



P.O. Box 1000, Beverly Hills, Ca. 90213

## GEORGE LUCAS: The Man Behind *Star Wars*

George Lucas is among the new generation of young film directors who have loved films all their life. These young directors were brought up on motion pictures, and continued their romance with film by attending film schools. They studied theories of filmmaking, explored the technical demands by making their own short films, and endlessly viewed old films to rediscover the visual and narrative elements that made moviegoing a weekly habit.

Other members of this new generation include Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*, and *The Godfather, Part II*), Steven Spielberg (*Jaws*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*), Brian De Palma (*Phantom of the Paradise*, and *Carrie*), John Milius (*The Wind and The Lion*, and *Dillinger*), and Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*, and *New York, New York*). All of these men share the love for films that made George Lucas want to become a director.

George Lucas was born on May 14, 1944. The son of a retail merchant, he was raised on a walnut ranch in Modesto, California. As a teenager, his two passions were art and cars. Determined to become a champion race car driver, he worked at rebuilding cars at a foreign car garage and in pit crews at races throughout the country. Following a serious automobile accident a few weeks prior to his high school graduation, he gave up all hope of becoming a race car driver.

He attended Modesto Junior College for two years, where he majored in social sciences. By chance, he met award-winning cinematographer Haskell Wexler, who encouraged him to study filmmaking, and helped pave the way for his admittance to the University of Southern California Film School.

While attending the USC Film School, he quickly turned out eight short films. He subsequently became a teaching assistant for a class training U.S.

Navy cameramen. With half of the class assisting him, he made a science fiction short entitled *Electronic Labyrinth (THX 1138:4EB)*. The film won the Third National Student Film Festival in 1967-68, and several other awards.

In 1967, he was one of four students selected to make short films about the making of Carl Foreman's *McKenna's Gold*. His short was Foreman's favorite, although it told more about the mysteries of the desert than about Foreman's film. Lucas then won a scholarship to Warner Bros. to observe the making of *Finian's Rainbow*, under the direction of Francis Ford Coppola.

While working as Coppola's assistant on *The Rain People*, he made a forty minute documentary about the making of the movie, entitled *Filmmaker*, which has been recognized as one of the best films on filmmaking.

George Lucas's first professional feature motion picture, *THX 1138*, was an expanded version of his prize-winning student film. Starring Robert Duvall and Donald Pleasence, it was enthusiastically received by critics when it was first released, and has since become a cult film with a large following.

In 1973, he co-wrote (with Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck) and directed *American Graffiti*. Upon its release, *American Graffiti* was hailed as the quintessential movie about American teenage life and rituals. The movie was nominated for five Academy Awards and won the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture—Comedy, and both the New York Film Critics and the National Society of Film Critics Awards for Best Screenplay.

George met his wife, Marcia, when she was hired to assist him on editing a documentary under the supervision of Verna Fields. Marcia Lucas was one of the editors on *Star Wars*, and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Editing, with Verna Fields, for *American Graffiti*. She has also edited *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *Taxi Driver*.

# STAR WARS

## Local Chapters for the Official Star Wars Fan Club

We've received dozens of letters from people who'd like to start their own *Star Wars* Fan Club. They want to get together with people who share their interests. And we've decided to help them.

We'll be running listings of all of the Local Chapters, to let you know if there's one in your area. We'll also run write-ups on Local Chapter activities.

We've set up some guidelines for the formation and running of Local Chapters. If you're interested in forming one, write to Local Chapters; c/o *Star Wars* Fan Club; P.O. Box 1000; Beverly Hills, CA 90213.

## Star Wars II

Almost since the day *Star Wars* was released, rumours about the making and release of *Star Wars II* have been spreading. The ones we've heard announce the film as being in at least five different stages of production, give four different 'firm' dates for the opening of the film, and other information that bears little or no resemblance to reality.



To keep you informed of what's actually happening, we'll be running a semi-regular feature on *Star Wars II*. We'll let you know about production and release dates, casting, scripting, and everything else concerned with the making of the sequel.

As things stand right now, production on *Star Wars II* should start in early 1979, with the release tentatively scheduled for the first quarter of 1980. Many of the characters—Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia Organa, and Han Solo—will be returning, along with R2-D2, C-3PO, Darth Vader, and probably Chewbacca.

## Star Wars Cast & Crew Find Mutual Interest: Comic Books

"Sometimes I really felt illiterate around the set," said Mark Hamill, *Star Wars*' Luke Skywalker. However, it wasn't discussing Shakespeare with Alec Guinness that made him feel unread, it was discussing comic books with aficionado George Lucas.

Mark explained his love for comic books. "When I was a kid, we weren't allowed to have them in my family. I was told they were a waste of money. But I still got them somehow. That made them even more exciting to read because they were forbidden. And my friends all had them. My love for them now is a kind of compensation for not being able to buy them then. I have collected a lot of them now, like *Silver Surfer*. I love Green Lantern—the one with the ring. Superman got on my nerves, but I like Batman because he could get killed. And I got my fix of monsters from *Classics Illustrated*, which had things like Frankenstein."

George Lucas was so passionate about comics as a boy that Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon* was the inspiration for *Star Wars*. His love of the genre has remained so constant that he co-owns a gallery-bookstore in New York City which specializes in space fantasy and science fiction comic strips and comic books.

Carrie Fisher is also a devotee of comic books, but her taste runs more to "those love comics. I still have them, and I am still fascinated by them. They gave dating tips, which was my favorite section. There was *True Love*, *Young Romance*, and *Just Married*. They had the most delightfully bizarre stories. I read them twice as soon as I got them. They were always the same and always great. Love, conflict, and then back together again. Romeo and Juliet stuff, but it always worked.

"There's also another series that I loved," said Carrie. "It was underground comic types of things, like *Slime* and *Despair*. I didn't really read them. I just loved to look at their covers. I think my favorite was the *Leather Nun*. And you had to be eighteen to buy it."

Even producer Gary Kurtz was not immune to the comic book mania on the *Star Wars* set. "Sometimes Gary would get an excited little grin," Mark Hamill recalled, "and he'd start talking about Scrooge McDuck and the other Carl Barks creations."

## Q & A

In each issue of the newsletter, we'll try to answer some of the most-often-asked questions about *Star Wars*. If you have any questions that you'd like to have answered, send them to Q & A; c/o *Star Wars* Fan Club; P.O. Box 1000; Beverly Hills, CA 90213. We don't have room to answer all of the questions we receive, but we'll answer as many as we can in these pages.

# STAR WARS

## How did you come up with the 'droids, and were they robots or real people?

The two 'droids, R2-D2 and C-3PO, are among George Lucas's favorite characters. In fact, an earlier version of the script had the two robots as the main characters, instead of the humans.

The robots were built from designs prepared by Ralph McQuarrie, Production Illustrator for *Star Wars*, following detailed discussions with George Lucas.

John Stears, Special Production and Mechanical Effects Supervisor, is the one who made most of the robots work. He and his staff talked with various experts in robotics, the science of robots, prior to building the first one. Besides the dozen robots he built, he also came up with the light sabers and land vehicles.

C-3PO was the only robot not built by Stears. He was designed by Ralph McQuarrie, Art Director Norman Reynolds, and Sculptress Liz Moore. C-3PO's casing was sculpted to fit actor Anthony Daniels, who played C-3PO throughout the movie.

Several different versions of R2-D2 appeared in the film. One version had actor Kenny Baker inside. Other versions were built for special functions, including several operated by remote control.

## Where did George Lucas get the idea for *Star Wars*, and why did he do it?

George Lucas had long been a fan of science fiction and action-adventure books and films. As early as 1971, he wanted to make a space fantasy film. Originally, he wanted to make a Flash Gordon movie but was unable to obtain the rights to the character. Instead, he researched where Alex Raymond, who had done the Flash Gordon comic strips, had gotten his inspiration. Discovering that Raymond was influenced by the books of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Mr. Lucas read through Burroughs's *John Carter of Mars* series of books. Further research led to the fact that Burroughs was inspired by a science fantasy called *Gulliver on Mars*, written by Edwin Arnold and published in 1905.

George Lucas made *Star Wars* because "I really enjoy the space fantasy genre. It's a lot of fun. I really wanted to make *Star Wars* in the hope that it will be such a fantastic success everyone will want to copy it. Then I'll get to see space fantasy movies and won't have to do them. I'll finally be able to sit back and enjoy other people's space adventures."

For more information on George Lucas and his background, read the article on him elsewhere in this issue.

## How did you get the Light Sabers to work?

The problem of getting the Light Sabers to work fell upon Special Production and Mechanical Effects Supervisor John Stears. Production Illustrator Ralph McQuarrie gave Stears a sketch of what the Light Sabers should look



like when in use, and, based on that, he made them work.

The 'handles' of the Light Sabers are seven inches long, and one inch in diameter. Loosely attached to a person's belt for carrying, when pulled from the belt and activated, there is a four foot long burst of light and an accompanying hum of power.

The 'blade' part of the Light Saber is actually a four-sided blade attached to a small motor in the handle. The motor is used to quickly rotate the blade.

Two sides of the blade are coated with a highly reflective material similar to the material used on motion picture screens. One of those two sides is painted four inches higher than the other side. When spinning, this gave the blade its flashing effect.

A device was made to lock a light source onto the camera, allowing the camera both to move freely and to be aligned with the light source and the blade's reflection.

The film was then taken to a special effects house and rotoscoped, an animation process involving the frame-by-frame drawing of previously photographed live action. This animation process added brightness, flash, and color to the Light Saber blades.

That's all for this issue. Next issue, we'll answer more questions about the how and why of *Star Wars*.

## Star Wars Merchandise and Discounts

As you all are probably aware, there is a lot of *Star Wars*-related merchandise on the market—tee-shirts, posters, blankets, masks, towels, toys, and more. And we've received quite a few letters from people wanting to know what is being produced and where it's available.

Some future issues of the newsletter will have inserts from companies producing *Star Wars* merchandise. Not only will these inserts serve to let you know what items are available and where they can be ordered, but some of the companies will provide discounts to members of the Official *Star Wars* Fan Club.

So look to future issues of this newsletter for information and discounts on *Star Wars* products.

# STAR WARS

## The Strange Item in your Membership Kit

Some members of the club have written in and asked about the triangular decal included in the Membership Kit. They want to know the significance of the figure, and what he has to do with *Star Wars*.

We included this particular decal, painted by Production Illustrator Ralph McQuarrie, to lend a sense of history to the club. It's been around just about the longest, and has always been used to represent *Star Wars*.

We called up Ralph McQuarrie and asked him about the decal. "It was done as a symbol for the film—to go on film cans and letters. George had had one for *American Graffiti*, and wanted one for *Star Wars*." It's been used to identify things as being a part of *Star Wars*. It can be found on notebooks, file cabinets, and doors. A simplified version of McQuarrie's design can be seen on the stationery used by Star Wars Corporation.

"It was done while we were working on costumes," said McQuarrie. "This was how we first pictured Han Solo. It could be a sort of Luke character, but I think it's more like Han. Anyway, later George decided that Han Solo should be a more relaxed character, and his costume was changed. But this decal was designed before the change."

Perhaps more than any other piece of artwork, this design has come to mean *Star Wars*.



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**STAR WARS FAN CLUB**  
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