon sported a newly painted look that inspired the latest entry in Hasbro's The Black Series.



The Boba Fett (Re-Armored) Premium Electronic Helmet boasts interior padding, electronic lights, and an adjustable fit, as well as a flip-down rangefinder with flashing LED lights and an illuminated heads-up display. Boba Fett's Re-Armored Premium Electronic Helmet can be purchased on **HasbroPulse.com**, where it can be added to your collection for $109.99.

Return of the *Razor Crest*



LEGO® *Star Wars* brings back Din Djarin's signature starship

The original *Razor Crest* may have been blown to smithereens by Moff Gideon in *The Mandalorian* Season Two, but Din Djarin has found a replacement for his old ride just in time for his debut on the big screen in *The Madalorian and Grogu*.

Luckily for fans of the famous starship, LEGO *Star Wars* has put together a brand new building set based on the vehicle as it appears in the new movie, complete with LEGO minifigures of Din Djarin, Grogu, Zeb Orrelios, Colonel Ward, and an Imperial remnant stormtrooper. The $149.99, 930-piece set is on sale now at **LEGO.com**.



THE STAR WARS DOT COLUMN

From the desk of StarWars.com Editor-in-Chief Kristin Baver



This month is bittersweet, a balance of the dark and the light. *Star Wars: Maul – Shadow Lord* is nearing its conclusion, and a new *Star Wars* movie is on the horizon in less than a month. And although there will be plenty of news to come on StarWars.com, this will be my last column here as *Star Wars Insider* signs off. From the first issue that arrived in my mailbox many years ago, I have been enthralled with the stories and voices that found a home on the pages of *Insider*. In the last decade, I have been honored to be among them, first as a news contributor and more recently with my second piece of official fiction late last year. The *Star Wars* community will continue to thrive, but our origin story will always be tied to the pages of this fine magazine. Now, one last time, let's look ahead at what's coming up on StarWars.com...

Grogu goes to the movies



Get those snackies ready! *The Mandalorian and Grogu* arrives in theaters May 22, marking the first new *Star Wars* film release since 2019's *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* capped off the Skywalker saga. Like Mando himself, we fell in love with Grogu the first time we laid eyes on him in the series premiere of *The Mandalorian*, and our affinity for the Clan of Two has only gotten stronger. Discover more about their exciting new adventure as we cover the movie in detail on StarWars.com.

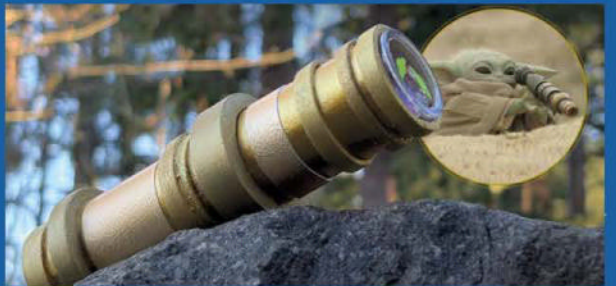
The end of Maul



This *Star Wars* Day will be long remembered. With the finale of *Star Wars: Maul – Shadow Lord*, we're excited to see where the former Sith Lord's twisted path is leading him this time. StarWars.com continues to follow his quest for revenge with behind-the-scenes features, galleries, and more.

Set your sights on Star Wars Day

Because all roads lead back to *The Mandalorian and Grogu* right now, on StarWars.com you can DIY your own kaleidoscope inspired by the tiny device Grogu peered through in the first teaser trailer for the film. Celebrate *Star Wars* Day with *Maul* then look ahead to the journey to come!



Interactive Action

Immerse yourself in the galaxy far, far away with these innovative LEGO® sets



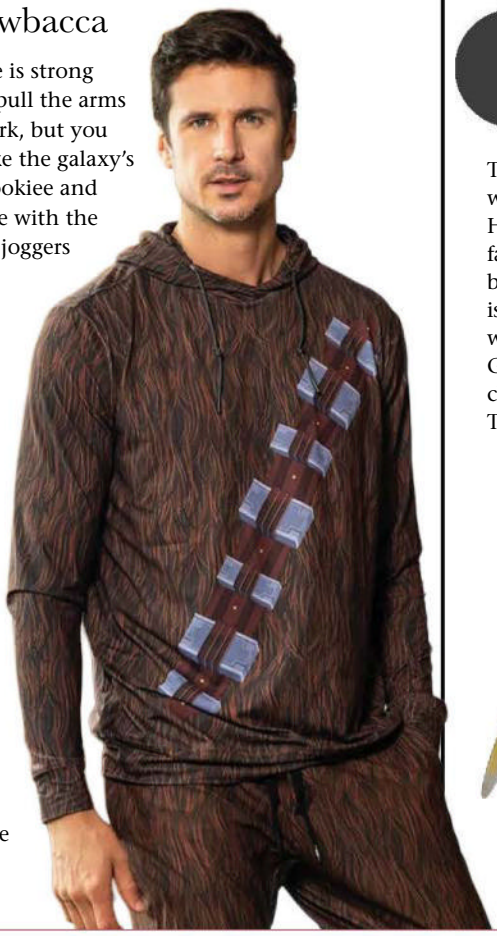
Every *Star Wars* fan has imagined what it would be like to explore the *Star Wars* galaxy for themselves, and the LEGO Group's brand-new SMART Play™ All-in-One sets provide a cool, immersive experience. The SMART Bricks, SMART Tags, and SMART Minifigures—included with every set, such as Luke's Red Five X-Wing, Throne Room Duel & A-Wing, and Darth Vader's TIE Fighter—provide another level of interactivity never before delivered thanks to authentic sounds and lights. Each one is compatible with the other, enabling you to combine them to create your own unique adventures. To purchase the 581-piece Luke's Red Five X-Wing ($89.99), 962-piece Throne Room Duel & A-Wing ($159.99), or 473-piece Darth Vader's TIE Fighter ($69.99) LEGO SMART Play sets, head over to **LEGO.com**.

Working the Wookiee Look

Chill like Chewbacca

Not everyone is strong enough to pull the arms off a gundark, but you can look like the galaxy's favorite Wookiee and relax at the same time with the Chewie performance joggers and hoodie from RSVLTS.

Featuring a rich brown print that recreates Chewie's famous fur, the hoodie (priced $82) is detailed with the Wookiee's bandolier, while the joggers (priced $72) have front and rear pockets and a drawstring waist. Made from a polyester and spandex mix with a comfy four-way stretch, both garments are available on **rsvlts.com**.



Eclectic Entourage

Demonstrate your prequel passion with iconic action figures from Hasbro

Toydarians, Kaminoans, and Geonosians represented just a microscopic number of the countless species who inhabited the *Star Wars* galaxy. Each played a key role in the prequel trilogy, with Watto wandering about Tatooine, Taun We overseeing operations on Kamino, and Geonosian warriors joining the Separatist cause on their homeworld. Hasbro has now added these three classic characters to its fan-favorite The Black Series line of 6-inch-scale figures, bringing their unique traits to life in stunning detail. Watto is equipped with a walking stick, datapad, and swappable wings, while Taun We carries her own datapad accessory. The Geonosian Warrior features a blaster, swappable wings, and a clear stand to depict him in mid-flight. The Watto, Taun We, and Geonosian Warrior figures from The Black Series are sold separately and priced at $27.99 each on **HasbroPulse.com**.



MANDO MERCH

The latest bounty on which to blow your beskar



Grogu Regalia

Accessorize any look with this foundling-inspired fine jewelry

As he's traveled alongside Din Djarin, Grogu's adorable demeanor and mischievous disposition have been known to attract attention from the galactic citizens he's encountered along the way. *Star Wars* Fine Jewelry's newest accessory is just as eye-catching, as the Grogu Women's Pendant incorporates the foundling into a stunning and elegant design. Crafted in sterling silver, Grogu's eyes are accented with black rhodium detailing, while a touch of 10K rose gold supplies the piece with warmth. 1/20 Carats Total Weight of sparkling white diamonds accentuate the pendant, which hangs from an 18-inch silver chain. This Grogu Women's Pendant can be acquired on **StarWarsFineJewelry.com** for $380.00.

Dark Troopers Deployed

Terror on Tython!

Intent upon capturing Grogu for his own nefarious experiments, Moff Gideon dispatched his dark troopers capture Din Djarin's was in Season Two of *The Mandalorian.*

The Mandalorian & Grogu vs. Dark Troopers *Star Wars* FANDROP diorama recreates the thrilling scene with 2-inch-tall figures, packaged with a Mythosaur pendant and mini-poster. Available priced $19.99 at Target.



Foundling Friend

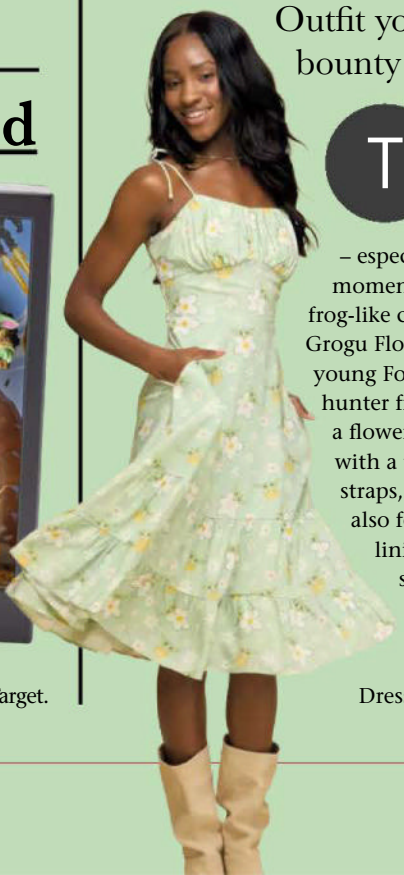
Let Grogu bring joy to your covert with Hasbro's latest plush animatronic

Grogu's curiosity led him down a path toward danger on a regular basis, but his lovable appearance and quick-thinking ways—not to mention his Mandalorian protector—made him a force to be reckoned with. Hasbro's Action Buddy Grogu lets you bring everyone's favorite Foundling into your own home, as the snuggly companion includes more than 50 sound and movement combinations that will keep your covert entertained for hours on end. The 10-inch plush animatronic also features a soft body, so kids can cuddle their new friend after a long day of galactic adventures. Hasbro's interactive Action Buddy Grogu ($54.99) is available on **EntertainmentEarth.com**.



May the Florals Be With You

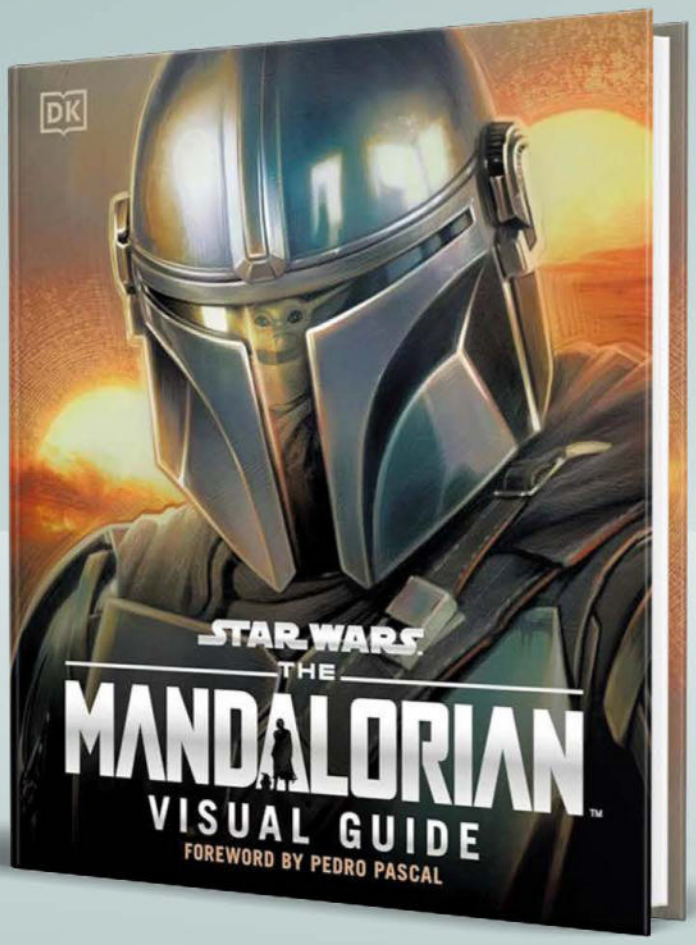
Outfit yourself for another bounty hunting adventure



Throughout *The Mandalorian,* Grogu demonstrated a keen interest in nature – especially when those serene moments involved any appetizing frog-like creatures! Her Universe's Grogu Floral Dress portrays the young Force-user-slash-bounty-hunter frolicking amid the flora in a flowery green print. Designed with a tiered skirt and tie cami straps, the 100% rayon dress also features a 100% polyester lining, back smocking, and side seam pockets. Add to your wardrobe on **HerUniverse.com**, where the Grogu Floral Dress retails for $59.90.

Book Club

Secrets of Mandalore and *Andor*'s artistic vision in the latest *Star Wars* books



This is the Guide to The Way

Explore the exploits of the Mandalorian and Grogu

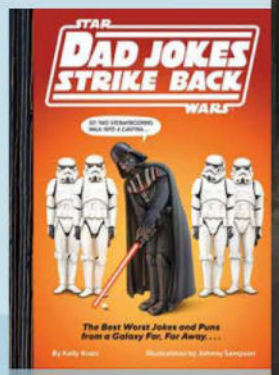
Din Djarin and Grogu captivated the galaxy as soon as *The Mandalorian* premiered on Disney+, with the newfound clan of two's exciting escapades featuring action-packed encounters with bounty hunters, the Imperial remnant, Force-weilders, ravenous creatures, and everything in between. With *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu* soon to arrive in movie theaters, now is the perfect opportunity to learn more about the compelling odyssey of two unlikely heroes.

Filled with incredible new insights and exclusive imagery, *Star Wars: The Mandalorian Visual Guide* offers an incredible, in-depth look at the Disney+ series, from the allies and enemies that Din Djarin and Grogu encountered along the way to the gear and vehicles they've utilized on their missions.

Written by Lucasfilm insider and director of franchise content and strategy, Pablo Hidalgo, the visual guide gives readers unprecedented access into Din Djarin's arsenal, uncovering the hidden gadgets that accentuate his beskar armor while also unveiling fresh details about the Mandalorian's code of honor—the Way—which informs his worldview and guides his every move. Discover the inner workings of the *Razor Crest* and learn the histories of key characters, from potential foe-turned-ally Fennec Shand to the ruthless Moff Gideon.

Featuring a foreword by actor Pedro Pascal, the 232-page *Star Wars: The Mandalorian Visual Guide* from publisher DK is on sale May 19.

01



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03



01

Star Wars: Dad Jokes Strike Back

Engage in some hilarity-fueled family fun with *Star Wars: Dad Jokes Strike Back,* a collection of more than 150 hokey-yet-wholesome *Star Wars* puns and gags from publisher Chronicle Books. Written by Kelly Knox and illustrated by Johnny Sampson, this sequel to the popular book of *Star Wars*-inspired dad jokes answers crucial questions that can be enjoyed by all ages, such as *How did Chewbacca get out of his prison cell? With a Wook-key!*

On sale April 28, this 128-page book is the perfect title for any fan who wants to exercise their funny bone and makes a great Father's Day gift!

02

The Art of Star Wars: Andor The Complete Series

Arriving June 30 from publisher Abrams Books, *The Art of Star Wars: Andor: The Complete Series* utilizes extensive interviews with creator Tony Gilroy, star Diego Luna, and Lucasfilm's talented concept artists to document *Andor*'s production from early discussions following *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* all the way through to post-production on Season Two.

Brimming with exclusive looks at *Andor*'s concept art, creature designs, graphics, props, and more, this 284-page tome unveils unparalleled insights into every aspect of *Andor*'s production, including its elaborate costumes, ships, and locales. Written by Phil Szostak, with a foreword by Tony Gilroy and an afterword by Emmy-winning series writer Dan Gilroy, the book offers incredible insight into one of the most critically-acclaimed television series of all time.

03

Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu: Where I Go, He Goes

Introduce your kids to *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu* with this Step 3 leveled reader that helps familiarize younger fans with *Star Wars* and its New Republic heroes.

Written by Michael Siglain and Emeli Juhlin, the 32-page story leads up to and includes some of the events of the highly-anticipated film *The Mandalorian and Grogu,* and chronicles the duo's encounters with friends like Zeb Orrelios, and run-ins with their enemies. Complete with an easy-to-follow plot for children who are ready to read on their own, *Where I Go, He Goes* is on sale April 28 from Random House Children's Books.

Comics Roundup

The latest *Star Wars* comics carry echoes from across the eras

A New Era for Galaxy's Edge

The Rebels rendezvous at Batuu

On April 29, the *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* attraction at Disneyland is expanding to include characters and events from the original trilogy. Fans can expect to encounter the likes of Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Han Solo, and the menacing Darth Vader on their trips to Batuu, and Marvel Comics is stepping up to provide the official story behind the land's new era.

Written by Ethan Sacks, with a cover by Phil Noto and art by Jethro Morales and Roi Mercado, *Galaxy's Edge: Echoes of the Empire* #1 sets the stage for the story behind the presence of the Galactic Empire and the Rebel Alliance on Batuu. In the first issue of this five-part mini-series, secrets surrounding Black Spire Outpost are revealed as Luke Skywalker is joined by Leia Organa and Chewbacca on an important mission that centers on a search for essential intel. In the process, the group stumbles upon a dangerous relic that leads the Empire directly to them!

Think you know everything about the history of Batuu? This thrilling mini-series will prove otherwise as it delves into the planet's mysterious past and the role it played during the Galactic Civil War.

If you're planning a visit to the immersive attraction, *Galaxy's Edge: Echoes of the Empire* #1, from Marvel Comics, is the perfect companion, and will be in comic shops and book stores April 22.



Rogue One: Cassian Andor #1

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story,* Marvel Comics bridges the narrative gap between the final shots of *Andor* Season Two and Cassian Andor's introduction in the movie as he arrives on the lawless maze of Kafrene. The tense espionage thriller pits Andor against bounty hunters and Imperial stormtroopers as he races to secure intel vital to the rebellion.

Written by Benjamin Percy, the one-shot comic is illustrated by Luke Ross with a cover by David Marquez. There's also a variant cover by Josemaria Casanovas, and a Mandalorian & Grogu variant cover by E.M. Gist. In stores May 6.



Star Wars: The High Republic Adventures: Pathfinders #2

Caught in a hyperspace abnormality that threatens to trap them forever, the Pathfinders put out a distress call in *Star Wars: The High Republic Adventures: Pathfinders* #2.

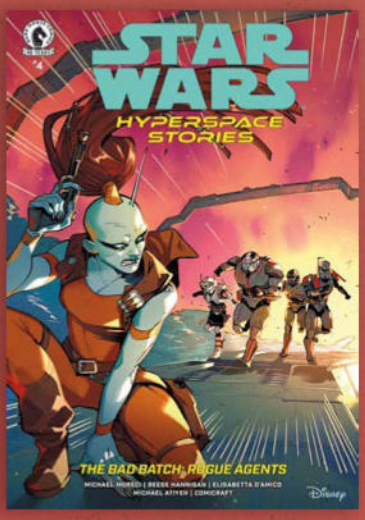
A fan-favorite character heeds the call, but will their help be enough to facilitate the Pathfinders' escape so they can continue on and investigate a mysterious comms disturbance?

Written by George Mann with art by Caio Filipe and Michael Atiyeh, and cover art by Jake Bartok, *Star Wars: The High Republic Adventures – Pathfinders* #2 is on sale from Dark Horse Comics on May 6.



Hyperspace Stories: The Bad Batch — Rogue Agents #4

Aurra Sing is out for revenge! In the fourth and final installment of the *Hyperspace Stories: The Bad Batch — Rogue Agents* series, Clone Force 99 is tracked down by Aurra Sing's rogue agents and must prevent the deadly assassin from capturing the doomsday device. Written by Michael Moreci with illustrations by Reese Hannigan, Elisabetta D'Amico, and Michael Atiyeh, *Hyperspace Stories: The Bad Batch — Rogue Agents* #4, published by Dark Horse Comics, features a cover by Valeria Favoccia and is on sale June 3.



Incoming

Don't Miss These Upcoming Releases

MAY

***The Mandalorian: The Manga* Vol. 4**
Viz Media
Adapted by: Yusuke Osawa
Artist: Yusuke Osawa

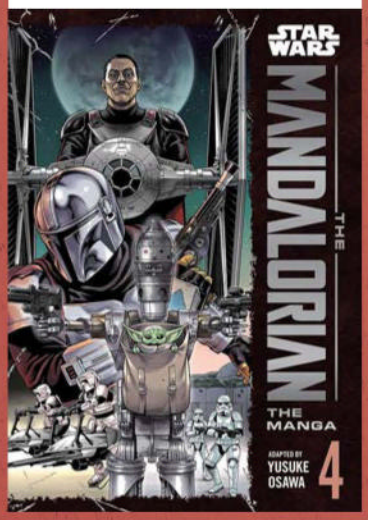
***Shadow of Maul* #3**
Marvel Comics
Writer: Benjamin Percy
Artist: Madibek Musabekov
Cover Artist: Derrick Chew

***Galaxy's Edge: Echoes of the Empire* #2**
Marvel Comics
Writer: Ethan Sacks
Artists: Roi Mercado & Jethro Morales
Cover Artist: Phil Noto

JUNE

***Rogue One: Jyn Erso* #1**
Marvel Comics
Writer: Ethan Sacks
Artist: Ramon Rosanas
Cover Artist: David Marquez

***The High Republic Adventures: Pathfinders* #3**
Dark Horse Comics
Writer: George Mann
Artists: Caio Filipe
Cover Artist: Jake Bartok



01 The first issue of the official *Lucasilm Fan Club Magazine.*

02 *Star Wars Insider* #237.

03 Warwick Davis, guest editor of *Insider* Issue #142.

THE DEFINITIVE JEDI TEXT

FOUR DECADES OF STAR WARS INSIDER



01

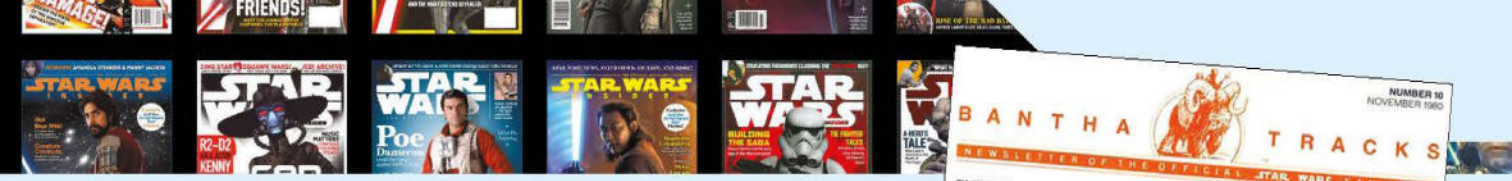


02

Having began as the magazine of the official Lucasfilm Fan Club back in 1987, *Star Wars Insider* has become the essential journal of the galaxy far, far away. As we look to the future of the legendary franchise that began almost 50 years ago, former editors Dan Madsen, Brett Rector, Jonathan Wilkins, Christopher Cooper, and *Bantha Tracks* founder Craig Miller, share their memories of helming the official *Star Wars* magazine.

WORDS: KRISTIN BAVER


03



04 05 06

T he first time I saw a copy of *Star Wars Insider* was in the summer of 1996. My first glimpse at an all-new scene featuring Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt graced the foldout cover of issue #30, delivered to my door soon after my parents signed me up for the official fan club. The original film was on the cusp of its 20th anniversary, and beginning with *A New Hope* on January 31, 1997 the Special Editions would start to be released in theaters, with *The Empire Strikes Back* landing February 21 and *Return of the Jedi* on March 7 of the same year. When I signed that membership card and slipped it into my wallet, I felt like I belonged to something really special. And you know what? I was right.

What I didn't know was that the club had been going strong for nearly two decades, and the magazine would continue for 30 more years, culminating with the issue now in your hands. To celebrate this milestone, we gathered together legendary editors Craig Miller, Dan Madsen, Brett Rector, Jonathan Wilkins, and Christopher Cooper to talk about the ultimate fan publication.

Star Wars Insider:* Craig, you were there from the very beginning. In 1978, you created what would very quickly become *Bantha Tracks.

Craig Miller: When I was hired at Lucasfilm full-time, one of my main tasks was to create the official *Star Wars* Fan Club, and part of that was having a newsletter. We wanted to celebrate the fans and keep them interested in *Star Wars.* It started out as *The Newsletter.* In the second issue, we had a contest to name it and got hundreds of suggestions, and it became *Bantha Tracks* for the rest of its run. You had to be a fan of the movies to know what a bantha was or why it would leave tracks. Ralph McQuarrie designed the logo.

Christopher Cooper: I had the membership card and everything. It was great!

Dan Madsen: Yeah, I joined immediately! I waited by the mailbox so anxiously to get each issue of *Bantha Tracks.* I absolutely loved it.

Jonathan Wilkins: I caught up with it many years later, and I'm pleased I didn't see it as a child because I would've killed for the little adverts at the back. There was Luke's Bespin Jacket, which is the greatest *Star Wars* costume ever as far as I'm concerned. If I'd have seen that, my parents would've been pestered to death for me to get ahold of one of those.

CM: When I designed the newsletter, I looked at it as, ▶

"WE WANTED TO TREAT THE FANS AS INSIDERS."
CRAIG MILLER

04 The *Official Star Wars Fan Club* newsletter was renamed *Bantha Tracks.*

05 *Bantha Tracks* #10.

06 Cartoon from *Bantha Tracks* #5.

07 The Lucasfilm Fan Club logo.



07





"I WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE WAS A *STAR WARS* PIECE IN EVERY ISSUE."

DAN MADSEN

08 First editor Dan Madsen interviewed numerous *Star Wars* actors for the magazine.

09 A personal message from George Lucas to fan club members.

10 Anthony Daniels and Dan Madsen on stage at *Star Wars* Celebration.



STAR WARS REPORT

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

ANTHONY DANIELS

Remembering That Galaxy Far, Far Away

By Dan Madsen & John S. Davis

It is a typical Tuesday morning in Northern California. Relaxing in his hotel room after a long flight in from England the previous day, Anthony Daniels is ironing his clothes and speaking Japanese.

It is soon discovered that Daniels is not preparing for a vacation in the Orient but rather for a television commercial using some of the *Star Wars* characters for the Japanese market.

"Right now C-3PO is going to be big in Japan from these commercials," Daniels says with great enjoyment. "When I was in Japan before, the reaction to R2 & 3PO was absolutely amazing! I thought they would be popular in America but the Japanese went wild! They have really taken to the robots in a big way. I felt very at home there. If I could only have understood the language, I would have known what they were saying. But they were smiling so that told me something. They have a delightful habit in Japan of bringing presents at all moments. It's a habit I'm trying to encourage the English and Americans to pick up! People know I have a very sweet tooth because when I'm signing autographs, someone will always come along with a huge bag of M & M's and say, 'These are for you!' Normally I wouldn't buy them because I would eat them. So I figure if someone gives them to me I have to eat them! I'm going to get sugar poisoning one of these days with all the sweets I eat!"

Daniels is no stranger to the field of television commercials. He has appeared as 3PO in numerous spots and one, in particular, which he is most proud of, that he wrote himself.

"The commercial I wrote was during the time I was sick and couldn't go to the premiere of *The Empire Strikes Back*," he recalls. "I was sitting in my bed in the hospital and the Health people came in to see me and I

Above: The man behind the golden mask, Anthony Daniels, and his world-famous counterpart, C-3PO. Below: 3PO in his three most famous adventures: rescuing Luke and company in *Star Wars*, having his leg repaired by R2 in *The Empire Strikes Back* & translating for the Ewoks in *Return of the Jedi*.

Daniels dreamed of being an actor on the stage. As a child, he was motivated by the talented performers he saw at the local theatre.

"I always wanted to act," Daniels states, "but I just usually thought about the theatre. I never thought about movies. I used to go to the Saturday morning childrens matinee but I never thought of myself being in the movies. I've always thought of the theatre as being slightly more vital. I was always acting as a kid, though. I would make little shows with my friends and bore everybody! I think my parents thought it was an aberration that I would eventually grow out of, but I never did.

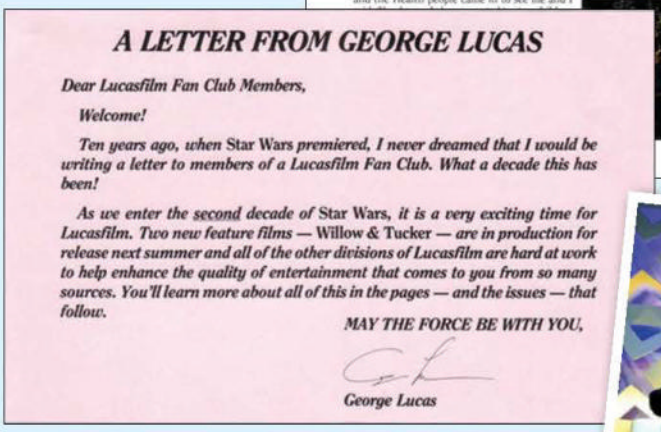
"Acting is really like an addiction," he adds. "It's very hard to give up. I think it was just something in my genes. You know, you can get into all these things about insecurity and a safe way of showing off because with actors, you may think you know them but you don't."

For the past decade, Daniels has been identified as C-3PO all around the world. However, now, looking back, he recalls vividly his first impressions upon receiving the role as *Star Wars* gold-plated robot.

"I was surprised and insulted," he chuckles. "I didn't feel it was a job for a real actor. But later I realized it was a terrific character. George Lucas, who is a very charismatic person, seemed interested in C-3PO so I thought, 'Well, it must be good!' But 3PO has a melancholy about him that I find attractive. I empathize with him. There is a kind of forlorn quality between him and R2-D2. They sort of get shipped around the universe and blown this way and that by events. I think probably they quintessentialize the human lot."

Upon being notified he had won the role, Daniels had to sit down and decide how he was going to approach the part. After all, portraying a robot is not the kind of role most actors have years of experience in playing.

"I thought about it a huge amount and planned all sorts of things," he says. "I kept seeing designs of this costume that was being built around me and I made all sorts of decisions about what I would do once inside it. However, that all went down the drain right away because I got the suit on and I couldn't do any of it! So 3PO kind of happened on the first day of shooting, quite frankly.



A LETTER FROM GEORGE LUCAS

Dear Lucasfilm Fan Club Members,

Welcome!

Ten years ago, when Star Wars *premiered, I never dreamed that I would be writing a letter to members of a Lucasfilm Fan Club. What a decade this has been!*

As we enter the second decade of Star Wars, *it is a very exciting time for Lucasfilm. Two new feature films — Willow & Tucker — are in production for release next summer and all of the other divisions of Lucasfilm are hard at work to help enhance the quality of entertainment that comes to you from so many sources. You'll learn more about all of this in the pages — and the issues — that follow.*

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU,

George Lucas

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11 Madsen with R2-D2 and Kenny Baker on the set of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace.*

Dan, you were there in 1987 for the launch of *The Lucasfilm Fan Club.*

DM: *The Lucasfilm Fan Club* wasn't really a continuation of *Bantha Tracks.* I started it as its own independent thing when I got the license. I had been doing the official *Star Trek* fan club for Paramount, and so I kind of patterned the Lucasfilm Fan Club and its magazine after that. It is amazing to me all these years later that it's evolved into the *Star Wars Insider* magazine.

My intention initially was to relaunch the *Star Wars* fan club name, but after I went out to Skywalker Ranch and sat down with Howard Roffman [head of licensing at the time] and several others at Lucasfilm, they convinced me that we should really focus it on Lucasfilm the company. We didn't know when *Star Wars* was coming back, and the great thing was that there were a couple of really cool projects to focus on: *Willow* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.* I was happy to do that, but I said I wanted to make sure that there was a *Star Wars* piece in every issue, and they happily agreed.

In the first issue, I did an interview with Anthony Daniels and Mark Hamill celebrating the 10th anniversary of *Star Wars.*



11



We put that picture of C-3PO and R2-D2 with the birthday cake on the cover. I had a guy named Jon Snyder, who worked with me and was a managing editor of the *Fan Club Magazine* right up until I sold my company. He was instrumental in so many of the articles. I did most of the interviews, but Jon came up with a lot of different articles. And I worked very closely with Lucasfilm publicist Lynne Hale back in those days. She's still a dear friend.

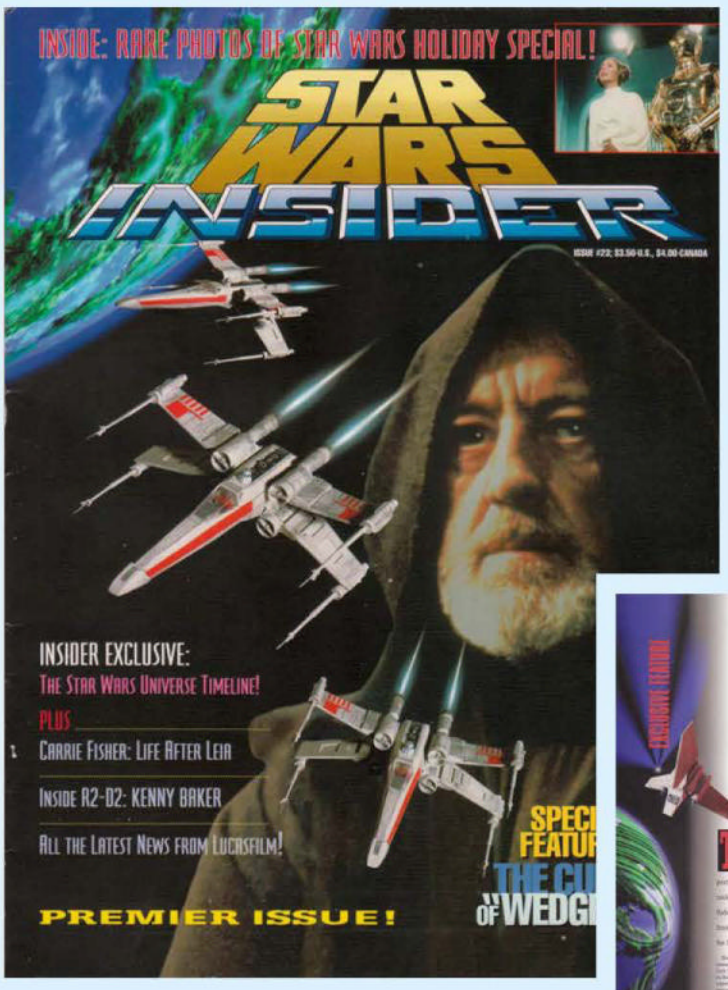


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JW: I picked up copies at the Forbidden Planet store in London, and I remember being very excited about *Tucker: A Man and His Dream.* There were some lovely photos of the car, and I thought "Oh, it's that guy from *Tron*! That's going to be cool." That Dan put a bit of *Star Wars* in every issue, for this *Star Wars* kid that was pretty clever. It kept that little flame alive that *Star Wars* was going to come back at some stage.

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12 A feature in *Insider* #23 by early contributor Jon Bradley Snyder.

13 Dan Madsen (right) with Anthony Daniels (C-3PO)

14 The magazine became *Star Wars Insider* with issue #23.

15 A feature from *Insider* #23 by Pamela E.Roller.

DM: I would keep asking. Every time I went out to the Ranch, I'd say, "Please tell me that George is getting ready to launch new *Star Wars* movies." And they'd say, "Yeah, he says he's working on it. He's going to get back to it." And then, when he finally did, it was a great day.

Let's talk about the shift to *Insider*. Dan, why did you rename *The Lucasfilm Fan Club Magazine* as *Star Wars Insider* but continue the numbering? *Insider's* premier issue came out in 1994 labelled as issue #23.

DM: Once I found out that George was getting started on writing the ▶



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prequels, we had a meeting at the Ranch and to talk about renaming the fan club. I suggested a bunch of names to the folks at Lucasfilm and *Star Wars Insider* was the one they seemed to like the best.

For me, the best time to be a *Star Wars* fan was those years going right up to the first prequel. There was so much excitement around *Star Wars.* It was electric, you could feel it. And the internet hadn't really caught on quite yet, so *Insider* was the place to find out what was happening around the new *Star Wars* movies. I did updates with producer Rick McCallum, and George Lucas was very generous with his time, giving me interviews and talking to me about a variety of things. Rick's interviews were always so much fun because there were a lot of things he would say that I couldn't print. Rick was very open with his opinions.

"BEING THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *INSIDER* WAS ABSOLUTELY AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE."
BRETT RECTOR

Once, I was invited to the Ranch to take a peek at how Episode I was coming along, and Rick took me up to the very top of the Main House and gave this special knock on a door. It was like a secret knock. And when the door opened, it was like walking into Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. There was Doug Chiang at a sketch board, working on one of the new ships. There were sculptures all over the place. I remember seeing one of Jar Jar Binks. At that point, absolutely nothing had been seen beyond the walls of Lucasfilm, and Rick showed me a couple of the early special effects on the computer. That was probably one of the most amazing moments. Another time, Rick brought me into an editing room, and who's sitting in behind the editing machine, but George. And George is editing the trailer! So, boom, he clicks the thing. And I'm sitting there watching the trailer as it's being edited for Episode I. I was just stunned. That trailer still gives me goosebumps.

Brett, you were the editor-in-chief of the magazine for a time before joining Lucasfilm Publishing, after Dan sold it around 2001.

Brett Rector: After Dan's run, Paizo Publishing took over, and I did a couple of videogaming-related articles at that time while working at CNET. I then began my first job at Lucasfilm with LucasArts in 2002 where I managed the creation of videogame manuals. Around 2004, the late, great Jonathan Rinzler, who I worked with when I was a copy editor at *GamePro Magazine,* got in touch with our former boss at IDG, the publication's parent company, to see if they would be interested in taking over the *Star Wars Insider* license. Spoiler: they did. And once it became official, I was contacted to see if I would want to come back to be the editor-in-chief. Spoiler: I did. It was truly one of the greatest days of my professional career. My start date with the magazine was May 25, 2004, and at that time we

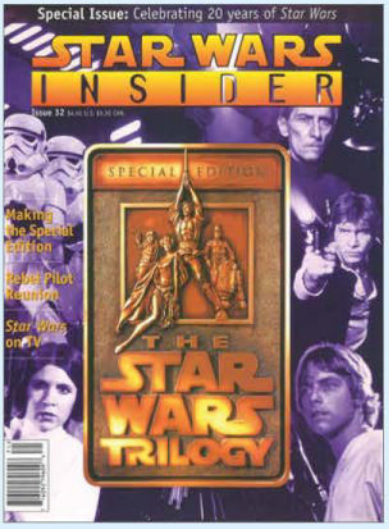
16 Senior editor at Lucasfilm Publishing and former editor-in-chief at *Insider*, Brett Rector.

17 *Star Wars Insider* #32

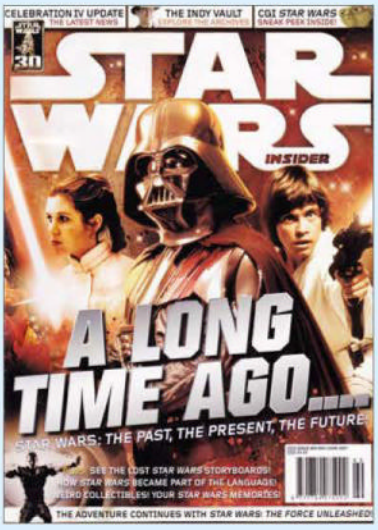
18 *Star Wars Insider* #93, the first issue published by Titan Magazines.

19 *Star Wars Insider* has been a prized bounty for fans across four decades.

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20 *Insider* editor Jonathan Wilkins at the Titan stand at *Star Wars* Celebration Europe 2016.

21 Warwick Davis and Jonathan Wilkins.

22 *Insider* has provided a window into the making of *Star Wars*, old and new, since 1987.

"WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAME THAT THERE WERE NEW *STAR WARS* MOVIES COMING, IT WAS LIKE FIREWORKS GOING OFF."
JONATHAN WILKINS

were going into the "last movie ever," *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*. It was an amazing time to be a part of that. 2004 to 2005 was magical, with new things like the Genndy Tartakovsky *Clone Wars* microseries. Our proximity, being in Northern California with the magazine with IDG in Oakland, did allow me to drive to Big Rock for regular meetings with [now-Lucasfilm creative executives] Pablo Hidalgo and Leland Chee. I would also speak every other month or so with producer Rick McCallum to craft the Prequel Update, which was a regular column started by Dan Madsen nearly 10 years prior.

And on one special occasion I was invited to meet with Rick at the Ranch, where I was granted access to the second floor of the Main House. We then spoke for about 10 minutes on the balcony outside of his office regarding the latest goings on with the movie.

JW: I took over around 2007. When Titan got the license with issue 93 in 2005, I wasn't initially the editor. I was on another magazine, and when my bosses asked if I liked *Star Wars*, I nearly bit their arm off. "Who doesn't like *Star Wars*?" I signed on as deputy editor and then became editor not long after that.

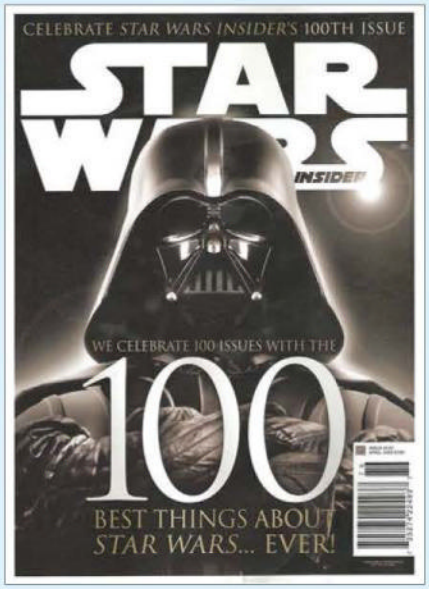
The mission statement was to make a magazine that would have broader appeal on the newsstand and have something that would appeal to all *Star Wars* fans. My time on the magazine coincided with what was arguably a quieter period for *Star Wars*, but Lucasfilm were busy gearing up for *The Clone Wars* TV show. And the next chapter of the saga was The Force Unleashed videogame. To this day, I have to be very careful when I'm writing *The Force Awakens*, because more often than not, I put The Force Unleashed by mistake.

And there's always going to be a market for a Mark Hamill interview. We did manage to get him once and I can remember at the start of the interview, I said two things. "We're going to make sure you're ▶



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▶ on the cover of the magazine. Don't worry!" He said, "Well, if I can't make the cover of *Star Wars Insider*, what hope is there?"

Warwick Davis once guest edited an issue, which was really fun. Every *Star Wars* fan knows what an absolute gentleman he is, but he spent a lovely day in the office working and joking and making time for every single member of staff who wanted to say hello or take a photo. It was one of my favorite issues.

23 *Star Wars Insider* #100

24 *Star Wars Insider* #200

25 Guest editor
26 Warwick Davis
27 joined the team (Art editor Oz Browne and Jonathan Wilkins) for a special issue marking *Return of the Jedi*'s 30th anniversary.



26

BR: One of my very favorite *Star Wars* memories was taking my dad to see *Revenge of the Sith*. It was a noon showing in Emeryville so there weren't a lot of people in the theater, and out of the blue Ralph McQuarrie sat literally right next to me. I was like, "Dad, remember that portfolio you gave me when I was a kid? This is the guy who created those images!"



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Jonathan, you were still helming it at the start of the sequel trilogy era, going into the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

JW: Yeah, our Lucasfilm editor was Jonathan Rinzler. His books on *Star Wars* are legendary and he was absolutely brilliant. When the announcement came that there were

"IT'S DEFINITELY BEEN A PASSION PROJECT, AND I'M SAD TO LET IT GO."
CHRIS COOPER

new *Star Wars* movies coming, it was like fireworks going off. It hadn't gone away, but it was coming back. It was really coming back big.

This time round, there was a lot more secrecy. I think even more than with the prequels. I remember Rinzler sent us the EPKs for *The Force Awakens* and they were like the Death Star plans. This was redacted and that was redacted. We couldn't get a picture of Maz Kanata. Trying to get those magazines out day and date with the release of the film was fun and stressful and crazy.

CM: That kind of secrecy had started even between *Star Wars* and *Empire Strikes Back*. On *Star Wars,* the novelization came out seven months, I think, before the movie came out. The comics were scheduled to appear so that we were halfway through the story when the movie opened, but we were showing artwork, all kinds

28



of things, and by Empire, everything was a secret. And this was all before the internet, so we didn't even have to worry about internet leaks.

Chris, like Dan you were working on *Star Trek* before you took over *Insider* in 2017.

CC: I'd been doing *Star Trek Magazine* for five years when the *Star Wars* editor job came up, and I reacted just like Jonathan

29



when the managing editor asked, "Do you like *Star Wars*? We thought you liked *Star Trek*?!" I've always argued you can enjoy both!

Insider was such an important magazine for me when I was a kid. Coincidentally, I would make a pilgrimage to the same Forbidden Planet store as Jonathan did, and I was mortified if there wasn't a new issue waiting on the shelf for me. To have ended up editing the magazine still feels weird, even after eight and a bit years, to have had that privilege to be involved.

My approach has always been to embrace the new storytelling while continuing to celebrate the previous 40 years. I wanted each issue to include material that would appeal to different generations of fans, regardless of when they joined the party. *Insider*'s job is to cater to a really wide variety of experience and tastes that has built up over nearly half a century. For me, it's been a pleasure to pay back all the enjoyment *Star Wars* has given me and to share that with our readers.

DM: To this day, I still get letters and emails and people commenting on how much the magazine has meant to them. To know that you gave somebody such a feeling of joy when your magazine would show up in their mailbox and that it was the best part of their childhood. That's a source of pride.

28 *Insider* #179 was Cooper's first full issue as editor.

29 Vivien Lyra Blair (Princess Leia Organa) at Celebration Europe 2023.

30 Laura Dern (Vice Admiral Holdo) at *The Last Jedi* premiere.

31 *Insider* editor Cooper with B2EMO at Pinewood Studios.

30



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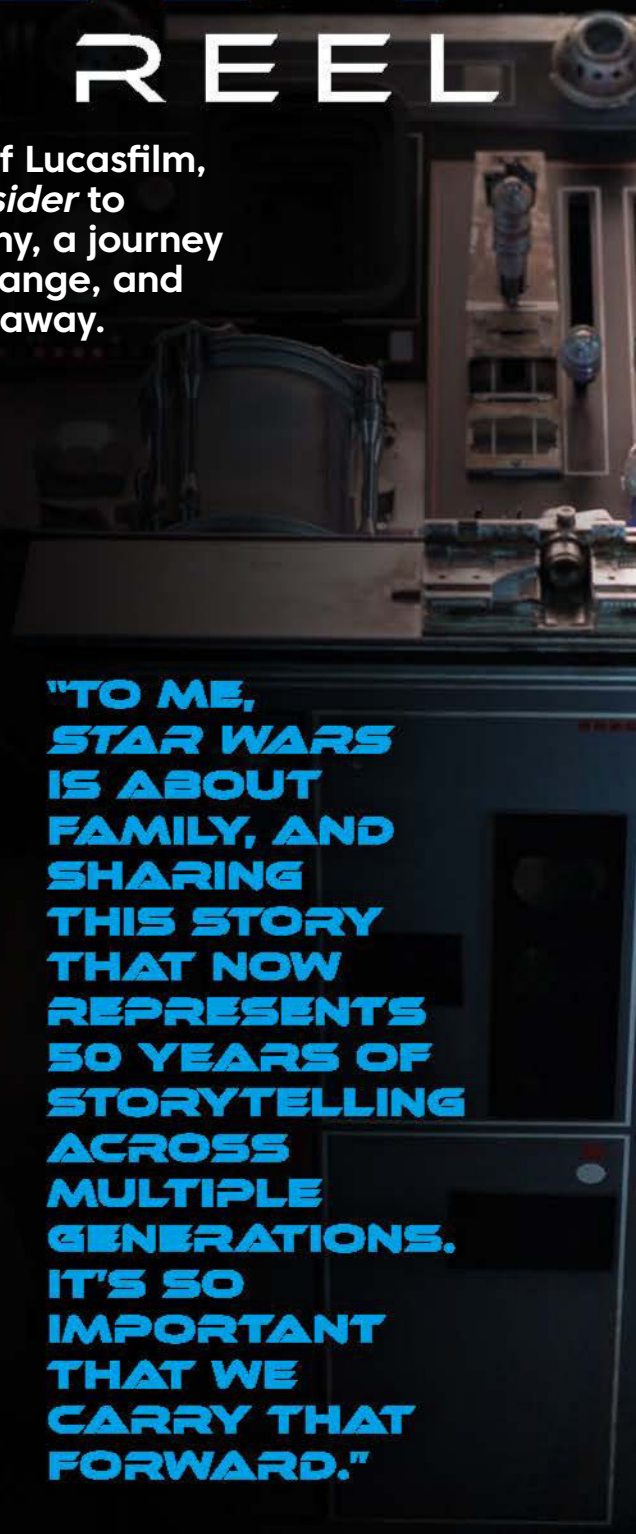


KATHLEEN KENNEDY

THE END REEL

In her final official interview as president of Lucasfilm, Kathleen Kennedy spoke with *Star Wars Insider* to discuss her time at the helm of the company, a journey that saw immense success, tremendous change, and incredible innovation in the galaxy far, far away.

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD



A graduate of San Diego State University, Kathleen Kennedy's production career had humble beginnings, as she gained valuable experience as a jack-of-all-trades at a local TV station. Having worked her way up to production coordinator, a move to Los Angeles paid dividends when she was employed as an assistant to filmmaker John Milius, before becoming legendary director Steven Spielberg's secretary. That, in turn, led to her working with George Lucas and future husband Frank Marshall on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)—the year she co-founded Amblin Entertainment with Spielberg and Marshall.

"I've known George for almost 50 years," Kennedy told *Star Wars Insider* in late January, 2026, just a few days after it was announced she was stepping down from her role at the head of Lucasfilm. "After the explosion of *Star Wars,* we segued into *Raiders*, which was when I had the opportunity to work closely with George and became acutely aware of his innovative side, the way he looked at the industry and asked, 'How do we meet the moment?' Probably even more than *Star Wars,* George's biggest contribution was to push technology in service of story, which I think created that maverick culture we have inside Lucasfilm. He was always fighting the status quo, and thank goodness he did, because everything we have in cinema today—the world-building and immersing ourselves in stories—was something that George was at the forefront of."

In 2012, Kennedy joined Lucas as co-chair at Lucasfilm several months before the deal to sell the company was signed with the Walt Disney Company. Kennedy was his choice to lead Lucasfilm in this new era as its president, and she was determined to ensure that the company continued to innovate and inspire as her tenure began.

"When I stepped into the role, the most important thing to me was to make sure we had the resources to carry on with the things George cared about so much," Kennedy reveals. "I knew that everybody inside Lucasfilm, in every division, cared as much as he did. There were generations ▸



01 Kathleen Kennedy on the *Millennium Falcon* cockpit set, recreated for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens.*

of people within the company who had worked with George, and were now working with me. I'm referred to as the leader of the company, but I never thought of it that way. I was always in lockstep and partnership with its people, many of whom knew so much more about *Star Wars* than I did. Encouraging and supporting them was the most important thing to me. I knew that I had to figure out every conceivable way to preserve that culture."

Kennedy immediately set out to learn as much as she could about Lucasfilm and the galaxy Lucas had built. "The learning curve was pretty steep," she admits. "I spent a good year or two focused on getting familiar with all of the things that *Star Wars* was engaged in."

While the Disney deal had signaled the return of the saga to movie theaters, Kennedy had her work cut out understanding all the other arenas in which *Star Wars* had made its presence felt since 1977. In publishing, toys, videogames, and multiple other avenues, the world of licensed merchandise had become a phenomenon all of its own, one which George Lucas and his associates had made possible.

"There had been a massive amount of work done in publishing under Howard Roffman (the former head of licensing at Lucasfilm)," continues Kennedy. "I knew Howard from years before, so I spent a lot of time talking with him and George. For all intents and purposes, they had invented this form of movie merchandising, which meant Howard had a wealth of information. It was incredible to look at and become familiar with the licenses he had set up."

HEART OF THE GALAXY

Another vital part of the broader *Star Wars* experience has been its presence in Disney Parks, which took on increased visibility with the announcement and opening of Galaxy's Edge in 2019. "Being a part of the parks was something that we were already involved with, which was daunting to say the least," she says. "I would argue Disney learned a lot from Lucasfilm, because George was a pioneer in terms of understanding the business of building a franchise. It was a word he didn't use, but that's what he did. He built the first significant movie franchise, and consequently he learned a great deal. By the time I stepped in, it was a smooth-running machine."

02



02 Kathleen Kennedy (left) on location for *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* with Ke Huy Quan (Short Round, center) and Frank Marshall.

As much as the saga excels through storytelling, innovation, and engagement, the fuel that feeds it all is the fandom, which began with local groups and fanzines, and continues today with websites, podcasts, and *Star Wars* Celebration. It is an important aspect of the broader *Star Wars* story that Kennedy never underestimated.

"Its association with *Star Wars* is everything," Kennedy insists. "When I joined the company,



03 Kennedy with Steven Spielberg, Dennis Muren, and members of the *E.T.* VFX crew.



04

"THE FUTURE... THE PAST... OLD FRIENDS LONG GONE."

Moving *Star Wars* forward into new territory has been an important aspect of Kathleen Kennedy's hopes for the ongoing saga.

"I've been involved in a lot of franchises, and one of the most challenging aspects of the job is finding what's familiar, because that's part of what brings people back to the stories and characters they want to experience, while trying to move it forward and into the future," she explains. "I think it's great to reintroduce our characters. I understand, because I'm right there with the audience. I know how thrilling it is when you see a character you've grown up with, or have become attached to. You love seeing them, but at the same time you want to know how the story is building and where it's going."

"I SPENT A GOOD YEAR OR TWO FOCUSED ON GETTING FAMILIAR WITH ALL OF THE THINGS THAT *STAR WARS* WAS ENGAGED IN."

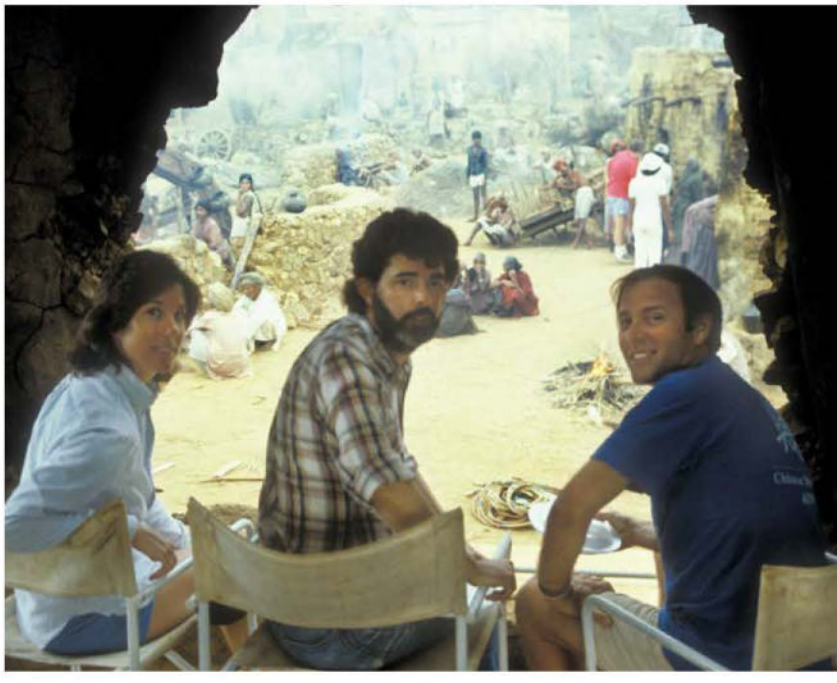
it was very clear; fandom is an *extension* of the company. It's an ecosystem, and that community is so important. Without them, there is no Lucasfilm. Disney has been incredible, and Bob Iger more than anybody understood how important it was to maintain the culture of that relationship between the company and the fans, which has always been so important to Lucasfilm, and to me. We have gone out of our way to make sure that exchange continues to exist. The way we connect with them is constantly evolving, but I think the most important thing is that the relationship remains authentic."

Even with that commitment foremost in her mind, nothing could have prepared Kennedy for her first *Star Wars* Celebration. ▶

04 Kennedy was reunited with Harrison Ford (left) and George Lucas (right) for *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull.*

05 Kennedy, Lucas, and Marshall on the Mayapore Village location for *Temple of Doom.*

05





06



"FANDOM IS AN EXTENSION OF THE COMPANY. IT'S AN ECOSYSTEM, AND THAT COMMUNITY IS SO IMPORTANT."

"I didn't know what *Star Wars* Celebration was when I started," she concedes. "It wasn't long after I had taken on the responsibility of running Lucasfilm that George said, 'You're going to have to experience it, because you really don't know what it is until you go.'"

Celebration Europe II, held in Essen, Germany in 2013, hosted 20,000 fans for three days of *Star Wars*-themed fun. "It was extraordinary," recalls Kennedy. "I was completely blown away. The community of fans and families, and the incredible emotional commitment, the amount of time people took to create costumes and props, and these incredible immersive experiences, I'll never forget it.

"Every single Celebration since Essen has been at the forefront of things that we plan for way in advance," she continues. "In fact, it's one of the first things we talk about when we look at any kind of marketing campaign, because it's important that we preserve Celebration as Celebration. It has to remain as authentic as when it first began in Denver in 1999. It has to be fan-run, and we wanted to continue to support that. I don't think anybody has any doubt that Dave Filoni and Lynwen Brennan (Kennedy's successors as Lucasfilm co-presidents) are going to carry that forward in a huge way. It's incredibly important to us."

One unforeseen outcome of Kennedy's Celebration visit directly benefitted pre-production plans for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens.*

"I remember turning a corner, and seeing a room full of incredible droids that had been built by fans," Kennedy says. "I was like, 'Who's behind all this?!' So I met and started talking to Oliver Steeples and Lee Towersey, and then we hired them and brought them on to *The Force Awakens.* Lee is still working on *Star Wars,* so that was an incredible connection."

06 Daisy Ridley (Rey, left) with Kennedy and costume designer Michael Kaplan during production of *The Last Jedi.*

07 Mark Hamill (left) with Kathleen Kennedy.



07



08

THE BIG COMEBACK

The arrival of *Star Wars Rebels* in 2014 kicked off the Disney era, but all eyes were on the big screen in 2015, when the long-awaited seventh chapter of the Skywalker saga arrived on December 14. The movie went on to gross $2.068 billion worldwide and $936.7 million in the United States and Canada. By every measure it was a smash hit, but Kennedy had been careful not to assume success.

"The funny thing is, when you're on the creative side, you do nothing but prepare for the worst. You don't prepare for success," says Kennedy, who admits the gravity of the project was not lost on anyone at Lucasfilm. "We went into bringing *Star Wars* back with a huge sense of responsibility—fear, to be perfectly honest—because of the enormous expectations that we knew people had. What was so rewarding was that when we sat in the audience at the premiere, it played better than we had ever imagined." She smiles at the memory. "That was a dream come true."

08 Kennedy amid *The Force Awakens* creature shop creations.

The return of *Star Wars* in such a monumental manner, followed by two sequels and the standalone films *Rogue One* and *Solo,* paved the way for an expansion of the franchise onto TV screens with the advent of Disney+ in 2019. *The Mandalorian* was an instant hit that led to more than a dozen seasons of live-action and animated shows, including the Emmy-award winning *Andor.* However, Kennedy emphasizes the value of cinema to the complete *Star Wars* experience.

"It's incredibly important, because *Star Wars* is a film brand. It absolutely is," she insists. "The television that we do is an extension of the cinematic experience, and we'll never back away from what those world-building, character-driven storytelling experiences have to be. That will continue in the TV space, but right now we have a huge focus on getting back into the ▶



09 Kennedy was at the helm of Lucasfilm from 2012 to 2026.

theater. We've got *The Mandalorian and Grogu* coming up in May 2026, and then *Star Wars: Starfighter* the following year. I can't say that there'll be a yearly cadence of movies—we'll make the movies when they're ready to be made—but having movies in theaters is the most important thing to us."

The first of those, *The Mandalorian and Grogu,* opens on May 22, just a few days shy of *Star Wars: A New Hope*'s 49th anniversary, and unsurprisingly Kennedy is very much looking forward to its arrival.

"I've been going through this experience with Jon Favreau since we started the TV series. Doing a movie was always part of the plan," Kennedy reveals. "I couldn't be more excited. Every time I see any aspect of this movie as it gets closer and closer to the finish line, it's thrilling. The fact that we've been able to expand the storytelling, the spectacle, and visual experience and bring it to the big screen, it's great."

Her enthusiasm extends to the score, composed by Academy Award winner Ludwig Göransson. "I was just on the scoring stage with Ludwig," she says. "What he's able to do with a 105-piece orchestra reminded me of why I love movies so much; it's that feeling and sense of spectacle that draws you in, in a way that frankly, television can't. That's what I think is thrilling about where we're going with this. Industrial Light & Magic has done an incredible job on this film."

The return of *Star Wars* to cinema screens after a gap of several years will, no doubt, introduce a new raft of fans that speaks to its multi-generational reach. Kennedy is well aware of what that means.

"You can look at *Star Wars* in segments, depending on where and when you became a fan," she explains. "You might have been there at the beginning with *A New Hope,* or you found it through the prequels, or the sequels—whenever it was, that's your *Star Wars.* Families started watching *The Mandalorian* during the pandemic, so it became a family event. To me, *Star Wars* is about family, and sharing this story that now represents 50 years of storytelling across multiple generations. It's so important that we carry that forward."



10



11

10 Kennedy and John Knoll admiring the *Razor Crest* miniature.

11 *The Mandalorian* creator Jon Favreau and Kennedy with Season One directors (l-r) Deborah Chow, Taika Waititi, Dave Filoni, Bryce Dallas Howard, and Rick Famuyima.

With Kennedy's impressive tenure as president of Lucasfilm and guardian of the *Star Wars* galaxy now at an end, we asked Kathleen if she had a final message for *Star Wars Insider*'s readers.

"*Star Wars* couldn't have lasted nearly 50 years without people who care deeply, show up, and pass it along. The fans are the heartbeat of the franchise, and *Star Wars Insider* has been a very important part of building the community. That passion has always mattered, and it always will, so thank you for your loyalty, your enthusiasm, and for being an important part of the story."

An armored Grogu, ready for adventure.

"STRAP IN!"

Get ready for *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu* with *Insider*'s preview of the first new theatrical *Star Wars* movie since 2019.

Opening exclusively in theaters and IMAX on May 22, 2026, *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu* is the first big-screen outing for the clan of two, and it's their most thrilling adventure yet.

The evil Empire has fallen, and Imperial warlords remain scattered throughout the galaxy. As the New Republic works to protect everything the Rebellion fought for, they have enlisted the help of legendary Mandalorian bounty hunter Din Djarin (Pedro Pascal) and his young apprentice Grogu.

In an epic cinematic escapade with all the excitement and drama of the *Star Wars* galaxy, *The Mandalorian and Grogu* sees our heroes embark on a dangerous mission on behalf of Colonel Ward (Sigourney Weaver) to counter the threat posed by the Imperial remnant. Along the way, Djarin will fight Jabba the Hutt's son, Rotta (Jeremy Allen White), face off against terrifying creatures, and encounter new allies, including Garazeb "Zeb" Orellios (Steve Blum) of *Star Wars Rebels* fame.

The movie is directed by Jon Favreau, and produced by Favreau, Kathleen Kennedy, Dave Filoni, and Ian Bryce.

PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW RIDE

Don't touch the buttons!

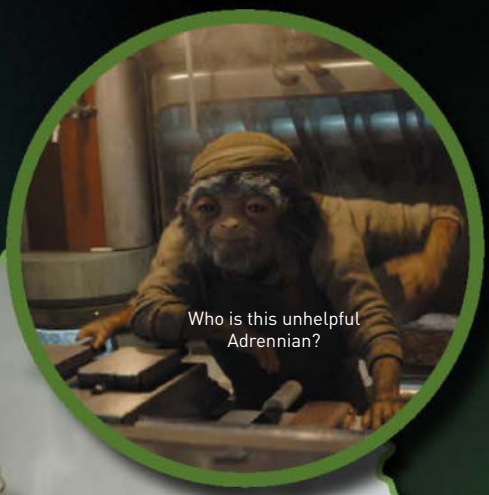
The *Razor Crest* is back! Din Djarin has procured a yellow-trimmed replacement for the ship that was blasted to smithereens on Tython. Good job, as there's more room in the back for holding captured bounties than in his N1-starfighter!

Din Djarin's new ship blasts off into adventure.

THE MISSION

"Gangsters. War criminals. We'll take out every bad guy in your deck of cards," Din Djarin promises Colonel Ward at the New Republic's Adelphi Base.

As they scour the galaxy for vital intel, the duo encounter an Adrennian fry cook (voiced by legendary filmmaker Martin Scorsese).



Who is this unhelpful Adrennian?



"Long Live the Empire."

Colonel Ward, played by Sigourney Weaver.

THE HUTTS

Cousins to Jabba the Hutt, the Twins have already caused trouble for Boba Fett on Tatooine. But they're just one slug-shaped obstacle in Din Djarin and Grogu's mission. Jabba's son, Rotta, is ready for a fight.

The Hutt Twins.



Mando unmasked!



Will Mando be any match for a ripped Rotta?

IS THAT A DRAGONSNAKE?

Din Djarin certainly doesn't seem pleased to see this creature, which is native to swamp worlds like Nal Hutta.





Din Djarin doesn't have much luck with water.

TARGET ACQUIRED

Din Djarin isn't the only bounty hunter on the scene in *The Mandalorian and Grogu*. Embo, who first appeared in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars'* second season, looks set to prove troublesome for Mando and Grogu.



What is the bounty Embo is after?



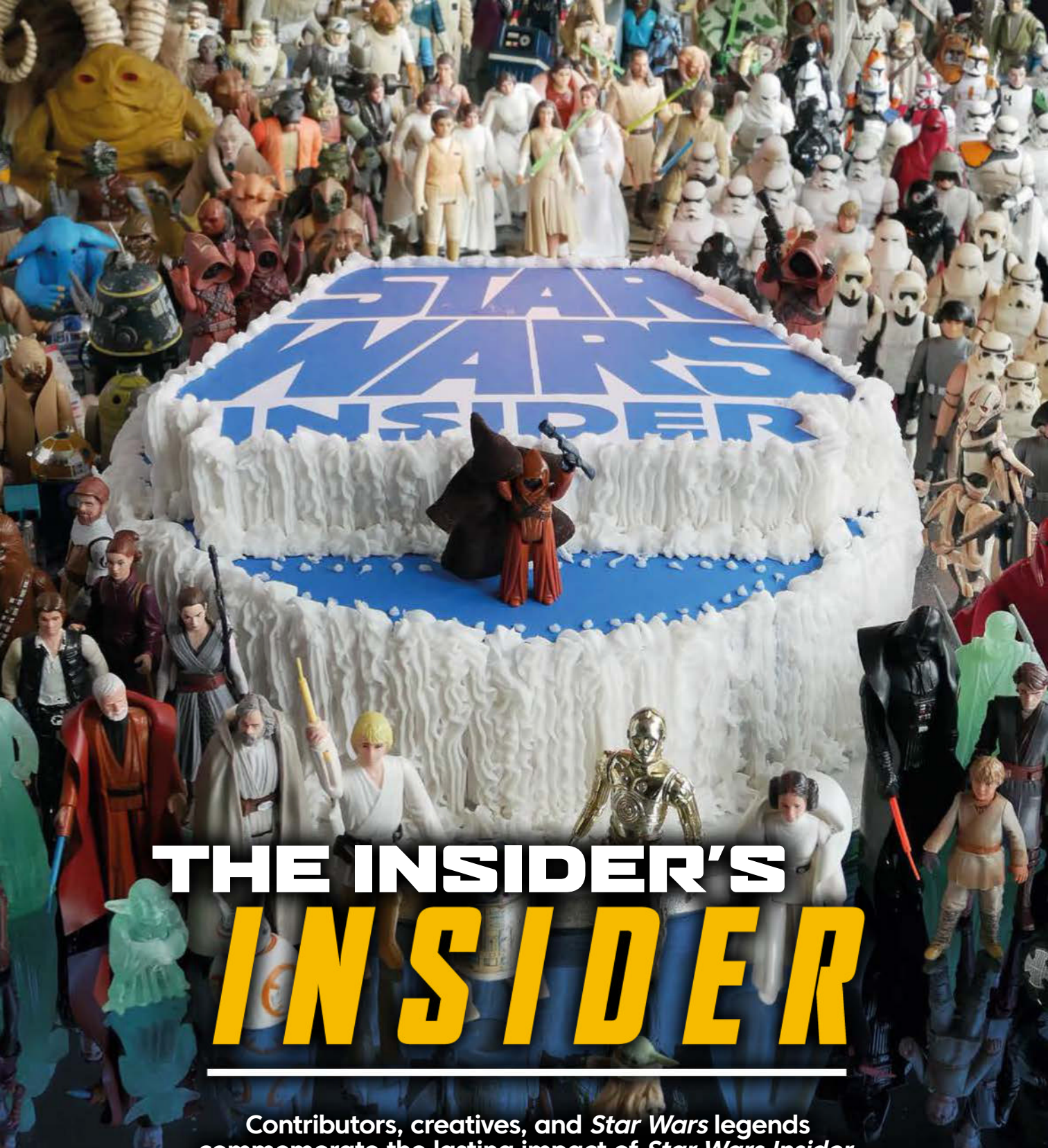
Use the Force, Grogu!

THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE



A meditative moment for Grogu

Grogu's abilities step up a gear in *The Mandalorian and Grogu*. What does the future hold for the little green guy? Find out when the new movie opens on May 22.



THE INSIDER'S INSIDER

Contributors, creatives, and *Star Wars* legends commemorate the lasting impact of *Star Wars Insider.*

WORDS: MELISSA T. MILLER

Over the decades, *Star Wars Insider* has celebrated the creativity behind the saga, bringing to life the stories of people behind the scenes as well as those in front of the camera. But the magazine has its own making of story beyond the people who have appeared in its pages. Each issue does not simply write itself and appear magically in mailboxes and stores. It has taken the dedication of many contributors to make it happen—creatives who share across the following pages what *Insider* meant to them, personally and professionally.



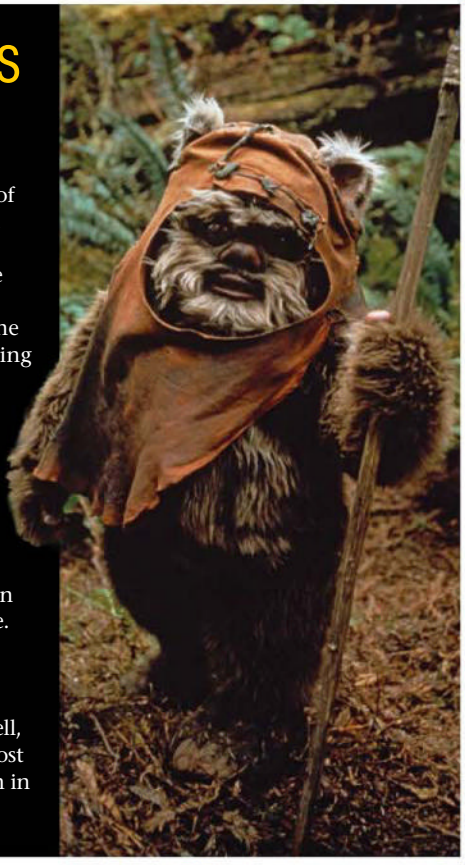
Warwick Davis

Actor (Wicket W. Warwick) and *Insider* guest editor

"For more than three decades, *Insider* has been the beating heart of the galaxy far, far away, a publication that not only chronicled the saga, but shaped the way generations understood it. Like Obi-Wan Kenobi reminding us that 'your eyes can deceive you; don't trust them,' the magazine consistently looked beyond the obvious, revealing the craft, creativity, and community that made *Star Wars* endure.

Insider became a trusted guide for fans navigating an ever-expanding universe. Its pages celebrated the visionaries who brought the mythology to life and championed the fans who kept its spirit burning. As Yoda once said, 'Pass on what you have learned,' and that is precisely what this magazine has done, passing on knowledge, passion, and wonder with every issue.

On a personal note, it was an honor to be featured in *Insider* several times. To appear in a publication that meant so much to so many is something I will always cherish. As we bid farewell, we echo the words of Leia Organa: 'Hope is not lost today… it is found.' The legacy of *Insider* lives on in every fan it inspired."





Gus Lopez

***Insider* contributor, creator of The *Star Wars* Collector's Archive**

"I have the complete run of all issues of *Insider*, and I will continue to reference and cherish the magazine as an essential part of my *Star Wars* library. *Insider* was a great vehicle for sharing information about *Star Wars* collectibles to this growing area of fandom."



Amy Ratcliffe

Author and *Insider* contributor

"I won't forget the feeling of seeing my name in print for the first time. It's remained a thrill and honor ever since to contribute to a magazine that's been such a joyful and influential part of my fandom and writing career. I haven't yet come to terms with the end of this era."

Jimmy Mac McInerney

***Insider* contributor and podcaster**

"From Dan Madsen's prequel production updates with Rick McCallum, to collecting news and advice from the great Stephen J. Sansweet, to the wild-and-crazy 'Wonder Column' written by the ever-effervescent and always witty Anthony Daniels, *Insider* was the conduit for fans to stay connected and up-to-date with our favorite film franchise. I devoured each and every issue.

Thank you, *Star Wars Insider*. It's been a great run."



Kelly Knox

StarWars.com contributor

"*Insider* was one of the only ways a small-town kid like me could hear stories from behind the scenes of the original trilogy. I never imagined that, decades later, I'd be in the pages of the magazine myself for my own work with *Star Wars*. *Insider* will always be an unforgettable part of my lifelong *Star Wars* journey."





Steve Sansweet

Founder of Rancho Obi-Wan museum and former Lucasfilm head of Fan Relations

I was on the phone in 1994 when Lucasfilm's director of publishing and Dan Madsen were discussing changing the name of *The Lucasfilm Fan Club Magazine* to *Star Wars Insider*. I thought it was a great idea, and that was the beginning of my 30-plus year friendship with Dan. For several years I wrote a column answering collectors' questions and eventually became the in-house editor of the international fan magazines. What an amazing, fulfilling journey it has been!"



Timothy Zahn

Author and *Insider* contributor

"I've had fun reading *Insider* over the years. It's been a great run, and I hope you've had fun."

Joonas Suotamo

Actor (Chewbacca, Kelnacca)

"*Insider* has allowed me to share my on-set experiences with fans, from breaking down Kelnacca's big fight scene to contributing to a guide about Chewbacca. I have loved providing insight into my approach to playing these extraordinary Wookiees."





Jason Fry

Author and *Insider* contributor

"I'm so grateful for the chance to have written for *Insider*. The magazine was a shared space for *Star Wars* fandom before the explosion of digital communities, and a tremendously vital and important one that showed so many others how to create and maintain those spaces."



Bryan Young

Author and *Insider* contributor

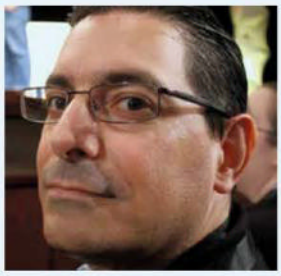
"I genuinely don't remember a time without *Insider*. Seeing my name in print in an official *Star Wars* publication was a dream of mine. One feature I wrote that meant a lot to me was a multi-part series on the influence of the original West End *Star Wars* Roleplaying Games. Getting to talk to the folks who created it, and interviewing people like Timothy Zahn, Aaron Allston, and Michael Stackpole about how they built the original Expanded Universe out of it was amazing."

Kristin Baver

Editor-in-chief of StarWars.com and *Insider* contributor

"*Insider* crystallized what it meant to be a *Star Wars* fan, and gave me irrefutable, tangible proof that I was far from the only person who adored the galaxy far, far away. I voraciously read each issue cover-to-cover. My sister and I absolutely adored Anthony Daniels' column growing up. But I think the shopping section of the 1990s was my favorite. It was a lightning-in-a-bottle idea that grew out of a very simple edict: the fans matter. *Insider* has brought people together, sharing their stories, and making its readers feel like they were a part of something bigger than just a personal fandom. It has been the stuff of dreams for me, and I am so glad to have been part of these pages and this community."





James Burns

***Insider* contributor**

"*Insider* will forever remain an integral part of *Star Wars* history."



Sander de Lange

***Insider* and StarWars.com contributor**

"*Insider* brought forth a lot of great writers who got their career started on the magazine. And let's not forget the countless friendships that formed among all of us who worked on it. Those will be an everlasting legacy of *Star Wars Insider*."



Jake Lunt Davies

Concept Artist and *Insider* contributor

"Coming from the world of film where most of my artwork is rarely seen by an audience outside of the production, it was an amazing opportunity to collaborate with *Star Wars Insider* and Lydia Kang, not only to see my work in print but also on the front cover of a magazine."



Lucas Seastrom

Lucasfilm historian and *Insider* contributor

"Reading *Star Wars Insider* was one of the first ways in which I felt connected to a larger community of fans around the world. Time and again it's been a treasured resource, with stories, interviews, and insights that otherwise might have been lost. Many of them are unique, with crew members or actors who hadn't been interviewed by anyone else about their involvement in *Star Wars* or other Lucasfilm projects. The magazine has illuminated details and stories about the creation of the galaxy far, far away, and provided a few handy quotations for writers like me!"

Terryl Whitlatch

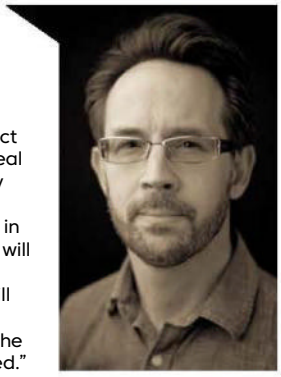
Principal creature designer for *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*



"*Insider* has been a faithful archive of what makes *Star Wars* special to so many people around the world, as well as documenting the making of the franchise, and thus constitutes an invaluable resource for fans, students, and film professionals. It was a true honor to contribute to this legacy."

Pete Vilmur

Senior Writer at Lucasfilm, former editor of the "Bantha Tracks" section of *Insider*



"The most important and lasting impact of *Insider* is the history it captured in real time, as events in the *Star Wars* galaxy (and fandom on Earth) unfolded. This history will survive because it's printed in hardcopy, something future historians will undoubtedly celebrate. The interviews and boots-on-the-ground reporting will become a primary resource for those studying the history of *Star Wars* and the phenomenon it launched and sustained."



Dan Brooks

Former StarWars.com editor and *Insider* contributor

"Back in the 1990s, *Insider* offered a sense of connection to the saga and its fandom in a way that nothing else really could. I remember how exciting it was to see the first images of a Naboo starfighter in its pages. It was a thrill and honor when I had my first *Insider* article published."



Lydia Kang

Author and *Insider* contributor

"*Star Wars Insider* has a legacy of short fiction and to be part of that, to entertain readers every month, to be challenged by the short story form, was an extraordinary and lovely experience. All this, while creating within the *Star Wars* galaxy? It was magical for me."



Lillian Noble

Lucasfilm Publicity Manager

"*Insider* was one of the early ways that I connected with the *Star Wars* fandom. Growing up, I'd buy the latest magazine to read interviews with current creatives and collect back issues from the 90s to discover how fans learned about the then-upcoming prequel trilogy. My absolute favorite sections of the magazine to read were Bantha Tracks (I definitely wrote in) and the 2-1B column. To the people behind the magazine, from founder Dan Madsen and Fantha Tracks editor Mary Franklin, to Jonathan Wilkins and the current team—Christopher Cooper, Jennifer Pooley, and Brett Rector— it's been an honor to work with *Insider* in a professional capacity. Thank you for all of your hard work, passion, and kindness!"

Mark Newbold

***Insider* contributor**



"It's been an incredible run for *Insider*, and every publisher, editor, and contributor has done a great job of bringing the saga just that little bit closer to home every time it dropped through the mailbox. Over 160 contributions later and the thrill of seeing my name in the magazine hasn't waned. I'll always be proud to say I wrote for *Star Wars Insider*."



Samuel C. Spitale

Author and Insider Contributor

"I remain grateful to *Insider* for giving me a chance to have such fun with the brand and for keeping the Force alive and well for so many memorable years!"

Mary Fan

***Insider* contributor**

"I loved the opportunity to work on the Worldwide pages of *Insider*, highlighting the heart and soul of the franchise: the fans. I'm grateful to have had the chance to hear their stories and give them a well-deserved moment in the spotlight."

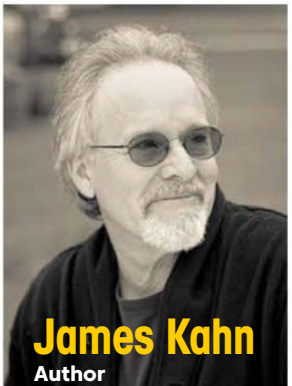




James Clarke

***Insider* contributor**

"*Insider* has been a wellspring of insight about all facets of the galaxy, far, far away. It's been vital to fostering and encouraging conversation across a devoted community, especially during those years that predated the online world. Here's to *Star Wars* and all of the ways that it enriches and emboldens us and continues to provide so much joy."



James Kahn

Author

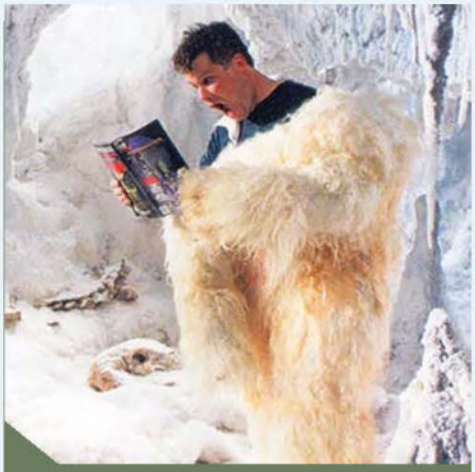
"*Insider* was a vibrant, glossy, focus of information and excitement in the *Star Wars* galaxy. I was honored to be a small part of it, speaking about my novelization of *Return of the Jedi*, and will be forever grateful for that inclusion, highlighting my experience writing for this legendary franchise."

George Mann

Author and *Insider* contributor

"It's been a real joy to work with *Insider* over the years. The series of stories I wrote for Phase II of *The High Republic* were some of my favorite pieces for the whole initiative, and being able to deliver them in serialized chunks really allowed us to create something that built over time, in a way that's all too rare in modern storytelling. *Insider* has been an important touchstone for *Star Wars* fans for many years, and its contribution cannot be ignored."





Howie Weed

Industrial Light & Magic creature artist

"When the Special Editions were being made, myself and a team of amazing ILM Model Shop creature artists were lucky enough to grace a cover of *Insider*, with the Wampa as the spotlight article. It was such an honor to be part of that print legacy. I still have four or five copies tucked away in a drawer as very prized possessions."

Tom Spina

Founder of Tom Spina Designs, prop and costume restoration

"My personal favorite *Star Wars Insider* explorations were the ones that delved behind the camera. I am honored to have been able to contribute to the magazine over the years, and share the stories of the creature makers who inspired me to go into a life of FX and monsters. There was no better place to shine a spotlight on these unsung heroes than *Insider!*"





Michael Siglain

Creative Director, Lucasfilm Publishing

"I'm extremely grateful to have been able to work with Brett Rector and everyone at Lucasfilm, and with Chris, Jonathan, and everyone at Titan, to help bring *Star Wars Insider* to fans throughout the world. I hope our combined contributions added a little more behind-the-scenes knowledge and fun to a galaxy far, far away."



Adam Savage

ILM model maker, MythBusters host

"I worked in the FX industry for 10 years and the only print publication that featured my model making work was *Insider*. It was finally something I could send to my mom. Best of all it was a pic of me and my colleague Tory Belleci, who later joined me on MythBusters! It holds a special place in my heart."

Chris Kempshall

Author and *Insider* contributor

"*Insider* has long been a fixture in my life, so getting to write articles about the historical roots and interpretations of the *Star Wars* saga for the magazine meant a lot to me."



Amy Richau

Author and *Insider* contributor

"Receiving a *Star Wars* focused magazine in the mail is something I will truly miss. There's something special about a physical magazine that connects fans, gives them access to behind-the-scenes interviews, and treats them to original short stories that add to the ever-growing *Star Wars* galaxy. I enjoyed reading *Insider* before and after I had the honor of contributing articles to it. I will always treasure connecting with the people I was able to interview and the fellow writers I met through the magazine. It's truly the end of an era."





David W. Collins

Sound designer and voice actor

"*Insider* gave me my very first sense of a much broader *Star Wars* fan community that I hadn't known existed. It gave me a sense of belonging. I remember seeing rows and rows of magazines in stores, and when I found *Insider*, it was absolutely a 'Chewie, we're home' feeling. *Insider* was like a *Star Wars* Celebration in magazine form. It has brought happiness to so many people for years, and provided a reading experience that has helped fans effortlessly connect with the saga they love."

Brian Herring

Puppeteer (BB-8 and other creatures)

"I was a reader of *Star Wars Insider* from very early on, and its articles about the people who made the movies fueled my interest in film-making. It was therefore exciting to find myself actually appearing in the magazine. It made my involvement in the saga feel that much more real to me, and I hope that somewhere, someone thought 'If he can do it, so can I.'"

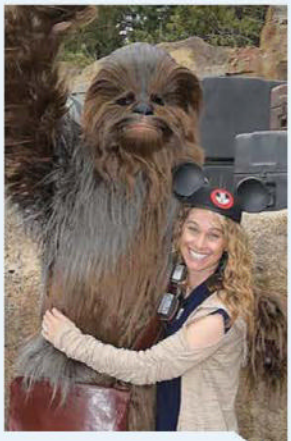


Harvey Hamer



Author and *Insider* contributor

"The legacy of *Insider* is that it brought fans and creatives closer together, and fostered the best aspects of the fan community."



S.T. Bende

Author and *Insider* contributor

"*Star Wars Insider* gave me my first chance to write original fiction in a galaxy far, far away. I'll always be grateful for the joy it brought to my mailbox, and for all the ways it connected so many people across the globe. I'm going to miss it so much!"



Chris Trevas

Artist and *Insider* contributor

"I was a member of the Lucasfilm Fan Club since I was a kid (I still have my original membership card!) And *Insider* was one of my first clients as a professional illustrator. My ongoing feature, 'Set Piece,' which covered behind the scenes of a particular location from issue #54 to #100, is special to me as it grew from my love of props and set building."



Shea Standefer

Artist

"For those of us who were born after the original trilogy came out and never experienced the hype of watching the original movies in theaters, *Insider* was a window into a community I hadn't known existed. It helped to sate my preteen, all-consuming obsession with *Star Wars*."

Fon Davis

ILM model maker

"I grew up reading *Bantha Tracks*, and my career dreams were inspired by seeing Asian model makers like Greg Jein, Ease Owyeung, and Larry Tan in its pages. After I started working in ILM's model shop in 1996, *Insider* featured pictures of me and my work. I hope maybe further generations saw me in the pages of *Insider* and were just as inspired as I was."



Adam Christopher

Author and *Insider* Contributor



"I can't overstate how thrilled I was to be featured in *Insider* as an author. Both of my books, *Shadow of the Sith* and *Master of Evil,* got a lot of coverage and it was pretty surreal to see myself in a magazine all about *Star Wars.* We're all fans—this is why we do what we do—and to make that leap into *Star Wars* as a creator is the ultimate dream.



Tim Veekhoven

StarWars.com and *Insider* contributor

"Naming unnamed background characters for an *Insider* feature called 'Rogues Gallery' was a dream project for me. Hasbro even made an action figure of Helder Spinoza using the name I'd made up in the feature. Thanks to *Insider*, I can proudly say that I named a *Star Wars* action figure."

Tricia Barr

Author and *Insider* contributor

"I'm most grateful to have been entrusted with writing *'Carrie Fisher: The First Lady of Star Wars,'* a tribute to the late icon published in the March 2017 issue. Writing it helped me grieve, and like many *Star Wars* fans, I strive to live up to Carrie's inspiration every day."





Joe Corroney

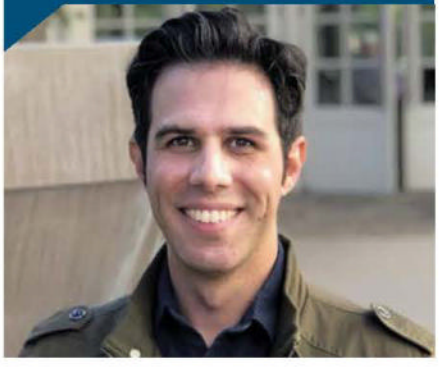
Artist and *Insider* contributor

"I collected *Insider* as a fan long before I became a frequent contributor to the magazine. I worked with many talented writers and editors and made many great friends and met so many fans over the years because of these collaborations. I'll always be grateful for the friendships and the amazing opportunities the magazine gave me to share my love for *Star Wars* through my artwork."

Adam Lance Garcia

Author and *Insider* Contributor

"In these halcyon days of Galaxy's Edge, *The High Republic,* and multiple movies in the works, we can forget just how rare it was to get new *Star Wars.* When I was a young *Star Wars* fan, *Insider* was a way to revel in my fandom. And for the *Star Wars* author I became, it was a significant impetus in my career. *Insider* was a reminder that *Star Wars* is for everyone. Every new issue showed fans that there were so many ways to celebrate their fandom."





Chris Bartlett

Actor (*The Mandalorian* and *Ahsoka*)

"The day I received word that my acting work was featured in *Insider,* alongside actors and directors I've worked with and admired, will be one I'll never forget. Thank you for all the stories and love you gave us over the years. In a sprawling, epic galaxy of *Star Wars* trivia, you made us feel like we were the real insiders."



Kevin Pearl

Licensing at Disney Publishing

"Many a lifelong friendship was forged over debates about behind-the-scenes photos and JAWA trader listings in the lunchroom at Middle School. I still remember earning my own Jedi status, after being the first among my friends to score a copy of SWI #37 when Senator Palpatine was... REVEALED! Years later, working with such a talented team to help 'carry the lightsaber' has truly been an honor and a privilege."

Pablo Hidalgo

Director, Franchise Content & Strategy at Lucasfilm



"Star Wars Insider is a time capsule capturing and preserving the evolution of the expanding *Star Wars* experience. In an age where our promised online information age really didn't come to pass, having these physical copies on a shelf and being able to dip back into, say, 1999 and experience the buildup to the release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* is invaluable. I have all my original issues, dating back to my teens, on my shelf in my office at Lucasfilm.

Those of us—and there are many—who consider themselves *Star Wars* historians, professionally or as a hobby, benefit greatly from all the work contributors put into the magazine."



Melissa T. Miller

***Insider* contributor and podcast host**

"As a lifelong *Star Wars* fan, holding my first article for *Insider*, 'The Secret Life of Porgs,' in my hands connected me to a galaxy far, far away on a deeper level. Being a semi-professional fan is a great joy and I will miss this outlet to geek out with all of you. I know its energy will live on."



Jay Stobie

***Insider* and ILM.com contributor**

"Writing features and regular columns for *Star Wars Insider* has been a profound honor, and watching as my grandparents excitedly read my work in print is a memory that I will always cherish."

Arda Ocal

Sports host and *Insider* contributor



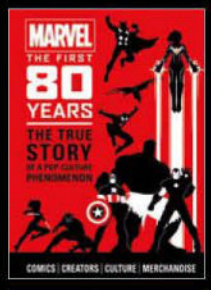
"I was lucky enough to write an article for Star Wars Insider and it was a complete thrill. I'll miss flipping through the pages every issue. Thank you for everything!"

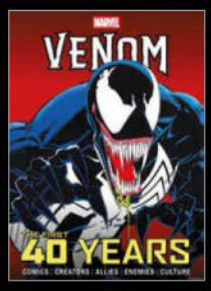
Mark Hamill

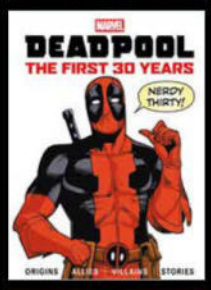
Actor (Luke Skywalker)

"Congratulations to everyone involved with the successful run of *Star Wars Insider!* Both insightful and inspirational. Fans have much to be grateful for. With many thanks, MH."

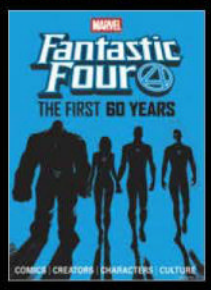


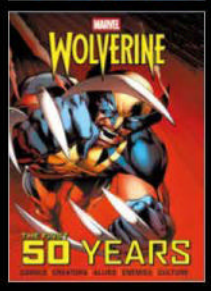






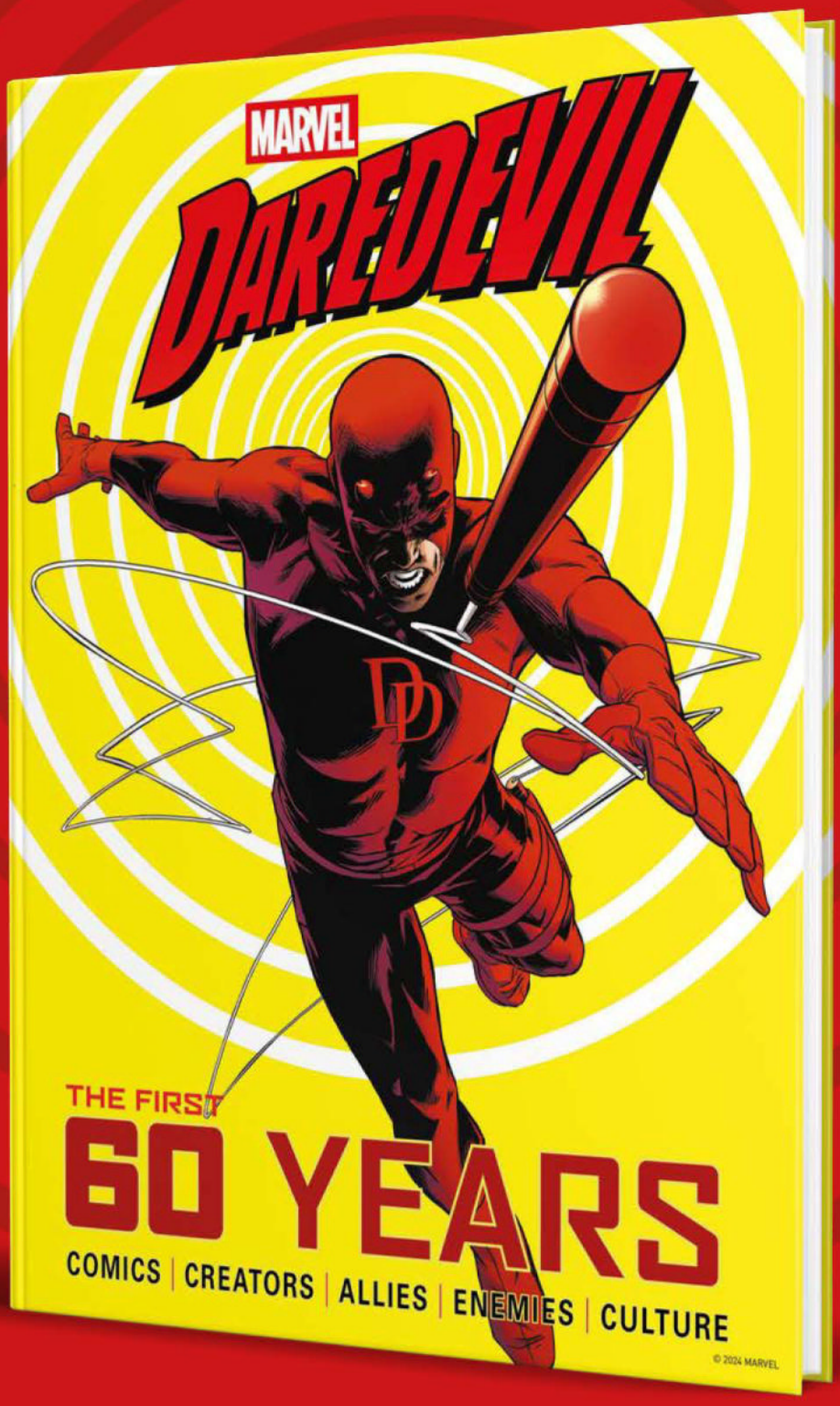






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01 Luthen Rael (Stellan Skarsgård) and Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) evade the authorities on Ferrix in *Andor* Season One.



Cut to the chase

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story and _Andor_ editor John Gilroy talks to _Star Wars Insider_ about life in the cutting room.

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER COOPER

After joining the _Star Wars_ galaxy to help reshape _Rogue One: A Star Wars Story_ with his brother Tony Gilroy, _Andor_ executive producer John Gilroy edited eight episodes of the hit Disney+ series and led the editorial team across both seasons. _Insider_ spoke with the seasoned editor to learn how the series was pieced together.

***Star Wars Insider*: You've had a long and collaborative working relationship with your brothers Tony and Dan Gilroy. How did that first begin?**

John Gilroy: Our dad was in the entertainment business. A Hollywood screenwriter who eventually became a director as well. My twin brother Dan and I were actually born in Los Angeles, but when we were three, our folks moved us all to upstate New York. The thinking was that they did not want to raise their kids in Hollywood. It's a little ironic, because the three of us all ended up gravitating toward the entertainment business. Tony and Danny became writers, and I got into editing with the idea of becoming a director. Tony and Dan initially worked as a writing team, but realized it was more lucrative to work solo, so they embarked on separate careers. I worked in a lot of cutting rooms as an assistant, then finally as an editor. It wasn't really until we were in the middle of our careers that our trajectories converged.

Tony was the first one of us to land a directing gig. At the time, it just made a lot of sense for me to be his editor. I'd cut a picture for my dad, and he knew that Tony would be in good hands so he lobbied heavily for it. It was very easy to work with Tony. *Michael Clayton (2007)* was a fantastic script that he had been saving for himself. Our sensibilities and tastes are very much the same, and we quickly ▶

developed a communicational shorthand in the cutting room. When my brother Danny started directing it was the same thing. I've cut everything either one of them have ever directed.

At what point did you decide that editing was your thing?
As I said, I got into editing to become a director but it's so hard to actually get a directorial project off the ground. I had a couple of directing jobs fall through at the last minute, and I got tired of waiting, raising money, getting talent to commit at the right time. It was very frustrating. I had sort of trivialized my editing career up to that point because I wanted to be a director, but I suddenly had an epiphany—I'd become quite a good editor and I realized I hated all the glad-handing that went with the job of being a director. From then on, I just decided to take my editing career seriously.

Working with your brothers must offer creative advantages?
It's just strange good luck that they are both so talented. Usually, I have to work with a director a few times before developing that shorthand I mentioned earlier. The advantage with them is that in both cases, it was instantaneous.

You came together again to work on *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story,* reworking a movie that had already been shot and cut. How essential was your editorial eye in working out where the storytelling needed a lift?
I'm quite skilled at "editing room rewriting," but *Rogue One* was a good deal more that. Before I got there, Tony quietly camped out at the *Rogue One* cutting room in London with Col Goudie to explore how to totally reimagine the movie. He came up with a very ambitious and brilliant plan. It was a combination of re-tasking the intent of many scenes and also shooting and reshooting many scenes. A hell of a lot of work.

When Disney and Lucasfilm gave us the go ahead for this ambitious project, I was on the next plane to London to oversee the editing. I'll tell you, we used every trick in the book to get that film on its feet by its release date, and we were all very proud of the results.

Your career has primarily been in movies. Is it different editing a TV series?
It's similar. You're doing the same things, except you're painting on a much bigger canvas. We did the math: 22 months to make a season, 12 episodes per season. It's like making eight movies in four years. We covered a lot of ground.
Also, I was working with a lot of other talented editors, because we were obviously cutting multiple

02





03

"There's a lot of quiet power in the cutting room."

04



02 The rebel base on Yavin 4.

03 Darth Vader's memorable assault on fleeing rebels was added to *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* during reshoots.

04 Felicity Jones as Jyn Erso in *Rogue One*.



05 Diego Luna reprised his role as the eponymous lead in *Andor*.

shows at a time. I had to get used to delegating more, but with the right people it went pretty smoothly. Big movies often do a lot of reshoots, usually because the scripts weren't tight enough before shooting, which leads to story problems.

As expensive as *Andor* was for a television show, we could never do that. We couldn't afford it. The scripts had to be really honed, really tight, really good. Everybody relied on that, including editorial. We went into production with a good plan and executed it. It's the only way you can make a show like this look and feel like a very expensive *Star Wars* movie. Tony built a really good workflow, first, and most importantly, with the writer's room, then with the directors. He brought them up to speed but he didn't micromanage them. He let them direct. I was there in post-production making sure everything felt right as we made the show.

Production moves more quickly in television, but finishing the show actually took a long time, mostly because *Andor* was so VFX heavy. The first year of a season, we were shooting all these episodes, and the second year we were mostly finishing them. As things moved along the assembly line, we got to live with our episodes and really scrutinize them. If Tony, [series producer] Sanne Wohlenberg, myself, or the VFX team had a small idea to improve a scene or sequence we did it. Those small improvements really added up. *Andor* was a lot of show, but this waiting period allowed us the same degree of scrutiny that any feature film gets. The schedule really helped with that.

A rough cut, sometimes called an 'assembly edit,' is usually the first stage in cutting a television episode, but you don't work that way.

I'm always trying to cut the movie that I would want to see, so I don't really believe in assembly editing. ▶

JOHN GILROY CAREER NOTES

John Gilroy has edited more than 30 feature films in a career that has spanned four decades, working with directors including Guillermo Del Toro, Philip Noyce, David Ayer, and Joe Carnahan.

He has collaborated with brothers Tony and Dan Gilroy on movies such as *The Bourne Legacy* (2012), *Michael Clayton* (2007), and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.*





06

I try to cut a film or a show like it's going straight to the movie theater. For any scene, a shooting plan is made. The first thing I do is to understand and execute that plan. I try to get the most out of every scene I cut as quickly as I can. You're not doing that if you are just tacking a scene together. The more perfectly that individual scenes are cut, the closer to the truth you will be when you join them into a sequence.

I think the most important tool for an editor is instinct. I don't over-intellectualize editorial decisions. Usually, it's stream of consciousness. It's hard to explain the feeling—how do monkeys know how to swing through trees, you know? It's a little bit like that. I swear, sometimes I don't even feel like I have anything to do with it. It's like tuning into a very specific frequency and channeling it.

There are a lot of metaphors for editing; mountain climbing, playing golf, being a surgeon. I'm really just trying to get from point A to point B, trying to climb that mountain.

Were there any scenes that proved to be problematic?

Editors are problem solvers. That's what we're basically doing all the time. I'm proud of the whole show really. Our best episode of Season One was probably Episode 10, "One Way Out," the Narkina 5 prison break, which was expertly put together by Simon Smith.

Season 2, it was probably Episode 8 "Who Are You," which Yan Miles cut and my brother Dan Gilroy wrote. To be honest I loved them all.

At what point did it become clear that the initial plan to do multiple seasons needed to be condensed into two?

The story covers the five years before *Rogue One,* so we thought there would be five seasons. In the middle of making Season One, Tony and Diego Luna started thinking, "Wow, it's going to take us ten years to do this!" And no one really had the appetite for that [laughs].

We already had these three-episode arcs, which evolved in

06 Filmmaking brothers (l-r) John, Tony and Dan Gilroy.

"Editors are problem solvers. That's what we're basically doing all the time."

Season One, so we decided to hold onto that structure but condense things and make every one of those arcs a year apart in Season Two. It really worked. Probably the biggest advantage was that it added a heightened sense of urgency to the end of our story in a way that was unexpected. It had a real punch to it.

The unfolding of Ghorman's fate played out over the entirety of Season Two, with different directors and editors handling different episodes. How closely did they work together to keep the storytelling consistent?

It starts with the scripts. We had a great plan of what to do. Also, Tony and Sanne promoted a lot of communication between our various productions, and the three of us were closely watching over

everything. All the directors and the editors read all the scripts, so everybody understood the arcs. They could see where seeds that were planted in earlier episodes were going to be paying off in their episodes. Everybody had a good overview of what we were doing.

Andor feels "of a piece" with _A New Hope_, despite being tonally very different. How did you, Tony, Dan, and everyone else involved achieve that?
We were telling an adult story set in the galaxy you loved as a child, and we did that by paying attention to the rules. We weren't lightsaber or Force-heavy, but we paid attention to all the rules and timelines of _Star Wars_. We were very faithful to the lore, and I think that was something _Star Wars_ fans really appreciated.

Working on _Rogue One_ was like a blur, but it was an incredible honor because I knew it was so important to so many people. Tony didn't jump onto an _Andor_ series straight away, but when it did happen we were all happy to go back to it. And the pleasure of editing Diego Luna's scenes everyday! What a great actor he is! The four and a half years I worked on _Andor_ went by very quickly, and that's a testament to the show.

Has your _Star Wars_ work been a creatively rewarding experience?
I've been in business for a long time and to be doing great work like _Andor_, at my age, is super rewarding. I'm very proud of it.

07



08





09

07 Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly) found herself in increasing peril across _Andor_'s two seasons.

08 The Narkina 5 prison break.

09 Ghorman's fate was the backdrop to Season Two of _Andor_.

THE SFXPERIENCE

As principal photography was about to begin on *Star Wars: Starfighter* in summer 2025, *Star Wars Insider* sat down with four members of the movie's SFX department—special effects supervisor Dominic Tuohy, floor supervisor Richard Cheal, and model designers Vincent Abbott and Gary Merrington—to discover what makes the art of special effects so special.

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD

The public perception of movie effects is that every awe-inspiring onscreen sequence is CG, rendered by bank after bank of computer processors, and the "old ways" of practical, hand-crafted special effects are all but forgotten. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The art of physical effects has had a renaissance in recent years, although it never really went away.

A common misconception is that visual effects (VFX—added in post-production and including CG) and special effects (SFX—physical effects captured in camera on set) are one and the same. The truth is that they are different tools, often seamlessly combined, used to achieve one goal: to convince an audience that what they are watching is totally real. So, what exactly does the SFX department do?

"We cover a few aspects of the production," explains Richard Cheal, a veteran of the galaxy far, far away who has worked on several *Star Wars* ▶

"If a director wants something at the last minute, we come up with the best solution."
Richard Cheal, Floor Supervisor



01

01 A gimbal allows a prop like this A-wing fighter to tilt and pitch for a shot as required.



02 Daisy Ridley poses beside Rey's speeder, a practical prop that could reach speeds of up to 100 miles per hour.

03



movies, including the sequel trilogy, *Solo: A Star Wars Story,* and most recently *Starfighter*. "We start in the workshop designing and building rigs, and when we go on-set we look after the atmospherics, which is wind, rain, and snow. We also look after pyrotechnics." The department is also on hand to fix problems. "If a director wants something at the last minute, we come up with the best solution."

"We try to be a department that is helpful. We try to be creative," adds special effects supervisor, Dominic Tuohy.

"The floor department works closely with the DOP (director of photography)," Cheal continues. "They set the tone on set. The director and the DOP will have a good idea about a particular scene, so if they need rain, we'll set up a giant rain rig, if it's snow, we have snow machines. We try to create an environment to be as realistic as possible. Often, less is more."

"Anything that moves on a film is down to us," says model designer Vince Abbott. "SFX is broken up into two major departments. You've got the floor department, where Richard (Cheal) is, and the workshop department. I'm based in the workshop. Construction builds everything that doesn't move. The minute it has to move, that's down to us. It could be a sliding door on a spaceship, a gimbal, or a motor vehicle. We are the go-to people for anything practical."

On the Same Page

To start the process, the SFX team breaks down the script, allowing department heads to discern what tasks lay ahead and then discuss those with the director. In the case of the SFX department, that often means determining what will be created practically, and then what will be created by visual effects.

"Let's say the script calls for a ship landing," says Tuohy. "That's VFX. Plus, there's a good chance the characters come down some sort of ramp. That part is VFX and SFX. Then we have to think about how to make everything look real and interesting." He continues. "What we do is smoke and mirrors. We're magicians. We're just trying to hide that fact that what you're watching isn't real, and that's the beauty of filmmaking. The human eye is trained to know what is real, and the moment the audience thinks 'That's not right,' you've lost them. You've lost the story."

"Another offshoot of the workshop is the CAD (Computer Aided Design) department," says Abbott. "We'll have anything from one to six CAD designers, and each will be assigned a separate project. If it's a big enough project, or if time's running out, then we all jump in and help."

Gary Merrington concurs. "Everyone tends to have a project

03 Vincent Abbott designed a three-axis gimbal for the sea skiff prop seen in *The Rise of Skywalker.*

"Usually, you'll focus on a specific rig and own it for the duration of the design and build."
Gary Merrington, Model Designer

piece that they're looking after, and we do help each other out, but usually a person focuses on a specific rig, or rigs, and owns them for the duration of the design and build."

"My speciality is to design all the rigs. Before I start my work, Dominic goes to production meetings with visual effects and the art department, and he comes back with a brief, or game plan, of what we need to do for a particular scene," Abbott explains. "We often use rigs in our inventory that we know work well, especially if we need something the next day, but I like to bring something new to the table that's never been done before. One example was the wavespeeder we shot for *The Rise of Skywalker:* I designed a three-axis gimbal rig, which was an idea that had never been conceptualized or attempted before."

Dominic Tuohy then needs to ensure the departments that overlap with SFX are aware of the rig's capabilities. "Our department makes scaled models of the rigs, which I present to the director to explain their strengths and weaknesses. At that point the lighting cameraman might say, 'I prefer a hydraulic base because I can put my lights here and I can be more controlled.' These discussions lead us to the point where we decide on the way we're going to go, because there's no point in us designing something that will restrict the shooting schedule." The process comes with a huge responsibility. "As a department ▶



04 Anthony Daniels (C-3PO), John Boyega (Finn), and Oscar Isaac (Poe Dameron) prepare to film a scene on the Passana speeder prop.

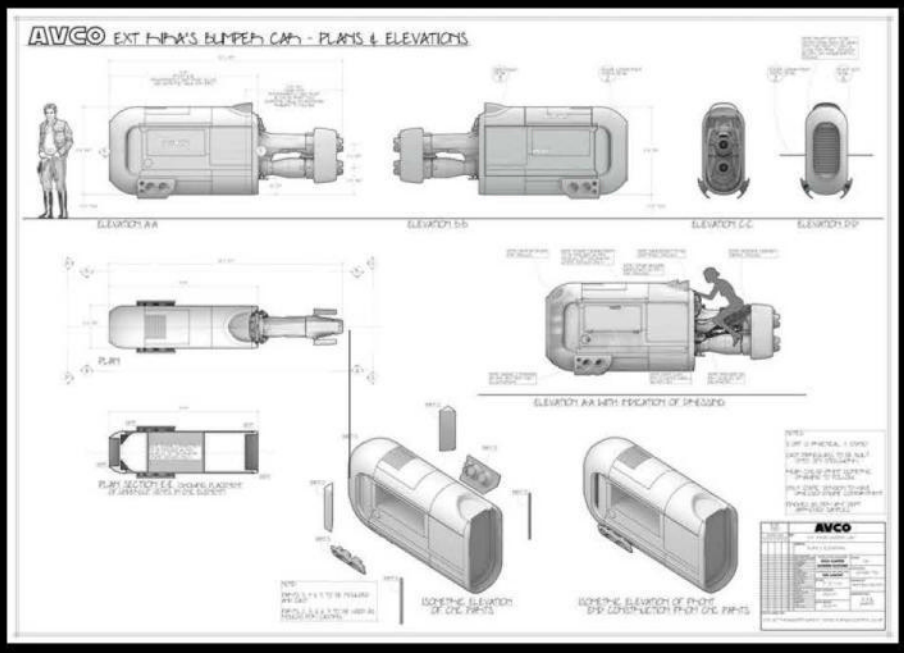
we can be heroes and villains in the same breath. Our rigs work really well, but if a rig does break, it means everyone's waiting on us to fix it. If you look at most shooting days and you consider the crew, the stage space, the rental of everything, that's a lot of money. The last thing we want to do is squander our budget, so our goal is to be as efficient as possible."

Prepped for Success

Preparation is critical to more than just the SFX department, as Cheal explains. "We work with a lot of departments: construction, prop makers, hair and makeup, and costumes. For example: If stormtroopers are getting hit with blaster fire, we need to work out where on the suits the pyrotechnics will go. There's a lot of interaction with the various disciplines," Abbott reveals. "Stunts need to be rehearsed on the rig, set decorators need to climb all over the rig, props need to dress and paint the rig, so that's why there's such an emphasis on the deadline: The minute any rig is greenlit we're go, go, go."

Once that green light is given, then work gets *really* busy, as Abbott explains. "We'll have guys in the workshop cutting metal for numerous rigs, with multiple crews leapfrogging each other.

05



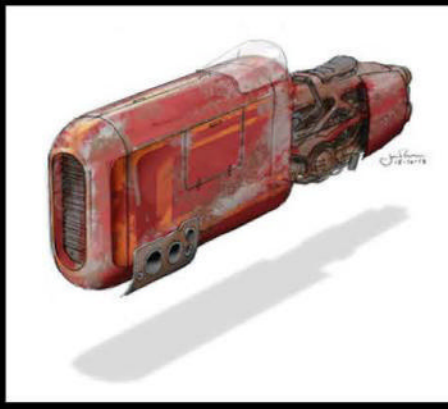
Quite often we'll do six-day weeks, with 10-hour days that can shift up to 12-hour days if needed." On the floor it's no different, as Cheal outlines. "Prep for us is anywhere between 10 to 15 weeks. Once we get the CAD drawings from the workshop, we can figure out a simulation of how it's going to work, and then the practical side takes over." It's a complicated process that needs to be ready to go on the turn of a

05 Blueprint elevations of Rey's speeder.

06 Concept art of Rey's speeder by Jake Lunt Davies.

07 Rey (Daisy Ridley) speeding across the Jakku desert.

06





07

dime. "We're like a coiled spring. We have to prove to the director that we can do it."

The comfort of the actors and needs of the crew must also be taken into consideration, which is where Tuohy's 41 years of filmmaking experience comes into play. "A page is broken down into eight parts, so on the call sheet you'll see that it's one-eighth of a page, which basically means it's one line. If you get eight eighths, that's a full page. That can have a bearing on how long a cast or crew member might be needed up on a rig. If you read a scene and it's two or three pages long, that means an actor is going to be on the rig for quite some time, so I need to be considerate of that. The actor sitting

on the speeder rig needs to be comfortable. They need to be able to get on and off because we're going to be there all day, so even though the design has the actor sitting in a certain position, we need to be able to build it so they can relax their legs."

The bigger rigs also need to be tested and checked for safety, something that is paramount on any film, especially a high-profile *Star Wars* production. "Before any cast or crew step onto a rig, we rigorously and vigorously test it," Cheal explains. "Once we're satisfied it's safe, it will be up to Dominic or me to show the cast how the rig works. For example, if we're in a speeder on a gimbal, we'll explain the maneuvers that we're going to do, and then we'll start at maybe 20 percent speed, so actors can get the feel of the thing. Once they're comfortable, we'll ramp it up. If we can make a fluid rig and the performer can manipulate it with their body to make them feel like they're in that environment, that's a win for us."

08 A scissor-lift rig hidden beneath the black sand allowed the actors to safely 'sink' into it.

09 Filming the Passana sandpit scene on location in Jordan.



08

Visual Versus Special

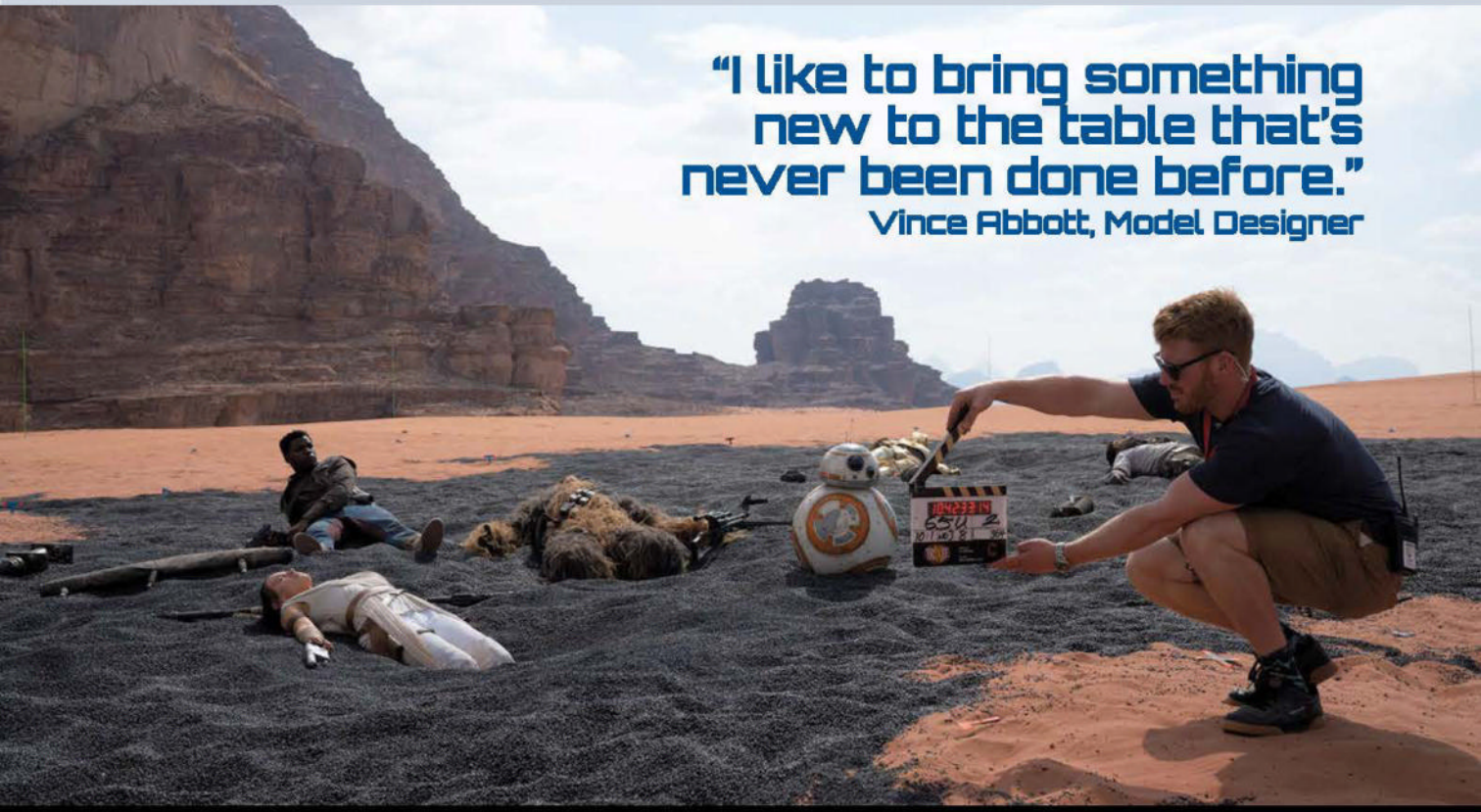
Abbott remembers how *The Force Awakens* director J.J. Abrams embraced everything the SFX department had to offer. "J.J. is very much a practical-effects person. We got to do a lot more than you would expect because he likes to keep things real. Actors need something practical to interact with, and you can tell when they don't have that."

Tuohy agrees. "That's where we have an advantage over visual effects, but they have an amazing set of tools that can push any shot that little bit further."

Abbott explains how the interaction between visual effects and special effects is integral to the fabric of a production. "What people probably don't realize is that we give a lot of visual reference to help the VFX department out. They rely on us for things like explosions and water, so it's good for them to have a visual clue to the way they're going."

"You can do anything with VFX, but in *Star Wars* there needs to be an amount of real-world grittiness to ground the VFX. We add a bit of dirt, age everything down more than we would on other shows," Tuohy adds. "You have to respect

09



"I like to bring something new to the table that's never been done before."
Vince Abbott, Model Designer



10

> "What we try to create are movie moments that everyone remembers."
> Dominic Tuohy, Special Effects Supervisor

the *Star Wars* style, because that's what we know and accept. If we rig an on-set explosion, no one questions it, but the explosion might not be quite big enough, or there might not be enough debris. The visual effects team can make a shot look more explosive; we can add more debris. That's why the combination of SFX with VFX works so well: The special effects team gets things going, and then VFX makes everything look bigger and better."

Abbott gives an example of an SFX build that many assume was created by visual effects. "I did the concept and design for Rey's speeder for *The Force Awakens,* but most people don't realize that it was a practical SFX vehicle that could do 100 miles an hour out on location in the desert, and it worked flawlessly. It could raise, lower, and tilt with Daisy Ridley sitting on the back and a stunt driver hidden inside, but everyone thought it was a visual effect."

Cheal gives another example. "Out in Jordan for *The Rise of Skywalker,* our heroes were battling on a speeder. It crashes and flips, and they land on black sand and start sinking into it. We built a rig beneath the sand with scissor lifts fixed on top of shipping containers and covered the surface with black beans. The actors were 'sucked down' using the scissor lifts into a safe zone in the shipping container, and we could lift them back out. It's a short scene in the film, but it was a big practical effect."

Get Set for *Starfighter*

The release of *Starfighter* on May 28, 2027, is still more than a year away, but the SFX unit completed their work on the movie when it wrapped principal photography. While Tuohy and his team couldn't give too much away, they were able to reveal some of the technical feats they orchestrated.

"There's a huge explosion in one scene," says Cheal. "We tested the pyrotechnics on the stage to work out the safe zone, not just for the cast and crew but also for the stunt performers, who we work very closely with. We needed to know air pressure and how big the flames were going to go, that kind of thing. We tried that out four or five times before showing anyone, then we tested again to see how wide we could go and how much fire we could put in there."

The SFX team also found an innovative method of levitating vehicles for the movie. "We did a speeder that flies through canyons really fast, which is an iconic *Star Wars* image, but we did it in a way that hasn't been done before on any other *Star Wars* show," says Tuohy with pride. "Imagine a long pole, with a cable connected in the middle and counterweight either side, like a seesaw. On one side of the cable, we put the speeder and the actor, and on the other side we had our counterweight. With all the balances correct, we were able to turn and rotate the speeder, and that gave us a much more fluid look than using a hydraulic platform."

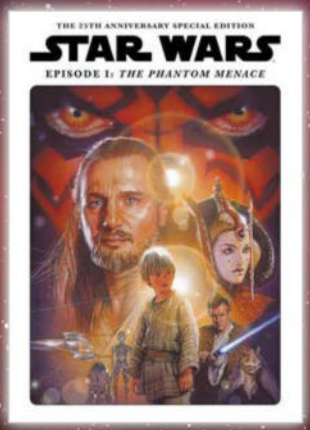
Another rig was taken out on location to capture the elements, as Tuohy elaborates. "We put a wavespeeder rig on a boat and took it out to sea along with the actors. We could have shot the sequence on a stage in a bluescreen environment, but on location you get the imperfections of the wind. When you're out at sea, one minute the wind is going this way, and all of a sudden it blows from behind and moves your costume in a different way."

The SFX team's excitement for their work on *Starfighter* is evident, but as with all things *Star Wars,* the mission is always to serve the story, and according to Tuohy the movie delivers. "*Starfighter* has a really good story. Ryan Gosling has got the charm, and it's got the old school tongue-in-cheek humor," he says, adding, "What we try to create are movie moments that everyone remembers. That's easy to say and so difficult to achieve, but when you do, the rewards are great."

10 (Left to right) Roger Guyett, Dominic Tuohy, Tommy Gormley, director J.J. Abrams, and Dan Mindel on *The Rise of Skywalker* set.

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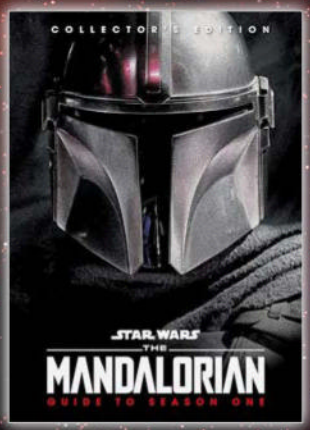
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THE MAKING OF MAUL

Ahead of the Season One finale of *Star Wars: Maul - Shadow Lord* on May the 4th, series creator and Lucasfilm president & chief creative officer Dave Filoni, supervising director Brad Rau, and head writer Matt Michnovetz take *Insider* behind the scenes on the latest chapter in the former Sith Lord's storied history.

WORDS: KRISTIN BAVER

Long before Brad Rau joined the crew of *Star Wars Rebels* as a storyboard artist and episodic director, he was just another kid obsessed with the mystery of Darth Maul.

"Before *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* even came out, he was everywhere," Rau recalls. "He's so iconic. He's a bad guy, and everybody loves a bad guy. And his look? He's the devil. Within a very small amount of screen time, Maul popped in a huge way."

The next chapter in Maul's story unfolded when the character was resurrected for *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. No longer a Sith Lord, and hellbent on revenge against Obi-Wan Kenobi (the Jedi who had cut him in half and left him for dead), this delirious version of Maul was far less muted and now expertly voiced by Sam Witwer.

"Dave Filoni and the team at Lucasfilm Animation really fleshed him out, working closely with Sam to add nuance to the character that we hadn't seen in *The Phantom Menace*," Rau says. In the years since, the creative team has continued to add to his story, always asking themselves the same essential question at the outset. "Whenever we bring him back, we're always asking ourselves, 'What's the aspect of this character that we haven't seen before?' Then we take it from there," he continues.

Maul returned once more in *Rebels*, and made a cameo appearance in *Solo: A Star Wars Story*. But it wasn't until the release of *Maul - Shadow Lord*, the latest *Star Wars* animated series for which Rau serves as supervising director, that the character got the chance to take the lead. Talking about this new chapter in Maul's story, co-Lucasfilm President and Chief Creative Officer Dave Filoni explains, "There were large chunks of his life, especially after Clone Wars, which are unaccounted for," he says. "[Maul] turned up surprisingly at the end of *Solo* and I was curious about that."

Those questions indirectly led to the creation of *Maul – Shadow Lord,* bridging the Zabrak's early alliance with the criminal syndicates seen in *The Clone Wars* and his position of power within Crimson Dawn hinted at in *Solo*. In a way, *Shadow Lord* is the third in a trilogy of shows that began with *The Clone Wars*. *Star Wars: The Bad Batch* explored the life of Clone Force 99 at the dawn of the Empire, and now *Shadow Lord* picks up with Maul in a previously unexplored time in his life. "I started to make some connections between the crime world [storylines] we'd done in *The Clone Wars,*" Filoni says. "Eventually, when it came to the end of *The Bad Batch* and we needed a new show, it was like I've been working towards this kind of chronology."

Created by Filoni and head writer Matt Michnovetz (who Rau worked with on *Rebels* and *The Bad Batch*), *Shadow Lord* breaks new ground. Not only is a villain serving as the main character, but the team behind the animation has evolved the classic Lucasfilm Animation style to incorporate paintbrush strokes, practical smoke effects, real matte paintings, and at least one kit-bashed physical ship model to give the world of Janix a grounded and tangible feel.

A Relatable Villain

Michnovetz was in the writer's room on *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* on the day creator George Lucas first floated the return of Maul. Literally rescued from the trash heap on Naboo, the latest chapter explores the character in a whole new light. "I wanted to tell a story about a character who we all could identify with in little ways but was also a really fun villain," Michnovetz says. "It's been challenging to say the least."

Maul, no longer Darth, is ▶

01 Sam Witwer once again voices Maul.

02 Rook Kast, voiced by *Star Wars* veteran Vanessa Marshall.

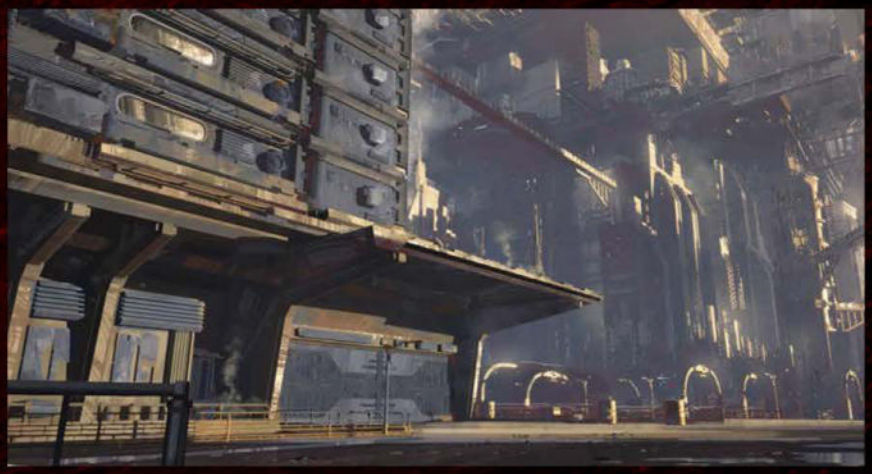


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oddly relatable and multifaceted. "It's always fun to try to find new ways to view him and new challenges for him," Michnovetz adds. "We've watched him take on some of the teachings of his former Master—who is obviously a genius manipulator and the most powerful Sith Lord in the galaxy. [In *Shadow Lord*] we try to mine some elements that we hadn't explored in previous shows. He has some of those [Palpatine-like] qualities deep down inside of him and he's done his best to try to emulate that and manipulate his corner of the galaxy."

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With Maul as the main character, Filoni and the team continued on the in-world timeline to introduce the dark-side warrior's quest for power and a host of new characters trying to remain out of the Empire's grasp. "Maul is a character that's our responsibility. We don't really know what's happened to him in this time," says Filoni. "Plus, George and I had had some talks about Maul over the years and what his plans for Maul had been. And so, I felt it was a way of honoring that future that we were going to have and finally bringing it to light."

Together Again

Behind the scenes, Rau and Lucasfilm Animation Vice President Athena Portillo led a crew of *Star Wars* veterans in bringing Maul's gritty space noir to the screen. Returnees included Keith Kellogg, who has worked on multiple *Star Wars* shows and joined *Shadow Lord* as animation director. "Keith and his team provided notes and reference to keep everything grounded but still fantastical," says Rau. With 440 shots per episode, "it was no easy task to keep the acting nuanced and realistic while being big and pulpy, but Keith did a great job keeping everything under control."

VFX veteran Joel Aron took charge of the series' animation lighting, special effects, and matte paintings—the latter of which have a concept art-like quality with their painterly depiction. "We know Joel as the Mad Wizard," Rau says of Aron. "Our stories want to break through limitations, parameters, and budgets so we're always looking for interesting and creative ways to solve problems, and Joel is amazing at that." For example, when creating a whole new ship asset was out of the question, Aron looked to *Star Wars* history for inspiration, suggesting a miniature that could be composited into the animation. "So, he built it, kit-bashing old model sets, just like the early days at Industrial Light & Magic," Rau says. "Then he photographed it and we added it to our matte paintings. You would never know. It looks incredible."

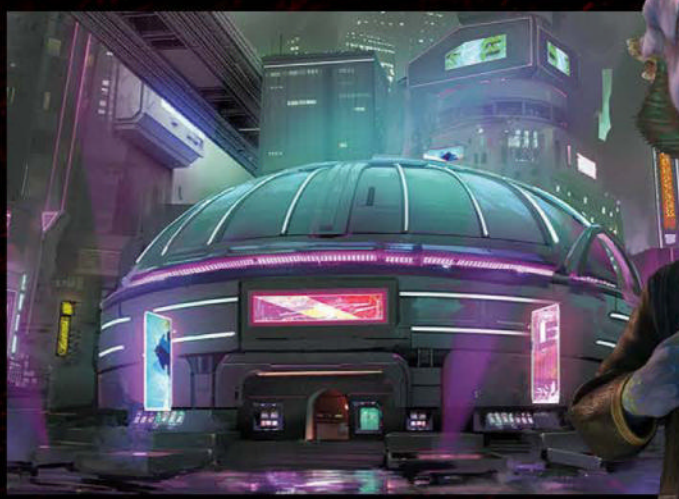
03 Devon Izara, voiced by Gideon Adlon.

04 Janix concept art by Clint Felker.

05 Janix concept art by Ben Meng.

06 Looti Vario, voiced by Christopher Diamantopoulos.

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That's the kind of thinking that we're always looking for to keep the show vibrant."

Paul Zinnes returned as the director of digital assets, taking concept designs and realizing them in 3D, while Andre Kirk served as the show's art director. "We always start with a script, but right from the beginning I would be talking to Andre about the designs we were going to need," says Rau.

For the series' atmospheric soundscapes, David W. Collins (who also voiced SpyBot) and Skywalker Sound crafted the sound design and mastered the mix, while legendary composer Kevin Kiner and his children, Deana and Sean Kiner, provided the music. Among their many scores in the *Star Wars* galaxy, Rau and the Kiners previously crossed paths on *The Bad Batch*. "They created some of the most incredible music, the most beautiful motifs," Rau says of the composers.

"It's a show about bad guys versus worse guys."

At its core, the series is still pure *Star Wars* animation, created and led by Filoni. "The look and the feel of the show, that all came from Dave," says Rau. "He really wanted us to try to push the boundaries, not only of the physics and the acting, but the animation, the fidelity, the lighting. He wanted to see the artist's hand in every frame." With Filoni's Jedi Master-like guidance, Portillo led Lucasfilm Animation to break new ground with a focus on making Janix and the characters reflect a painterly aesthetic. "We started layering brushstrokes in a beautiful way, not only on the characters, but the props, the vehicles, and the backgrounds," Rau says. "We wanted the style to be this pulpy noir, fun and exciting, but not too dark."



07 The series expands on conversations between Dave Filoni and George Lucas about Maul's destiny.

Ultimately, the series is a story of good versus evil coexisting in the blurred era of the Empire, retaining the high-stakes and epic qualities inherent in *Star Wars* storytelling. "It's a show about bad guys versus worse guys," Rau explains. "It's a show about people on the run coming together against all odds to fight against oppression, and about hope and beauty."

The Hands of Fate

In addition to his duties as supervising director, Rau was also the voice director for the series, and he utilized star Sam Witwer's training as an on-screen actor to inform and inspire some of the animation. "Sam treated it very seriously," Rau says of Witwer's approach to reprising the role of the fallen Sith lord who recently lost his brother Savage Opress and his clan in the Nightsisters. It's a role Witwer has embodied off-and-on for more than a decade.

Some of Witwer's performance, while not technically recorded as motion capture, is reflected in the

POWER OF THE FORCE

For Rau, everything goes back to being a kid playing with his *Star Wars* action figures, or confronted by the visage of Maul on every poster collage and Pepsi product he encountered as Episode I was arriving in theaters.

"I always approach these shows as a fan, because I'm a fan first," Rau says. And while *Maul – Shadow Lord* won't answer every question we have about the vengeful Zabrak warrior and his quest for power in the early days of the Empire, Rau hopes the series delivers a version of Maul as we've never seen him before: in search of an apprentice and an empire of his own.

"There's this huge gap in time from the end of *The Clone Wars* until we get this mystery sighting of him in *Solo*, and then we don't pick up with him again until *Rebels*," Rau says. "He's very different in all three of those iterations. But in this era, the dark ages, the rise of the Empire, what is someone like Maul doing? How does he survive? How is he gaining power?"



08

animation of the show. "Sam even painted very crude markings on his face so that Keith could see how they would stretch," Rau reveals. "It's the subtleties in a flicker of his brow, or an eye dart that we hadn't considered. It keeps the character grounded and real."

Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee Wagner Moura voices Captain Brander Lawson, a high-ranking member of the Janix police force working alongside his droid partner Two-Boots, voiced by Richard Ayoade. "Those are the good guys. They're trying to hold peace and justice together on Janix. They do not want the Empire involved because they know the Empire will take over and the citizens of Janix will be in danger," Rau says. To complicate matters, Lawson is also juggling life as a single father to his son, Rylee, voiced by Charlie Bushnell. "He's just trying to do his best," Rau says of the elder Lawson. "He's such a good cop but he maybe isn't spending enough time at home with his son."

Fighting for the light in this new era of the Empire are hidden Jedi Master Eeko-Dio Daki and his Padawan Devon Izara, voiced by Dennis Haysbert and Gideon Adlon. Surviving after Order 66, Devon and Master Daki must live off the grid and on the run.

Michnovetz had worked with Haysbert on the TV series *24* (2001-2014), but no one on the crew knew he was a *Star Wars* fan when they approached him for the role. In their first conversation, he revealed his true feelings. "'It is my lifelong destiny to be a Jedi Knight,'" Haysbert told Rau. "That's him. That's him all the way through," Rau says. "And the way he performs Eeko-Dio Daki, there's this warmth, this fatherly sense. We talked about it a lot. He had instincts to not just treat Devon like his Padawan, but more like his daughter. To look out for her, but to be stern when he had to. Again, it gives this grounded realism to the character."

Perhaps most conflicted in the series is young Devon, a Jedi without an Order forced to exist in the shadow of the Empire. "We don't have a lot of Jedi Knights like this," Rau noted. "She has the spirit of truth and virtue in her, but she's also upset at these changing times. She wants to help people, she doesn't want to be in hiding. And when they come across Maul, everything goes sideways."

In the recording booth, Witwer became something of a mentor figure for Adlon. "The way that Gideon and Sam worked together was a beautiful thing," Rau says. "When I was directing, I would talk about the scene, but Gideon stepped right up to where Sam was at so fast, I just let them go. It's all about setting them and then seeing how they do it. We wanted our characters to feel genuine and authentic, as grounded as possible against the scope, scale, and high-stakes adventure. When you get that contrast right, then it feels like *Star Wars*."

"We wanted our characters to feel genuine and authentic, as grounded as possible against the scope, scale, and high-stakes adventure. When you get that contrast right, then it feels like Star Wars."

08 Maul and Brander Lawson (voiced by Wagner Moura).

09 Maul's arrival on Janix.

10 Devon Izara is a Padawan in hiding.

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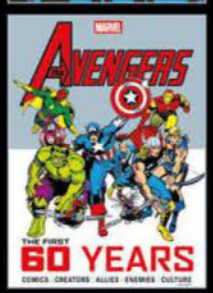


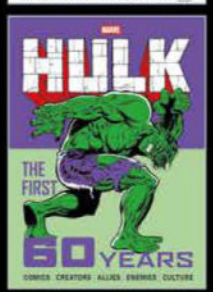












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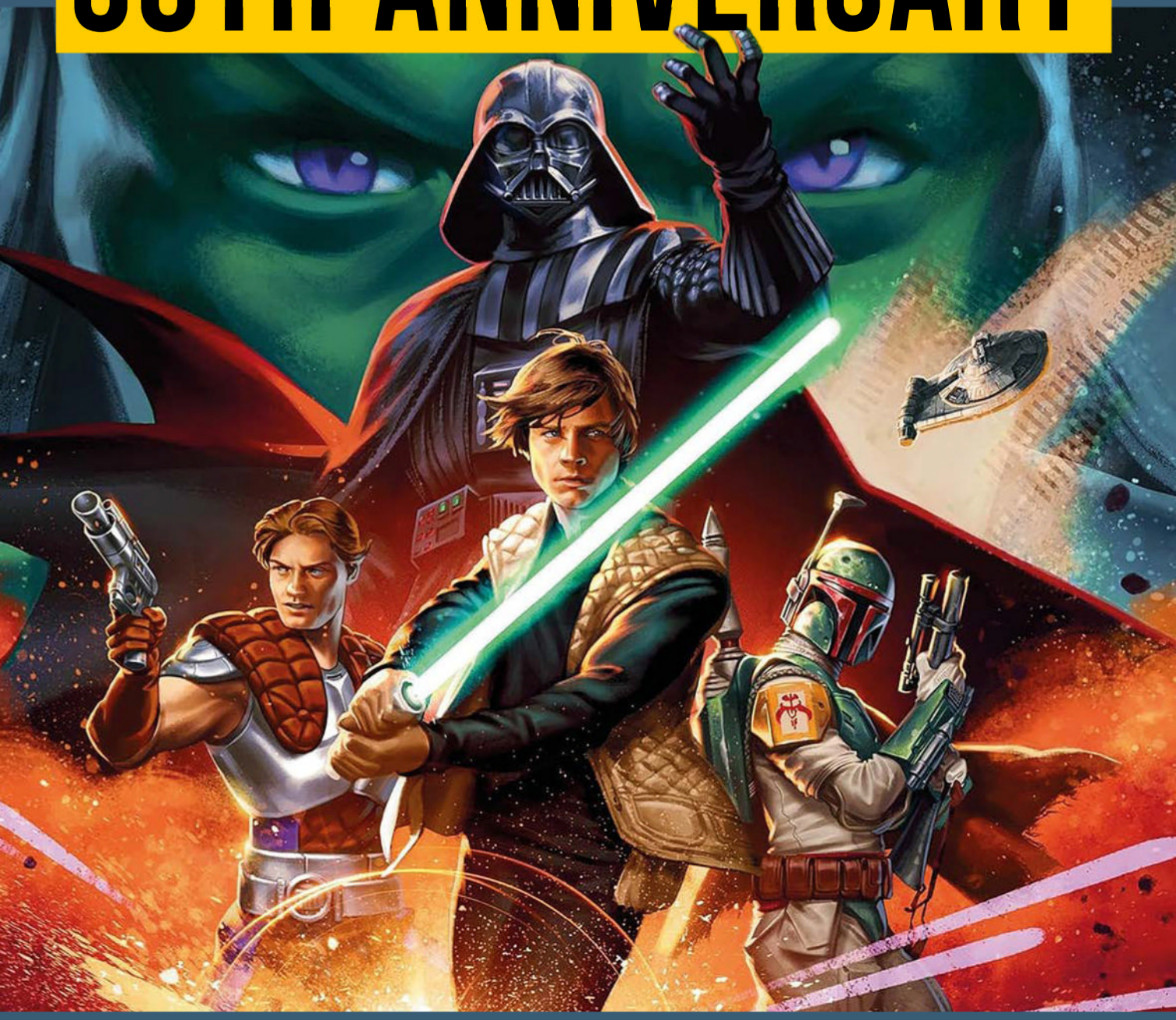
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"Everything But The Movie"

STAR WARS: SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE 30TH ANNIVERSARY



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Star Wars Insider dives into one of the most ambitious multimedia initiatives ever undertaken with a glimpse into the seedy underworld of the galaxy's scum and villainy.

WORDS: BRANDON WAINERDI





02

The *Star Wars* saga was in a very different place in 1996 than it is today. The Special Editions of the original trilogy were scheduled to be released in theaters in 1997, and George Lucas was still working on early drafts of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace.* Yet a casual fan could easily have assumed that a new movie was already out, based on the amount of *Star Wars* action figures, collectibles, and videogames that began appearing on store shelves at that time.

Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire was not just a book, not just a videogame, and not just a comic book series. In fact, the marketing campaign described it as "Everything but the movie!" Shadows was a full *Star Wars* story set between *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi,* following the green-skinned alien Prince Xizor and his attempt to control the galaxy. In celebration of the 30th anniversary of Shadows' release, *Star Wars Insider* spoke with former director of publishing at Lucasfilm Lucy Autrey Wilson, author Steve Perry, and LucasArts designer Jon Knoles about the multimedia initiative.

01 Cover art from the Essential Legends Collection reprint.

02 *Star Wars Galaxy* #7 cover art by Hugh Fleming.

Leading the publishing side of the project was the first permanent employee of Lucasfilm, the multi-talented Lucy Autrey Wilson. Wilson had started her career at the company as bookkeeper and secretary to George Lucas in 1974.

Lucy Autrey Wilson: I had tried to move to Europe and it didn't work out, so I came back to the States and realized I was going to have to work for a living. I thought I should move up to Northern California—that was my goal—so I called my sister who lived in the Bay Area and asked if she knew anybody looking for a bookkeeper. She happened to know that George Lucas was looking for one, because she was working for his accountant at the time. I had seen *American Graffiti* and thought this all sounded interesting. I drove

"I THOUGHT THE BONES COULD BE BOBA FETT TRYING TO GET HAN SOLO TO JABBA THE HUTT."

Jon Knoles, Designer, LucasArts

"THEY HAD A GENERAL IDEA OF WHAT THEY WANTED—SOMETHING DARK, SOMETHING ABOUT THE GALACTIC UNDERWORLD."

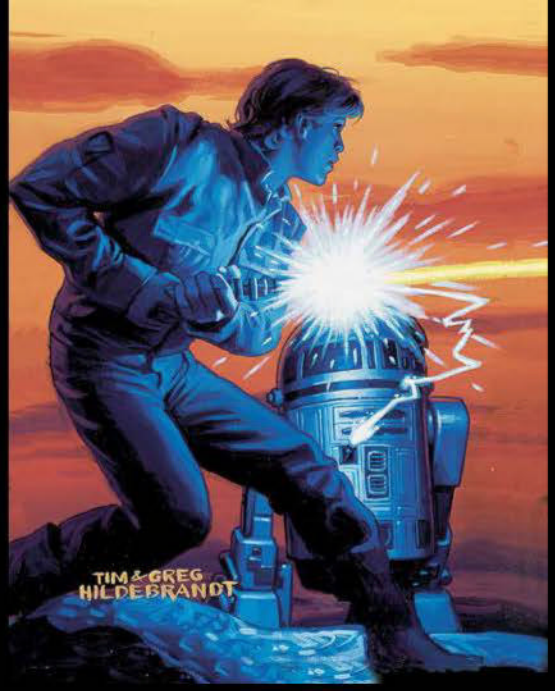
Steve Perry, Author

to an office on the Universal lot in Los Angeles, and was interviewed by George and Gary Kurtz, although George hardly opened his mouth. Because my sister's boss had recommended me, I got the job, packed my stuff and moved on up. I didn't even know where Marin County was.

Wilson rose through the Lucasfilm ranks, eventually leading a burgeoning *Star Wars* publishing program for the company.

LAW: I had studied English Literature in college, so I had always wanted to be in publishing, but I didn't want to live in New York so I had kind of given up on the idea. But when I went to Lucasfilm, even before the original movie had come out, Charlie Lippincott and Carol Titelman [née Wikarska] were already doing some book-related things. I used to go down to L.A. to visit them and poke around. Over time, I started begging them to let me do some things in the publishing area, so I did some stuff on *Willow* and *Indiana Jones* and the Grateful Dead—they were a client of ours back then. So, I got my foot in the door a little bit.

Eventually, the publishing head left, I was interested, and the company said I could take over. They didn't think it was going to be anything. They basically told me, "Okay, you can run this department—but if it doesn't work out, you're out of a job." So, I took a big risk.



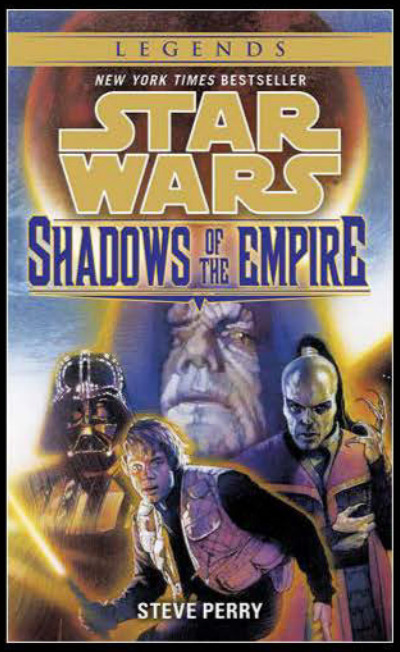
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03 Legendary
04 artists Greg
05 and Tim Hildebrandt painted new art for the *Star Wars Legends: Shadows of the Empire* Topps trading card series.

06 Drew Struzan's art for the original release of the *Shadows* novel.

The relaunched publishing program kicked off in full effect with the launch of Timothy Zahn's 1991 novel *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire* (see boxout). After a few years, and several new and bestselling Expanded Universe novels, it was time for new ideas—leading to the creation of a "movie marketing campaign without a movie."

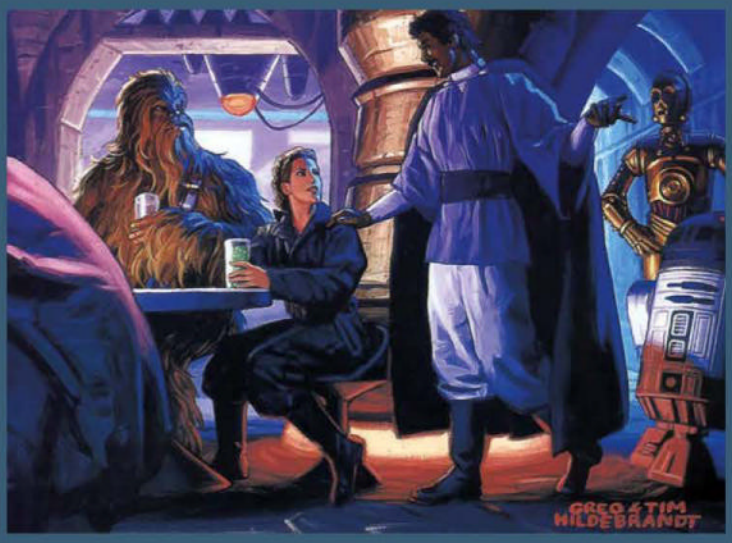
LAW: When we first started out with *Star Wars* books, we just let every author write what they wanted, as long as we maintained some sort of continuity. But after a while, I wanted to juice things up a little bit. We were in this in-between stage where we knew there was going to be another series of movies coming out, but we didn't know what we wanted to do until then. Another big marketing push for that next year wasn't working out, and the company wanted to do something else. That sounded like a lot of fun, and we had enough lead time to do it.

A meeting at Skywalker Ranch in 1994 brought together department heads from across the company, as well as some creatives, including established science fiction author Steve Perry and LucasArts designer Jon Knoles.

Steve Perry: I had cranked out the movie novelization for *The Mask* in 18 working days, as a favor to an editor at Bantam Spectra Books. He said that he owed me one, and came back and said, "I'm working on this *Star Wars* project and we're looking around for a writer. Would you be interested?" Well, a writer never turns down work, so I said, "Yeah, sure."

07 Topps trading card art by the Brothers Hildebrandt.

07



08 Boba Fett as illustrated by Greg and Tim Hildebrandt.

09 Cover art for *Star Wars Galaxy* #5 by the Brothers Hildebrandt.

Jon Knoles: Before *Star Wars,* I drew all the time as a kid. A friend of mine loved to draw, and it was usually Western stuff. I would draw the good guys on one side and he would draw the bad guys on the other side. And we would draw these battles where they were falling out of windows and stuff. But then *Star Wars* came out, and I started drawing spaceships and rockets, and we started drawing space battles all the time.

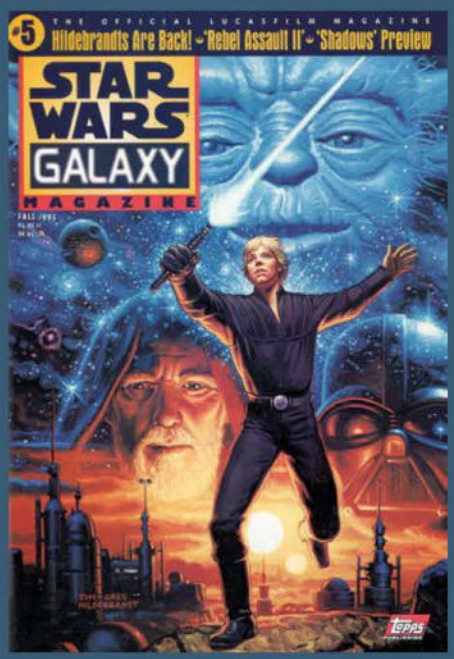
I went to art school in Seattle, and I was an illustrator and airbrush artist, and I did a lot of photoreal-type paintings of jets, and of Harrison Ford. I sent a VHS tape of my reel, a portrait of Harrison, and some other stuff to Lucasfilm Games, as it was then, and they said, "Why don't you come down?" So, I drove from Seattle to the Bay Area, slept on a friend's floor, and tested for a week doing a bunch of artwork at Skywalker Ranch. At the end of the week they said, "Okay, you can stay." And that's where I was for the next 14 years. I started in art and moved into design. Shadows of the Empire was the first videogame I took on as the lead designer.

SP: After I got the job, they sent me out to the Ranch to sit down with a group of people, to explain what the project was about. I flew into San Francisco, and we all sat down around a big table. All of the players had a general idea of what they wanted—something dark, something about the galactic underworld. We sat around and started spit balling ideas and characters.

JK: We had done quite a few of "play the movie" games with the Super *Star Wars* trilogy for Nintendo, and we didn't want to just do that again. Because of the time period in which the story was going to be set, and because it was going to be about ▸



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the seedy underbelly of the galaxy, I thought the bones could be Boba Fett trying to get Han Solo to Jabba the Hutt. He would be having a very difficult time because everybody else wanted to get him.

But in the end, we couldn't use Boba Fett, so if we couldn't play as him or as my favorite character, Han Solo, we needed someone else to be the main character of the game. Steve Perry also wanted a "rogue" type of guy to fill the vacant Solo shoes, so he came up with a name and a description. I thought, "Okay, we'll make him the main character of the game."

That main character was Dash Rendar, a smuggler and mercenary who would serve as the POV character for the Shadows videogame.

11



"SHADOWS WAS A FUN PROJECT TO DO, BUT I DON'T THINK WE COULD HAVE REPEATED IT."

Lucy Autrey Wilson, Director of Publishing, Lucasfilm



10 Luke and Leia meet space rogue Dash Rendar. Art by the Brothers Hidebrandt.

11 Dash Rendar's starship, the *Outlander*.

12 Rendar fulfilled the role of scoundrel in place of Han Solo. Art by the Brothers Hidebrandt.

12

JK: Dash then needed a cool ship. And it seemed natural that he came from the same planet as Han Solo and was cut from the same cloth—these Corellian guys probably all knew each other. They all drove hot rods. I had heard that artist Doug Chiang had been doing some sketches and designs for the Special Editions, like the swoops, so I sat down with him and talked about Dash's ship.

Two of my favorite ships from the original trilogy are the *Millennium Falcon* and the B-wing fighter. I liked the asymmetrical nature of them, and Doug really did too, so we thought we could do a mash-up of those two. He whipped out an amazing sketch and I immediately came up with the name *Outrider*, because "outrigger" just jumped to my mind. And an "outrider" is someone who rides on the fringes of a convoy to look for trouble.

Okay, but what about the shoulder pads?

JK: Honestly, that one was out of necessity. We had been planning to do a third person shooter game, as there hadn't been much like that back then. We'd had some sneak peeks of what the developers were doing with Super Mario 64, and we couldn't do what they were doing with the technology at that time—we were only able to build things with rotating capsules, and the place where you could see that the most was in the shoulders. The only way we could fix that was by hiding them, so that's where Dash's shoulder pads came in: to hide the inner penetration of upper arm to shoulder rotation in the animation.

The primary antagonist of Shadows was Prince Xizor of the infamous Black Sun criminal organization. He was a reptilian Falleen, whose name proved to be less alien in origin than one might expect.

LAW: I had a Portuguese boyfriend when I was living in Europe. I was going to live there forever, but then he got drafted into the war in Mozambique, and I went back and lived in Spain. We ended up breaking up, but remained friends. His name was "Francisco" but his nickname was "Xico," and in Portugal you pronounce the "X" with a "sh" sound. If you're an English speaker, an "X" that has that unique sound can sound sort of alien. So I combined that with "razor", because Xizor is a bad guy, and it sounded very cool to me. I volunteered the name to the group and it was accepted.

SP: I made sure to pronounce it at least once in the book, so that people would know how to say it. People still got it wrong.

The collaborative storytelling went hand-in-hand with the cutting-edge work that the LucasArts team was doing. Shadows of the Empire was going to be one of the early marquee games for the new Nintendo 64 video game system.

JK: It felt like we were part of a pioneering group of people in the industry that was leading the way with realtime 3D work. You could turn and look around in an interactive 3D environment, and no one had ever really done that before. The only thing that was capable of emulating the graphics you were going to see was a box they gave us called the Onyx. It gave off so much heat that the person who was sharing their office with the Onyx always had to have a fan on and their door open. And Nintendo was saying, "Oh yeah, we're going to put that power in a little box that's not much bigger than the Super Nintendo." It was unbelievable, but ended up being true.

13 The Nintendo 64 videogame was cutting-edge.

14 The game was also available on PC.



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15 Prince Xizor was the primary antagonist in Shadows of the Empire. Art by Chris Trevas.

BIRTH OF A LEGEND

In 2006, Lucasfilm Licensing President Howard Roffman revealed to StarWars.com that Shadows of the Empire was made possible after George Lucas adjusted his writing schedule for Episode I, which had originally been planned for a 1997 release.

"At that point, it made much more sense to move the Special Edition release to 1997 for the 20th anniversary [of *A New Hope*], which left us empty in 1996," Rothman explained. "We put our heads together and thought, 'OK, what media do we have at our control, and how do we communicate with people? What if we put them all together and come up with a really significant story that would be big news for fans and that all the different media could play off of?"

16 Hoth in the Shadows of the Empire videogame.



There was nothing I wanted to do more with this new technology than fly a snowspeeder and take down an AT-AT at the Battle of Hoth. The first time we were able to actually fly through the legs of a walker, we all just stood around the TV agog. So we said, "Well, Dash was there too." Why not?

Upon its release in 1996, the "Shadows" experiment was deemed a considerable success. The book reached *The New York Times* Best Sellers list. And the videogame was the third-best-selling title for the new Nintendo 64 the following year, with over a million copies sold.

JK: I am reminded by people who grew up playing Shadows of the Empire that it was mind-blowing and amazing for them. It's hard for me to look past all of its flaws sometimes, but I have to remind myself that at the time it was pretty revolutionary.

LAW: Shadows was a fun project to do, but I don't think we could have repeated it. By the nature of the medium and development process, a games team could never get anything done as quickly as we could publish our books. *Shadows* taught me that it was far easier for me to do things as our own little group, where I could control everything. The next time I wanted to do something as ambitious (which turned out to be the *New Jedi Order,* a nineteen-book series that began in 1999), I wanted it to be solely publishing.

SP: I have nothing but fond memories of the experience. *Shadows of the Empire* changed my first name. I was no longer just "Steve"—I was "*New York Times* bestselling author Steve." I've always been very happy with that.

LEGENDS OF THE EMPIRE

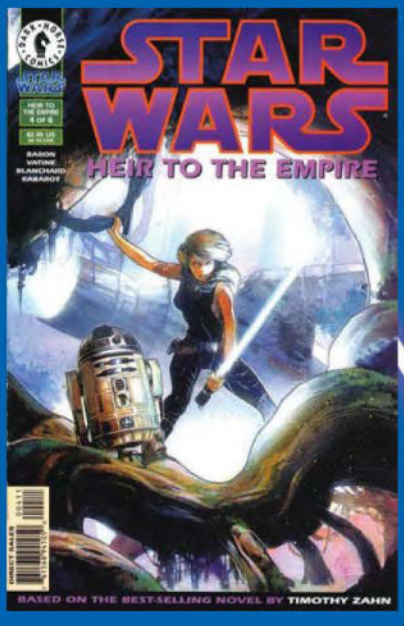
Long before Prince Xizor, another villainous alien stalked the pages of the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe—the blue-skinned Chiss strategist, Grand Admiral Thrawn, who first appeared in *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire.*

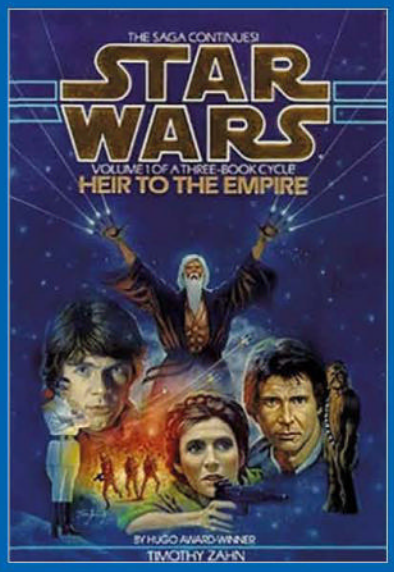
"I didn't want a Force user like the Emperor or Vader," remembers Timothy Zahn, the author behind the 1991 masterpiece. "I didn't want anyone who was manipulative or who inspired fear. I just wanted someone who the troops would be loyal to."

Whereas *Shadows'* Dash Rendar had been a light-side stand-in for a carbonite-frozen Han Solo, the *Thrawn* Trilogy's Mara Jade—the "Emperor's Hand"—was conceived to provide an adversarial mirror for Luke Skywalker. "When you're writing *Star Wars,* your goal is to always make it feel like *Star Wars*—that the characters you're creating for your story fit seamlessly into this galaxy," Zahn explains.

Jade evolved beyond her initial concept, eventually marrying the young Jedi Master in a later comic series. "Mara was partly a foil for Luke and partly a connection to the first part of S*tar Wars: Return of the Jedi,*" the author continues. "But, as I developed her, I realized she was something unique. She was not a Sith or a Dark Jedi or a Jedi—she was simply someone convinced by Palpatine that what they were doing was inherently good."

Thrawn and Mara Jade also showed up in video games, most notably in Mysteries of the Sith and TIE Fighter.





Decades after the publication of *Heir to the Empire,* Thrawn re-joined the *Star Wars* galaxy proper, making the jump from page to screen as the villain in *Star Wars Rebels* and *Ahsoka.* Meanwhile, other characters from the trilogy, such as Mara Jade and Talon Karrde, remain filed under the "Legends" category, and Zahn is quite content with that classification.

"Imagine sitting around the campfire, a long way from Coruscant, when somebody says, 'Hey, have you guys ever heard the legend of Luke Skywalker and Grand Admiral Thrawn?' They proceed to tell this grand saga and, as you're zipping yourself into your sleeping bag, you don't know what was true and what was made up. But it doesn't matter. Legends are where you'll find King Arthur, Robin Hood, and Paul Bunyan. Legends are a really nice place to be."



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TITAN MAGAZINES

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01

The Star Wars Archive

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

FIFTY YEARS OF FILMING

Fifty years ago, on March 22, 1976, the first shots for *Star Wars: A New Hope* were committed to film.

It had been a long journey for George Lucas, who had begun formulating his idea for a grand space fantasy three years earlier, and had faced an uphill struggle to finance the film before his crew and cast arrived in Tunisia.

The first scenes shot involved the purchase of R2-D2 and C-3PO at the Lars homestead exterior set, way out in the Tunisian desert. They would film more Tatooine locations at Matmata (the homestead interiors), and on the island of Djerba, where its iconic domed buildings perfectly represented Mos Eisley spaceport.

As production on new *Star Wars* live-action tales continues, *Insider* celebrates the past five-decades of creative endeavor for one last time.



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01 Filming the Mos Eisley arrival scene in Djerba for *Star Wars: A New Hope.*

02 Dennis Muren animating a tauntaun for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back.*

03 A legion of Imperial extras prepare to shoot on the hangar set of the second Death Star for *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi.*

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04 Two R2-D2s await their cue.
The Phantom Menace.

05 Natalie Portman and Rose Byrne.
Attack of the Clones.

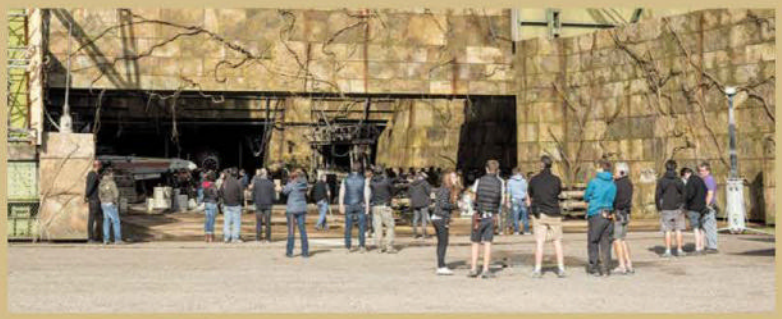
06 Lightsaber stunt props.
Revenge of the Sith.

07 John Boyega lightsaber training.
The Force Awakens.

08 Mark Hamill and Rian Johnson.
The Last Jedi.

09 Anthony Daniels in his C-3PO costume with J.J. Abrams.
The Rise of Skywalker.

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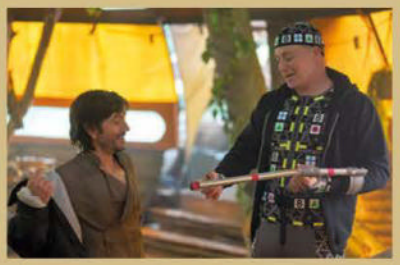
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10 The Yavin 4 exterior set from *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

11 Alden Ehrenreich and Joonas Suotamo rehearse a fight for *Solo: A Star Wars Story*.

12 Pedro Pascal minus the beskar helmet. *The Mandalorian*.

13 Jon Favreau directing *The Book of Boba Fett*.

14 The meat farm set from *Obi-Wan Kenobi*.

15 Ravi Cabot-Conyers watching puppeteers rehearsing for *Skeleton Crew*.

16 Hayden Christensen and Ariana Greenblatt on the set of *Ahsoka*.

17 Director Leslye Headland with Lee Jung-jae on the set of *The Acolyte*.

18 Diego Luna and Alan Tudyk during a break in filming *Andor* Season Two.

A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

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



Concept art by Ralph McQuarrie

"If Luke Skywalker hadn't left Tatooine since he was a baby, why did he tell Han Solo that he'd be able to fly Obi-Wan Kenobi to Alderaan and wasn't "such a bad pilot" himself?"
Yvette Jones, Oakland, United States

Until Luke Skywalker met Han Solo for the first time in the Mos Eisley Cantina, the young farmer had spent his entire life on Tatooine, unaware that he had been delivered to the desert planet for his own protection as an infant by Obi-Wan Kenobi. The confidence Luke expressed to Solo on his ability to fly a starship may have been youthful exuberance, but it was true that Skywalker *was* already an experienced pilot. Much to his Uncle Owen's annoyance, Luke had "wasted" a lot of time with his friends racing his T-16 skyhopper through tricky terrain like Beggar's Canyon, honing skills that would stand him in good stead later in life. Inspired by his best friend and fellow racing enthusiast Biggs Darklighter, Luke had every right to assume he was a good enough pilot to follow Biggs to the Imperial Academy.

While atmospheric exploits at the controls of a T-16 might seem like a far cry from the more complex requirements of piloting an interstellar starship, the skill set that Luke had built was clearly transferable to spacecraft. Not that long

Starfighter Standouts

Dutch Vander



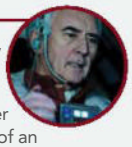
As Gold Leader, Jon "Dutch" Vander commanded the Y-wing fighters that escorted Mon Mothma during an encounter with the *Ghost* crew. Vander later fought at the Battle of Scarif before ultimately accepting the assignment to lead the bombing run on the Death Star trench in what became known as the Battle of Yavin.

Hobbie Klivian



A member of Rogue Squadron during the Battle of Hoth, Derek "Hobbie" Klivian flew as Luke Skywalker's wingman when rebel snowspeeders attempted to intercept the Imperial ground forces that were converging on Echo Base. Klivian targeted an AT-AT with his snowspeeder, coliding head-on with the Imperial walker.

Wedge Antilles



A veteran of the Battles of Yavin, Hoth, and Endor, legendary pilot Wedge Antilles returned to assist the Resistance at the Battle of Exegol. However, rather than hopping into the familiar cockpit of an X-wing starfighter, Wedge crewed one of the *Millennium Falcon*'s turrets as the citizens of the galaxy took on the Final Order.

after bragging about his abilities, Luke found himself jumping into an X-wing fighter to participate in the Battle of Yavin. When Skywalker was asked by Commander Garven Dreis whether he could handle the starfighter, Biggs Darklighter quickly interjected, crediting Luke with being the best bush pilot in the Outer Rim territories. So, perhaps it would be best to equate the relationship between flying a T-16 and an X-wing with driving different types of automobiles here on Earth. For example, people who typically drive cars can rent a truck, and while adjustments need to be made, they are able to make the transition with relative ease.



Jess Pava



Heroic Resistance pilot Jess "Testor" Pava flew a T-70 X-wing starfighter into battle at Starkiller Base as part of Blue Squadron. The frenzied engagement cost the lives of many Resistance pilots, but Jess both contributed to the victory over the First Order *and* survived the harrowing mission.

Tallie Lintra

With the Resistance abandoning their base on D'Qar, Tallissan "Tallie" Lintra flew an A-wing on a mission to protect the bombers that targeted a First Order Siege Dreadnought. While Tallie returned safely to the *Raddus*, she was tragically killed when Kylo Ren launched a devastating attack run on the Resistance flagship.





As we discovered in *Solo: A Star Wars Story,* Han Solo's background as a 'pilot' paralleled Luke's to a certain degree. Growing up on Corellia, Han saw himself as a pilot based only on informal experience with speeders, long before signing up to join the Imperial Navy himself. During his famed Kessel Run, Han performed a risky maneuver that he'd learned from a street racer named Needles, further underlining the notion that speeder skills could be loosely applied to controlling a starship. And let us not forget that Luke's father, Anakin Skywalker, honed his own piloting abilities as a podracer until venturing off to the stars with Qui-Gon Jinn. Like Luke, Anakin also had the Force as his ally, which, unbeknownst to him at the time, contributed to the quick reflexes that made him such a proficient pilot.

Not Such a Bad Pilot

Although such details partly explain Luke's boasts, there was another key element at play during that encounter on Tatooine. While he had yet to travel into space, meeting Han in the cantina represented Luke's first steps into a new world. This was the beginning of the adventure Luke had always envisioned undertaking. Suddenly, Luke came face-to-face with a self-confident smuggler and, intent on proving that he belonged in this arena as much as Solo did, he infused his boastful declaration with bravado as a way of showing his worth.

Luke continued embodying this bombastic demeanor in his early dealings with Han, particularly when he insisted that they rescue Princess Leia Organa of Alderaan while Obi-Wan Kenobi shut down the Death Star's tractor beam. Of course, Luke's relationship with Han quickly evolved, both as he became more acquainted with the smuggler and acclimated to life in the galaxy at large. By the time Luke delivered the strike that obliterated the superweapon, he had begun to grasp that Han's bluster was simply a mask for his own doubts and demons.

Following Solo and Chewbacca's triumphant return to provide cover for Luke in the final seconds of his trench run, Luke engaged Han in an exuberant embrace. In that moment, the two pilots shed their braggadocio, opting to exhibit their genuine joy rather than put up a gruff facade. This bond contrasted sharply with the ego-driven combativeness of their first conversation, highlighting just how far their friendship had grown in a short time. Luke's initial claims about being "not such a bad pilot" himself were grounded both in truth *and* bravado, as his authentic belief in his skills was amplified by a desire to compete with Han Solo's effortless self-confidence.



FLIGHTS OF FANTASY

32 BSW4:
During the Battle of Naboo, Anakin Skywalker found himself at the controls of a N-1 starfighter. After R2-D2 disabled the fighter's autopilot, Anakin flew into the Droid Control Ship's hangar and fired proton torpedoes into its main reactor.

19 BSW4:
Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker negotiated the carnage of the Battle of Coruscant in Jedi starfighters in a bid to rescue Chancellor Palpatine from the clutches of General Grievous.

10 BSW4:
With L3-37's brain installed into the *Millennium Falcon*'s navicomputer, Han Solo and Chewbacca tackled the infamous Kessel Run in the wake of stealing coaxium from the Pyke Syndicate, evading a massive summa-verminoth which resided in the Maw.

SW4:
At the Battle of Yavin, several attempts to target the Death Star's thermal exhaust port ended in failure. As the battle station drew within range of the rebel base, Luke Skywalker placed his trust in the Force, delivering the blow that destroyed the superweapon.

4 ASW4:
During the Battle of Endor, Lando Calrissian piloted the *Millennium Falcon*, leading his squadron into the second Death Star's superstructure where they were able to detonate the reactor core and destroy the space station.

34 ASW4:
Commanded by Poe Dameron, Resistance X-wings swept into the Battle of Takodana to engage with First Order TIE fighters.

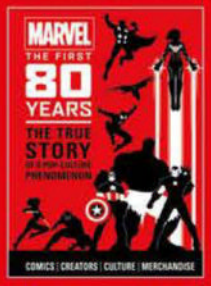


The Co-Pilot's Creed

When it came to handling the *Millennium Falcon*, even the best pilots required a trusted sidekick to help control the freighter. As Lando Calrissian's co-pilot, L3-37 connected directly to the *Falcon*'s navicomputer to plot faster routes. Upon her death, L3's knowledge was uploaded into the ship's system, providing invaluable data as Han Solo and Chewbacca made the Kessel Run.

Decades later, with Chewbacca wounded, Han Solo found himself with an unexpected ally, as Rey served as his co-pilot while they fled from the Guavian Death Gang and Kanjiklub. Taking Chewie's seat, Rey proved her worth by informing Solo about the fuel pump Unkar Plutt had installed, angled the shields, and reminded him about the compressor during their escape.



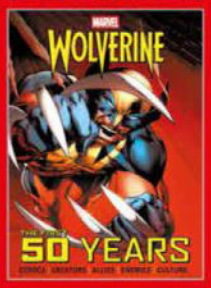












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VENOM
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A NIGHTSISTER CELEBRATION

Cosplay that captures the spirit of Dathomir

"I really connect with Asajj Ventress, because I like morally gray, complex characters that eventually find a way past their many mistakes," says Rachel, who is also known as ReychelOfJakku in the cosplay community. "The inspiration behind my Ventress cosplay was a combination of my love for the character and the challenge of bringing her from animation into real life. It was exciting to learn new makeup techniques, although I quickly realized that applying a bald cap is so much harder than it looks! Through trial and error, and a lot of research, I've found a technique that works best for me."



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

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Rachel has also experimented with cosplaying as her own, original Nightsister character. "Nightsisters are so cool. I love that they use magic, have dark side tendencies, and are a coven of witches. I really enjoyed the freedom of picking and choosing what fabrics and textures I wanted to use."

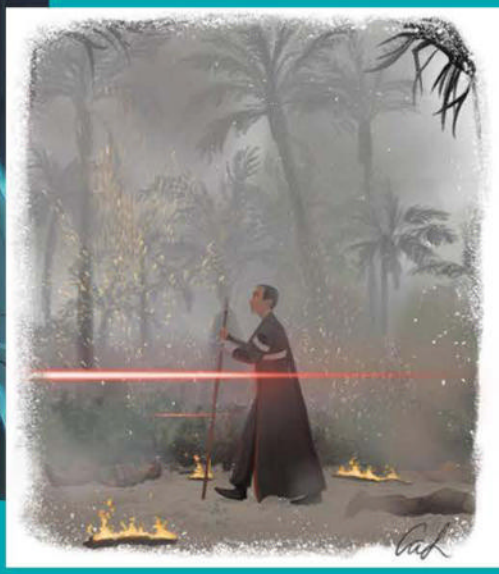
Originally introduced to *Star Wars* via the prequel trilogy, it was the recent sequel movies that ultimately motivated Rachel to explore cosplaying and conventions. The cosplayer even had a chance to attend *Star Wars* Celebration Japan in 2025. "It was the most incredible experience," she says. "I loved the fusion of *Star Wars* and Japanese art—the badge art alone was worth the trip. They even had an amazing dewback that you could sit on for a photo opportunity. I loved meeting other *Star Wars* fans from all over the world, and even though there was often a language barrier, we still found a way to communicate through our shared love for *Star Wars*. It's been the people I've met that has brought me the most joy," Rachel adds.



ARTISTS' ALLEY

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





01 "BEN AND YODA" AND "CHIRRUT" BY CASEY LAMAKU

"My dad introduced me to *Star Wars* when I was 7, a gift which has helped me as a neurodivergent girl to navigate life, grow my imagination, and process the world around me," explains fan artist Casey Lamaku. "Today, I try to capture that *Star Wars*-specific blend of nostalgia, movie magic, and complex, deeply human themes in my art. These scenes represent that effort and the most profound lessons I've taken away from the films: the ghosts of Ben and Yoda showing the persistent force of hope in a time of darkness; and Chirrut's final walk depicting the irrevocable value of the individual in the face of overwhelming odds."



01 "BATCHER" AND "SY SNOOTLES" BY STEPH AKA STAX REBO

"I really love the side characters and creatures of *Star Wars*. I've noticed that my fan art usually reflects that love," says fan artist Steph, who also goes by the pseudonym Stax Rebo. "I latch onto the creatures and aliens of most *Star Wars* media, and I like to imagine them in different scenarios and wearing funny clothing. I imagined Batcher, from *The Bad Batch*, would snuggle up with Lula and 'trash Lula' in Omega's cubby on the *Marauder*. I also put Sy Snootles in a fancy dress with a tooka cat on her lap, just because I imagined her being an aristocrat with gems, jewels, and fancy dresses. I paint what I want to see."



BOUNTY HUNTERS

Scouring the galaxy for the stars of *Star Wars*

TAYLOR GRAY: Encountering Ezra



Jasmine poses with Taylor Gray, who voiced Ezra Bridger in *Star Wars Rebels*.

Ezra Bridger's heroic journey in *Star Wars Rebels* has inspired countless fans, including Jasmine, who is also known as Nerdy Blasian Cosplays. Jasmine's connection with Lothal's homegrown hero encouraged her to take a trip to a local convention, where she had the opportunity to chat with Taylor Gray, the actor who originated the role by voicing Ezra in *Rebels*.

"I got to meet Taylor at Rebel Scum Con's Boonta Eve special event in Frisco, Texas," says Jasmine, who was thrilled at the chance to share her enthusiasm for the character. "I was so excited because *Rebels* is my favorite *Star Wars* show, and I adore Ezra. Taylor was incredibly nice. I gave him a friendship bracelet I made that said 'Spectre-6,' then got my autograph and photo with him. It was a very brief interaction but I'm so glad I got to do it!"



TRASH CRAB CRAFTING

A family honors *Skeleton Crew* with incredible creations

"I remember loving *Star Wars* when I was growing up, especially the droids," says fan crafter Beth, "But my fandom was reawakened during the lead-up to *The Force Awakens.* When I became a parent, I introduced my baby daughter to *Star Wars* through osmosis as I rewatched *The Clone Wars, Rebels,* and all the movies while she was sleeping on me."



It was a convention trip that sparked Beth's interest in *Star Wars* crafting. "When Celebration Chicago rolled around, we knew we had to go," says Beth. "My husband created a 'Jedi Pope' cosplay for the event, for which I helped craft his hat, staff, and some ancient Jedi texts to carry around. I also made my kid a porg costume. Thus began my journey of mixing crafting and *Star Wars.*



"As my daughter got older, and we realized how much she loves art and crafting too, my Space Mama heart nearly exploded when she began to mix *Star Wars* into her creations," Beth beams. "She loves all the small and cute creatures and aliens of *Star Wars,* so when *Skeleton Crew* trailers were released she became obsessed with Neel. I think it was after the first trailer that she decided to make a model of him out of clay."



Other projects have ranged from making 50 mini trash crabs to creating a book nook she dubbed 'Meiloorun Alley,' inspired by a walk through the Batuu marketplace at Galaxy's Edge. "I bought a book nook kit purely to put a *Star Wars* twist on it," she says. "I printed new signage, made a lot of tiny meiloorun fruit, and changed how the doors and windows were installed, replacing swinging doors with sliding hatches to make it less 'Earthly' and more *Star Wars*."



'TOY'-DARIAN TALES

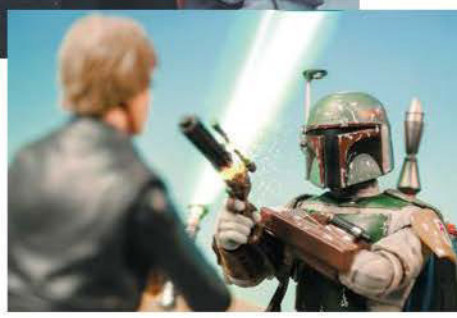
A Brazilian fan's *Star Wars* toy photography



"My journey into toy photography began long after I started collecting," says Allan Rebelo, whose *Star Wars* scenes have included a wealth of classic characters, from Darth Vader and Boba Fett to Luke Skywalker and Yoda. "At first, I simply enjoyed arranging figures in different poses, experimenting with how they looked. But over time, I realized this was a chance to explore my creativity, to tell stories through these small characters. What started as recreating iconic scenes soon evolved into crafting more original concepts, each photo becoming its own narrative."

With the galaxy far, far away as his canvas, Allan harnesses his enthusiasm for photography with the spirit of a director plotting out their next blockbuster film, allowing his imagination to run wild and without limit. "What I love most about this hobby is the creative freedom it offers," Allan shares before emphasizing the diverse skill sets involved. "Photography allows me to combine so many things at once: storytelling, composition, and visual design. Every setup feels like directing a scene—adjusting poses, lighting, and perspective until the figures come alive in front of the camera. It's amazing!"







Of course, taking things a step further and pairing his beloved hobby with *Star Wars* resulted in the perfect blend of inspiration and nostalgia. "My passion for *Star Wars* runs even deeper. I was first introduced to *Guerra nas Estrelas,* as it was known in Portuguese, by my father when I was very young. It was love at first sight. That galaxy immediately captured my imagination with its characters, and its fight between light and dark," Allan adds, concluding, "For me, *Star Wars* is more than just a series of films—it's a galaxy that continues to inspire generations."



STAR WARS

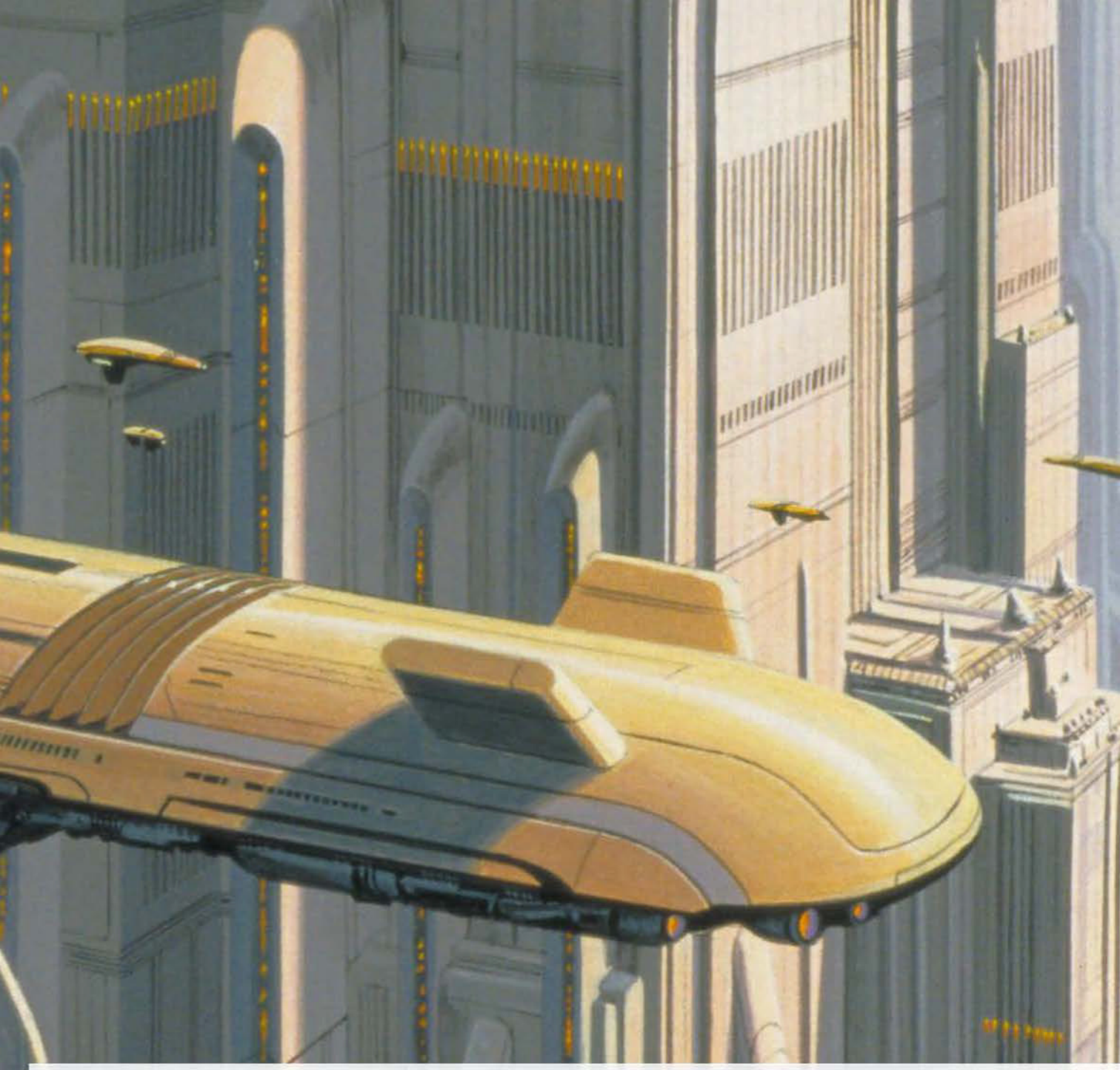
GALACTIC TALES

ANOTHER FACE IN THE CROWD

BY CHRISTOPHER COOPER



Concept art by Doug Chiang



Ricta Varsh stepped into his office, closed the door, and threw his overcoat onto the mess of datastates, cards, flimsies, and other ephemera piled high on the couch he'd not cleared for a decade. He collapsed into the battered chair behind his desk and let out a deep sigh.

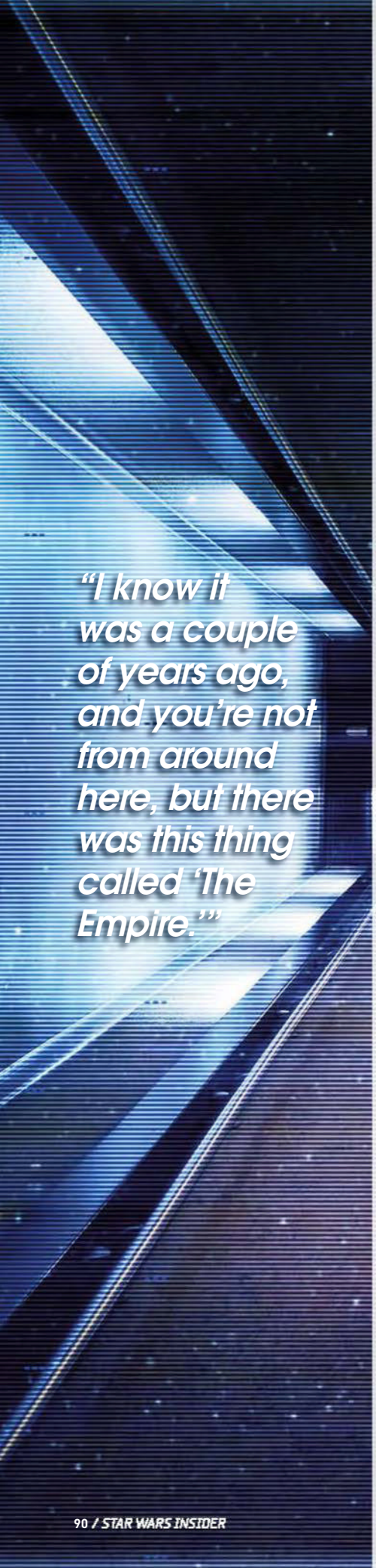
In just a few days' time this unkempt space, this sanctuary, would no longer be his.

Ric surveyed his surroundings. Floor to ceiling shelves stretched across the main wall, bulging with old memory drives, reference material, and an assortment of personal mementos he'd collected during his forty plus years as a journalist for the HoloNet News Network. Close by, a stack of empty storage boxes were waiting, but he didn't have the heart to start filling them. Ric closed his eyes, ran his fingers through his unkempt gray beard, and decided a nap would be a better use of his time.

A sharp rap at the door curtailed that idea. He knew that knock. The bony knuckles of his editor.

"Come on in, Moldreth. It isn't locked."

The sharp-faced, pallid human who entered was twenty years Ric's junior, installed by the management half a decade into the Imperial era. A stooge for the Empire, he'd arrived with no journalistic pedigree whatsoever, and ▸



Ric hadn't trusted him from day one. Now that the Galactic Civil War was over, with any luck Moldreth's days on the holonet were as numbered as his were.

"To what do I owe the dubious pleasure?" Ric smiled at his boss without warmth. "Nothing too taxing, I hope. I warn you, the muse is not with me today."

"This is Taylo Mar," the editor replied, curtly. Moldreth's nasal tones always reminded Ric of buzzing trash wasps. The editor nodded toward the slight young human female lingering in the corridor outside. "One of our new graduate interns. For some reason, she asked if she can shadow you until your last day."

"If I'd wanted help packing my stuff, I would have asked." Ric wasn't keen on being spied on.

"I won't be any trouble, honest," piped up Taylo as she bobbed into the room, an earnest grin on her face. Her enthusiasm confused Ric. He'd long forgotten ever feeling that way. "I've seen dozens of your old Clone Wars reports," she blurted, with genuine excitement. "It'll be an honor to learn from such a legend."

"Less of the 'old,' if you don't mind," said Ric in mock affront. "It's a very different galaxy now, and I was a *very* different reporter back then."

"Varsh here specializes in more low-key reportage these days," Moldreth interjected, with no attempt to conceal his contempt. "Trade route taxation, minor obituaries, the latest in sewage treatment technology. Nothing too controversial. On which note, you'll be covering the Skylanes Agency consultation today. Starts in an hour, so you'd better get going. The hearings run for at least a month, Mar, so you'll be taking this beat over from Varsh once he's gone." Ric had to bite his tongue at the sight of Taylo's eyes widening at this supposed honor. "And help him get this office cleared," Moldreth wrinkled his nose as if the room smelled worse than a rancor's armpit. Without another word he was gone, leaving the keen young journalist waiting to be briefed on her first assignment.

Ric leaned back in his chair and considered this bright-eyed child. So be it. If he was going to be nursemaid to an over-eager cub reporter in his final week on the job, the least he could do was try not to crush her dreams. He'd let the assignment do that.

"Not as glamorous as you were expecting, huh?" Ric whispered to Taylo, whose bubble of enthusiasm had been cruelly burst. Two hours in an airless auditorium listening to deliberations over proposed changes to Coruscant's skylanes network would do that to you.

They didn't really need to be there, of course. An electronic transcript would be publicly available within an hour of the meeting's conclusion, and the report he filed would be of interest to absolutely no one. In the entire galaxy. But Ric had grown to rely on the dull reliability of his beat. Unremarkable news, as far from the limelight as possible, was just the way he wanted it these days. Pointless briefs allowed him a few hours off the books, out of harm's way.

Taylo shifted uneasily in her seat. "Why would someone like you waste your skill covering non-stories like this?" she asked. "You used to break stories that mattered. You reported from Onderon during the coup, for pity's sake. And now you file… traffic reports?"

Ric raised a sarcastic eyebrow. "I know it was a couple of years ago, and you're not from around here, but there was this thing called 'The Empire.'"

"Yeah, I heard about it. Toppled almost as quickly as it arrived," Taylo fired back, matching his tone. He was beginning to like her.

"Nosy journalists weren't its favorite kind of people. *Most* people weren't its favorite kind of people!"

"But it's gone now," Taylo insisted.

Ric shook his head and turned his gaze to the half empty auditorium. They were the only two journalists in the media gallery, but this wasn't the right place to talk. And he needed a drink. "Let's get out of here," he said.

Confused, Taylo followed.

Ric was still surprised at how quickly the color and vibrancy had returned to Coruscant's thoroughfares. He and Taylo sat down at one of a dozen tables outside a local tavern, on a pretty concourse filled with plants and people and life. Not so long ago, Imperial stormtroopers would have rounded up anyone caught lingering here, let alone enjoying a bowee soda. Now, people could go about their business as they pleased, secure in the belief that the Empire had been swept away. Ric wasn't so sure.

"What made you want to be a reporter, Taylo?" he asked his young companion as he took a sip of his icy beverage. He noticed her cheeks blossom.

"It was you," she admitted shyly, avoiding eye contact. "Your work, anyway. My parents got hold of illicit HoloNet News packages when our world was under Separatist control. I found them when I was a kid, and I knew straight away that's what I wanted to do. Tell stories. Speak the truth. Like you used to."

Ric accepted the compliment, noting the slight barb. He hadn't spoken truth for a long time. "Where is it you're from?"

"Worosta," Taylo said, her expression tightening.

A Republic aligned world invaded and exploited by the Separatists. That exploitation had only continued under Imperial rule. Ric knew it well, and of the hardship wrought upon the system. "I remember its people were always very welcoming," he told her, kindly.

"You've been there?"

"A lifetime ago. I wasn't much older than you when I started out. Cut my teeth as a travel writer, long before I found myself reporting from battlefields." Ric smiled at the memory of a galaxy that had celebrated its diverse cultures rather than subduing them. "I came back to Coruscant and moved over to the news desk when I noticed things were beginning to change out there. I could see war was brewing after a man named Count Dooku made a divisive speech on Raxxus and the Confederacy split away. I wanted to give a voice to the people who would be caught in the crossfire."

Ric took a sip of his soda and waited for Taylo to follow through with her line of questioning. He had a feeling he knew where it was heading.

"I went through the archives on my first day, looking for more of your work," she said, finally. "As far as I can tell, as soon as the Empire took over, you stopped. No more speaking out, for anyone. What happened?"

Her obvious disappointment came as no surprise—he'd grown used to disappointing people. He'd made a habit of it. Still, the bitterness cut deep. He was impressed. She'd done her homework, and it took guts to confront him.

"It was safest to keep my head down," Ric shrugged. "How else do you think I managed to get this old?"

Taylo stared at him, and he knew she was trying to parse the hero she thought she'd met with the tired, disillusioned oaf sitting opposite. When the lengthening silence between them became unbearable, Ric downed the remains of his drink and stood up. "You'd better get back to the office," he sniffed.

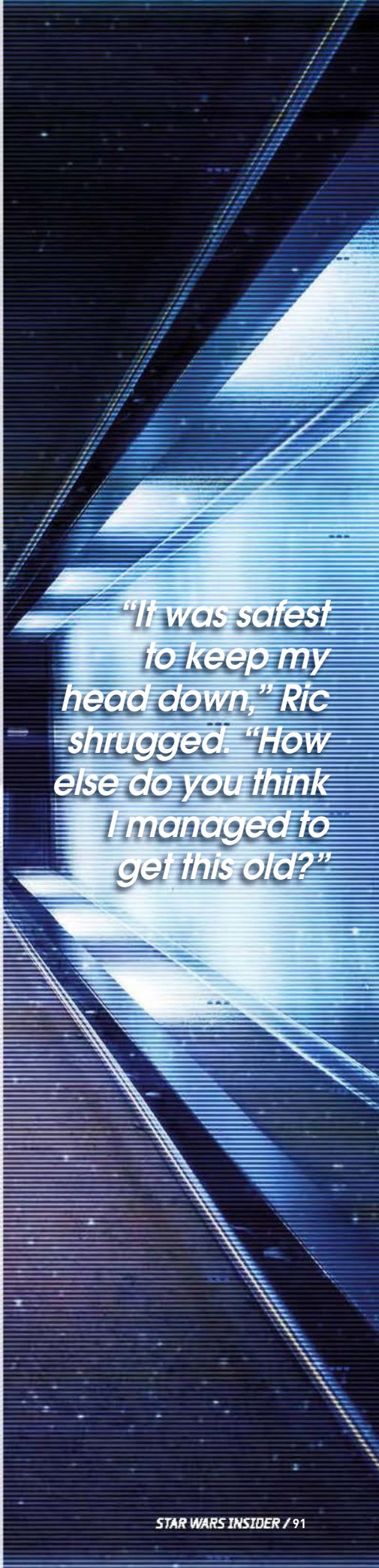
"What?" asked Taylo.

"That report isn't going to write itself. You've got a deadline to meet. Enjoy your first HoloNet News byline. I'm taking the rest of the day off."

The airbus station was bustling with waiting passengers when Ric first noticed a face among the commuters that gnawed at his memory. It was probably nothing, but he hurriedly negotiated his way through the throng to get a clearer view of the woman anyway, earning more than a few muttered curses from his fellow travelers as he pushed by. He could almost touch the hem of her cloak when the airbus arrived at the terminal and he was caught up in the surge of bodies boarding it. As the doors swished shut on the heaving interior, he was relieved to find he'd ended up right beside her.

Ric caught the eye of the woman as the public transit vehicle departed and rolled his own in resignation. "Packed in like sard-fins again, eh?!" he complained.

A curt nod in agreement was her





"The stranger glared at Ric in an unequivocally unfriendly manner before moving further along the interior."

only response before she pointedly turned her gaze to the route map above the windows—the universal commuter shorthand for *don't talk to me.* He noted the New Republic administration uniform she wore, and glanced at the I.D. pinned to its tunic. He made a mental note of the name, but it rang no bells. Maybe he recognized her from some meaningless initiative launch he'd covered?

Undeterred, Ric attempted to continue their one-sided conversation. "Funnily enough, I've just come from a Skylanes Agency consultation," he said. "Not one mention of special airbus corridors, and I've complained to them so many times. In writing! You'd have thought after a thousand generations *someone* would have sorted out the timetables!"

The stranger glared at Ric in an unequivocally unfriendly manner before moving further along the interior, but it was enough to dredge up a singular, chilling memory. He hoped he was wrong, but he felt certain he'd seen those cruel eyes before. If he was right about where and when, he wasn't going to risk drawing her attention any further.

Thirteen uncomfortable minutes later, the airbus came to a halt at a terminus in an unfashionable residential district. Ric watched the woman exit and waited until the doors were about to close before stepping onto the platform himself. Tailing a mark without being noticed was a skill he'd picked up from a Kubaz "security consultant" back in the old days, and the ability to slip through a crowd unobserved had never left him. Over the past few decades it had been a lifesaver on more than one occasion.

Ric followed the woman several blocks until she finally entered a tall, nondescript apartment building and disappeared into a waiting elevator. The moment its doors closed, he ducked into the lobby and hovered beside the row of lifts, as if he were waiting for another to arrive. He watched the indicator board closely. The woman's elevator stopped on the 138th floor for a few moments then began its journey back down. Ric had left the building before it returned to the lobby.

When the agitated old man eturned to his office, he was startled to find Taylo sitting at his desk, evidently wrestling with her script for the dullest journalistic debut in history.

"What's happened?" she asked, with concern. "Are you alright?"

Ric felt like a Hoojib caught in the grasp of a hungry Hutt. "Why haven't you gone home?" he stammered.

"I haven't finished this Skylanes thing. I can't make it interesting."

"Doesn't matter. It isn't important." Ric said dismissively. He began scanning his shelves intently, checking faded scribbles on the spines of each dataslate and memory drive.

"Fierfek," Ric cursed under his breath. "I thought I kept a copy here."

"Ric, calm down and tell me what's going on!"

He stopped and took a moment to compose himself. "You think the Empire is gone, yes?" he said in as measured a tone as he could manage.

"Come on, Ric. It fell apart the second Palpatine died. You know that," the young woman protested.

Ric laughed. "Of course it did. It's been fireworks and celebrations ever since. But the fact is *it's still out there,* licking its wounds, waiting for a chance to strike back."

"You're being paranoid…"

"No. I'm not. I just bumped into an Imperial war criminal on an airbus, and… I *know* how ridiculous that sounds, but I did."

"Ric…"

"I've watched this galaxy twist itself in knots for more than half a century. Nothing changes for the better this fast, trust me," he insisted. Ric had a fire in his belly he hadn't felt for years.

"Grab your things," he said. "We need proof before we can do anything about it."

"We?" Ric heard Taylo exclaim excitedly as he left the room.

"Isn't that ISB headquarters?" Taylo hissed as they turned a corner and were confronted by a brutalist edifice ahead of them. "We're going *inside* the Imperial Security Bureau?

Are you *joking*?!"

"Don't say I never take you anywhere," replied Ric. He let her enjoy the prospect for a moment before admitting the truth. "The chances of us getting into that place are slimmer than an eopie's hind leg. We're going to Municipal Records. I've got an old flame there who lets me look through Coruscant's dirty linen every once in a while."

It took what seemed to take an age for them to navigate the foreboding perimeter of the fortress, currently being data-stripped by former rebel intelligence operatives. Ric imagined it would likely take years for them to root out the full extent of the ISB's web of intrigue, but he needed information right now, and that meant digging through less secure sources.

His contact was waiting for them at the records complex, access to which had been restricted under the Empire—unless you knew the right people. And Ric knew a lot of people.

Ama Immi, an affable woman a few years younger than Ric and wearing a security uniform, welcomed him with a hug. "I was beginning to think you were going to drift off into the sunset without saying goodbye," she admonished.

"As if I would," Ric protested, although he'd been planning to do just that. He'd said goodbye to too many friends, too many times. "I can't remember the last time we went in through the front entrance, can you?"

"The secret passage is still there, if you'd prefer."

"With *my* knees?" Ric puffed out his cheeks at the very thought.

Immi led the two reporters into the depths of the building and deposited them in a private data retrieval booth, discreetly leaving them to their business. Ric set to work immediately, pulling accommodation records from the district where he had trailed the mystery woman, narrowing them down to the occupants of floor 138. There were dozens to plow through, and he only had a surname to work with.

Taylo's curiosity got the better of her. "So, Ama is an old flame who just happens to have access to the kind of records regular people don't?"

"She also cooks a mean drejil stew."

"Brave too, if she snuck you in here while the Empire had the place locked down."

"'Brave' doesn't begin to cover it," said Ric, not taking his eyes off the screen. "That woman risked everything…"

Taylo pressed further. "It doesn't sound much like you were 'keeping your head down,' either."

Ric paused his search. "Look at me, Taylo. What do you see? A dogged investigative reporter in his prime or an old Corellian hound who's forgotten his last trick?"

He knew she'd see a mess. Greasy hair, a straggly beard, and an overcoat that looked like a massiff slept on it.

"Fear isn't the only reason to keep your head down," Ric said, firmly, and he turned back to the data stream. A few minutes later he slapped a hand on the desk. "Gotcha!" he declared.

"Found who you're looking for?" Taylo asked, peering at the readout.

Ric didn't answer. He was staring at the image of the woman from the airbus. A woman he now recognized as the Butcher of Biklai.

Ric Varsh's apartment was nothing like his office in the HoloNet News building. It was tidy and well ordered, almost obsessively so.

Taylo picked up a colorful wooden doll she found sitting unobtrusively on his desk, propped up against an antique data terminal. "What's this?" she asked.

"A kalikori," answered Ric, more interested in a light fitting on one of the walls. "A gift from Ja Wen, my old editor on the news desk. She was a Twi'lek."

He twisted the light with a clunk, and a hidden door slide open in the galley area. "Come on in," Ric grinned enigmatically as he disappeared through it.

Taylo followed him into a small, dimly lit space filled with racks of data cubes and a small table against one wall. A holo-reader, clearly cobbled together from spare parts, sat upon it. "What is all this stuff?" she asked in amazement.

"You wanted to know why I stopped ▶

"Ric Varsh's apartment was nothing like his office in the HoloNet News building. It was tidy and well ordered, almost obsessively so."



"You wanted to know why I stopped making noise when the Empire started getting nasty? This is why."

making noise when the Empire started getting nasty? This is why."

Taylo was beginning to understand. "You went underground."

"Took my *real* work completely off-grid," Ric said as he powered up the reader. "I carried on gathering stories, but not only the ones Moldreth sent me to cover."

Ric took the kalikori from Taylo and held it tenderly. "Ja gave this to me a few days before the Empire came for her. Twi'leks pass them down through the generations, each adding something of themselves to the markings, passing on their stories. She was my mentor."

He turned and surveyed the files he'd collected. "This was all her idea. 'There are alternatives to fighting,' Ja used to say. And she heard that from a Jedi, so it must be true," Ric's half smile was heavy with regret, remembering all those who had fought and lost. "Terrible things are done in the name of war, but wars always end. Someone has to collect the evidence, ensure justice is served when the time comes."

"And you did this all on your own? In secret?"

"With help from friends like Ama, and the resources of the HoloNet News network. All under the Empire's nose. And now I'm going to make sure those Imp fyrnocks start paying for everything they did, starting with Elix Kynch."

Ric inserted the data cube into a socket on the reader—a military record he'd got his hands on years ago. Taylo recognized the shimmering image of the Imperial officer as a dead ringer for the resident from floor 138.

"I was reporting from Biklai during the transition from the Old Republic to the Empire, which was less transition and more bloodbath," Ric explained. "I witnessed Kynch order her troops to open fire. There were civilians in the crowd. Children. They weren't even part of the protests. She laughed as each life was stolen. Management quashed my report. That's when Ja realized we had a problem and I went dark." Ric fell silent, holding the kalikori close to his heart.

"Kynch turns up on Coruscant, using a fake identity and working for the new administration," Taylo reasoned aloud. "If she's an Imperial loyalist, that can't be good news."

It rarely got cold at night on Coruscant. The heat generated by every occupied level of the city planet was regulated at the surface, which had suited Ric and Taylo just fine. They'd spent half the night watching the entrance to Kynch's apartment block from a bench in the speeder lot opposite. Taylo was dozing when their target finally walked out through the lobby entrance.

"She's on the move," said Ric, nudging his companion.

Taylo blinked herself awake and got to her feet. "Let's see where she's going, then," she suggested.

Ric held her back. "I'll handle that. I want you to go to the office. Find Zork Aurlex, he's a junior editor on the sports desk. One of us."

"I'm an 'us' now?" Taylo asked.

"You know you are," Ric assured her with a smile. He'd known the moment they'd met. "Tell Zork we need to get this story out there. And don't let Moldreth anywhere near it."

Ric felt guilty sending Taylo on a pointless errand. There was no Zork Aurlex. He'd just wanted her safe in case this got messy.

In truth, Ric already knew where Kynch was headed. He'd checked her employment records. Sure enough, he tailed her into the heart of the administration district, where the mundane, day-to-day coordination of galactic infrastructure had been managed for centuries. For the life of him, Ric couldn't see what it offered as the location for a decisive strike against the New Republic, although he noted the lack of security personnel about the place.

The building she'd entered was a window-free slab of featureless brown, and Ric quickly understood why after following her in. Why fit windows when there weren't any beings inside who needed them? The the vast, dimly lit space was occupied only by bank after bank of slab-like processors, stretching away from him in all directions. Maintenance droids pottered about the catwalks that wove themselves around each level.

Ric caught a glimpse of Kynch before she disappeared along a third level catwalk. He raced to catch up, taking care not to give himself away. He needed to learn what she was up to before challenging her. And he *was* going to challenge her—that was why he'd concealed a blaster inside his overcoat.

Ric found Kynch kneeling beside an open maintenance cabinet, attaching a palm-sized disc to a data relay. He'd worry about what that was for later, and waited silently until she'd closed the access panel before announcing his presence.

"Hello again. We've met before, haven't we? On the airbus yesterday?" he asked, all feigned innocence.

Startled, Kynch leapt to her feet but didn't respond.

"I thought you worked in admin, though, not technical services," Ric continued. "At least that's what your employment record says. What are you doing in here?"

Now she looked worried. "Who the hell are you?" Kynch almost spat the question.

"You wouldn't know me," he countered, calmly. "I was just another face in the crowd. A member of the media corps, during the Biklai uprising. You remember *that*, don't you?"

Before Ric could defend himself, she was on him, a blaze of efficient violence. It was all he could do to twist free and reach for his blaster, but it flew from his grasp after a fierce kick connected with his wrist. She'd grabbed the weapon before he had a chance to scramble for cover and he felt the searing heat of a blaster bolt rip through his shoulder.

Ric crashed to the gantry deck, reeling with red-hot pain. Unable to move, he could hear the sound of boot heels on metal, each step a countdown to his demise. This hadn't panned out quite the way he'd hoped. He never had been any good at fighting.

When the next shot rang out, he felt nothing.

Taylo Mar's report was playing on a loop on the HoloNet News network.

"Security forces intercepted a rogue Imperial agent after following a tip off from HoloNet reporter Ricta Varsh, who sustained injuries while attempting to apprehend the insurgent," her narration explained. "The plot to wreak havoc across the New Republic by destroying a key galactic coordination hub was foiled before it could happen, with numerous explosive devices retrieved from the intended target."

Arial recordings of the bland building surrounded by New Republic security forces cut to another of Taylo interviewing Ama Immi, who had led the squad that stunned Kynch before the Imperial could end Ric's life. Watching the transmission on the monitor in Ric's office, Taylo smiled, trying not to look too pleased with herself.

"That's a better first byline than a skylane report." Ric winced, adjusting the sling supporting his wounded arm. "Don't you ever do what you're told?" he complained.

"If I hadn't followed you instead of coming back here, you'd be dead now," she protested. "You were lucky Ama arrived in time. I still haven't been able to find your friend Zork, though."

Ric smirked and took a final look around his office. Taylo had helped him pack his things. Even the couch had been cleared. He'd forgotten it was so comfortable.

"I've got something for you," he said. "A farewell gift."

Taylo was stunned to see he was holding his kalikori. "I can't accept that," she stammered.

"You're the next generation, kiddo. Time for you to add your own story. Ja Wen would've liked that." said Ric.

"Thank you." She took the hand-painted object from him with gratitude. "You're still determined to go traveling?"

"I've spent too long in the dark. It's time I soaked up some starlight."

"But what about all that evidence you've collected?"

"I'm pretty sure you know what to do with it," he told her. Ric had seen something of his younger self in the girl. He knew she'd finish the job he'd started.

The End



JEDI MASTER'S QUIZ

The Mandalorian and Grogu arrives in theaters soon! This issue's trivia test takes us back through Din Djarin and Grogu's exploits across three seasons of *The Mandalorian*.

Compiled by Jay Stobie

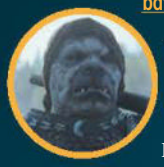
"WHEREVER I GO, HE GOES."

Prepare for our hero's cinematic adventure with these questions about Din Djarin and Grogu.

FROM QUARRY TO COMPANION



1: How did the Mandalorian imprison his Mythrol bounty?
A/ Subdued him with a dybbuk
B/ Fed him to a sarlacc
C/ Froze him in carbonite
D/ Locked him in a dungeon



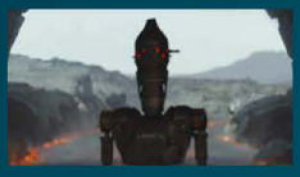
2: Where did the Mandalorian do battle with Klatooinian raiders?
A/ Savareen
B/ Hoth
C/ Kef Bir
D/ Sorgan

3: Who did the Mandalorian meet on Arvala-7?
A/ Leia Organa
B/ Kuiil
C/ Darth Vader
D/ Jod Na Nawood



4: What was Migs Mayfeld's previous profession?
A/ Moisture farmer
B/ Imperial sharpshooter
C/ Bantha herder
D/ Rebel medic

5: How did IG-11 sacrifice himself to protect the Child on Nevarro?
A/ He self-destructed
B/ He drowned in an ocean
C/ He was eaten by a ravinak
D/ He crashed a starship



FINDING THE FORCE





6: Who served as the marshal of Mos Pelgo?
A/ Xi'an
B/ Fennec Shand
C/ Mok Shaiz
D/ Cobb Vanth



7: What information did Ahsoka Tano want from Morgan Elsbeth?
A/ Plans for a cloaking device
B/ The location of Grand Admiral Thrawn
C/ Coordinates to a Sith temple
D/ Schematics for Starkiller Base



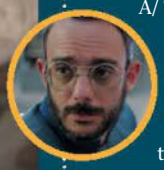
8: Where did Din Djarin first encounter Bo-Katan Kryze?
A/ Trask
B/ Yavin 4
C/ Mimban
D/ Corellia

9: What weapon did Boba Fett deploy against TIE fighters on Morak?
A/ A tractor beam
B/ A lightsaber
C/ An ion cannon
D/ A seismic charge

10: Who saved Din Djarin and his allies from Moff Gideon's Dark Troopers?
A/ Bo-Katan Kryze
B/ Boba Fett
C/ Luke Skywalker
D/ Grogu



A MISSION TO MANDALORE



11: Why did the New Republic send Dr. Pershing to Coruscant?
A/ To participate in the Amnesty Program
B/ To investigate the Jedi
C/ To spy on the Chancellor
D/ To meet Luke Skywalker

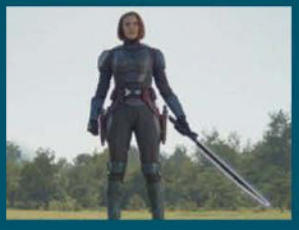
12: Who served alongside Carson Teva at Adelphi Base?
A/ Cassian Andor
B/ General Grievous
C/ Bail Organa
D/ Garazeb "Zeb" Orrelios

13: Which creature lurked in the Living Waters below Mandalore's surface?
A/ Rathtar
B/ Blurrg
C/ Tauntaun
D/ Mythosaur



14: Who rescued Grogu from Order 66
A/ Aayla Secura
B/ Kelleran Beq
C/ Ki-Adi-Mundi
D/ Plo Koon

15: Where did Bo-Katan Kryze reclaim the Darksaber?
A/ Dantooine
B/ Khofar
C/ Plazir-15
D/ At Attin



"MANDALORIANS ARE STRONGER TOGETHER."

Gather your covert and locate 10 key phrases from *The Mandalorian* below:

A	G	M	A	N	D	A	R	F	A	S	I	X	S
C	R	A	G	A	X	E	W	O	V	E	S	I	M
L	E	U	G	R	O	G	A	K	R	L	O	W	O
P	E	L	I	M	O	T	T	O	P	A	N	N	S
I	F	K	R	Y	W	O	L	S	M	Z	Y	E	S
R	K	D	Y	Z	O	A	I	K	A	E	B	O	T
M	A	Y	T	H	D	O	S	A	N	U	R	B	R
P	R	E	R	N	S	H	I	R	N	G	Z	A	M
A	G	O	A	S	G	V	O	E	K	R	Y	Y	O
S	A	M	M	R	U	H	O	E	R	I	Z	Z	B
D	A	N	R	Y	D	I	E	V	R	N	A	N	E
Z	F	U	R	U	I	U	X	E	V	A	W	E	S
S	L	O	M	D	A	R	K	S	A	B	E	R	K
B	G	R	O	G	I	U	M	P	A	X	X	E	A
M	A	N	N	D	D	O	R	I	A	N	E	S	R



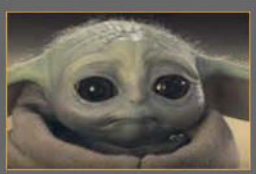
ANSWERS:

"WHEREVER I GO, HE GOES."
1. C, 2. D, 3. B, 4. B, 5. A, 6. D, 7. B, 8. A, 9. D, 10. C, 11. A, 12. D, 13. D, 14. B, 15. C.

"MANDALORIANS ARE STRONGER TOGETHER."
1. Mudhorn, 2. Omera, 3. Darksaber, 4. Greef Karga, 5. Mandalore, 6. Peli Motto, 7. Koska Reeves, 8. Beskar, 9. Axe Woves, 10. Blurrg.

HOW DID YOU DO?

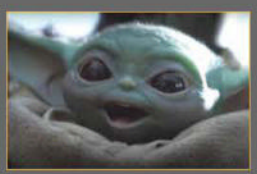
Were you able to track down the correct answers and pocket a top bounty?



0–9: Not bad. There may be hope for you yet.



10–19: Mandalore is not cursed... and neither are your answers.



20–25: Good hunting! This is the Way.



AFTERWORD

BY DAN MADSEN, CREATOR OF *STAR WARS INSIDER*

Star Wars has played an important role in my life since I first saw it in 1977, as a 14-year-old boy. To become involved with the franchise was a dream come true, and *Star Wars Insider* was a labor of love for me after I founded it in the 1980's. First, as *The Lucasfilm Fan Club Magazine* and then switching over to *Insider* before the prequels were released.

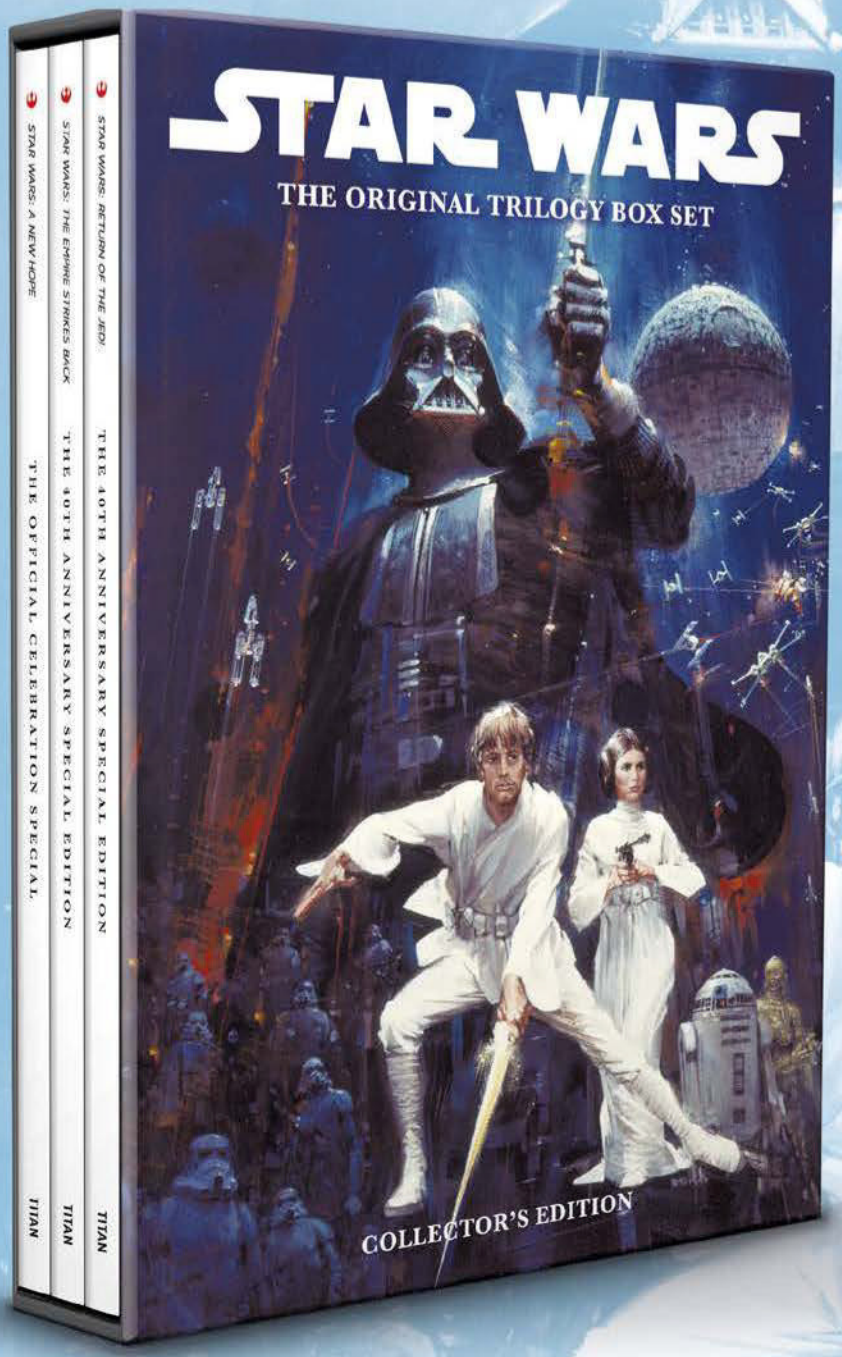
I've made so many friends with those who have made the movies and television shows and, of course, the fans. Professionally, it allowed me to do so many other things and provide jobs for hundreds of people over the years who have worked for the *Insider*. People's lives have been changed as a result of the magazine's existence.

We launched *Star Wars Insider* in the 10th anniversary year of *A New Hope,* although we had to wait many years before we had anything new concerning the saga to talk about. During the downtime between *Return of the Jedi* and *The Phantom Menace,* there wasn't another place to keep up to date with what was happening with the franchise, and the *Insider* filled that space by providing informative articles, interviews with cast and crew members, exclusive merchandise, and giving fans a reason to be hopeful that *Star Wars* would return someday. I honestly believe, and I've been told this as well, that the *Insider* kept *Star Wars* fandom alive, active, and interesting when there wasn't a whole lot to talk about. *Star Wars Insider* (and *The Lucasfilm Fan Club Magazine*) nurtured and fed *Star Wars* fans' insatiable appetite for MORE coverage, and once the prequels came out, the doors were wide open to give them the kind of exclusive coverage they expected from an official magazine.

I feel very proud to have launched *Star Wars Insider* into the world, and I am equally proud of all the talented individuals who have contributed to its long existence, over many issues, to entertain and inform the fans. The fact that the *Insider* has lasted so long is a legacy I don't take lightly. I take great pride in the quality of work that has found its way into the pages of the magazine during my time and thereafter, and will be forever proud of its place in *Star Wars* history.



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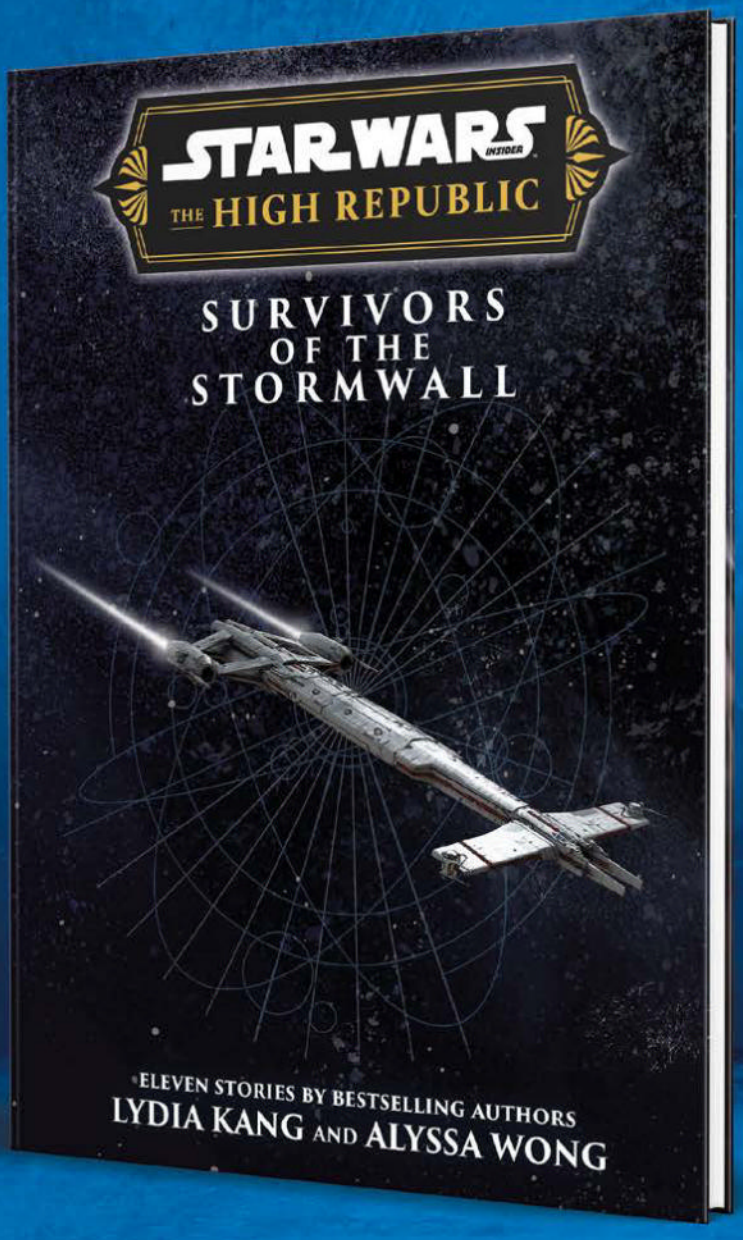
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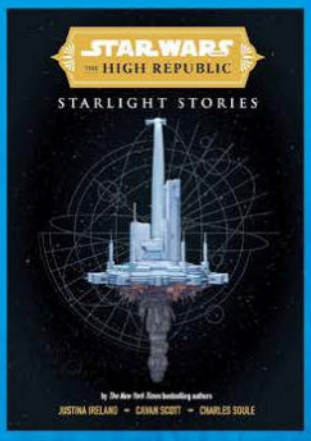
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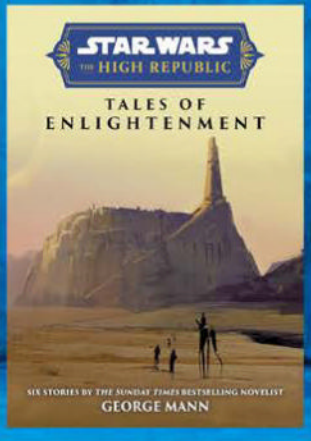
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