

BANTHA TRACKS

JOURNAL OF THE OFFICIAL **STAR WARS/LUCASFILM** FAN CLUB

The Ewok Movie

Tom Smith studied film at Northwestern University and in France. After a stint in the Air Force he began producing and directing educational films. Eventually, he formed his own company and, primarily as a director, produced documentaries. By 1968 he had relocated to Los Angeles. One of the last films his company produced was a film about a journey through our solar system, which introduced him to the world of special effects. After the production on THE SOLAR SYSTEM was finished Tom went to work for Churchill Films and it was there that he received the call that resulted in his being hired as General Manager of ILM.

BT: How would you describe your role as General Manager at ILM?

TS: As General Manager it was my responsibility to make sure that ILM had work. I would select the projects that we would do and if necessary go down to Los Angeles and try to persuade people to come to us. When a new project came in I would be involved in how much work it was going to be, how much it would cost, and I would assign who would do what, and get



Terry Chostner

Tom Smith



which projects. It was very much like being a film producer, only we were producing visual effects for movies instead of producing a whole movie. Because I've worked for a long time in films I have a good general skills background: I can run a camera, edit film, etc., not well enough to make those individual things my career, but well enough to know what problems people are likely to confront.

I came to ILM during the production of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and became General Manager right after that. While I was General Manager, ILM worked on DRAGONSLAYER, RAIDERS, ET, POLTERGEIST, STAR TREK II, JEDI, INDIANA JONES, the third STAR TREK (my second), and NEVERENDING STORY.

During production of RETURN OF THE JEDI I told George Lucas I wanted to get out of special effects, that it had been really interesting for four and one-half years but I preferred to make

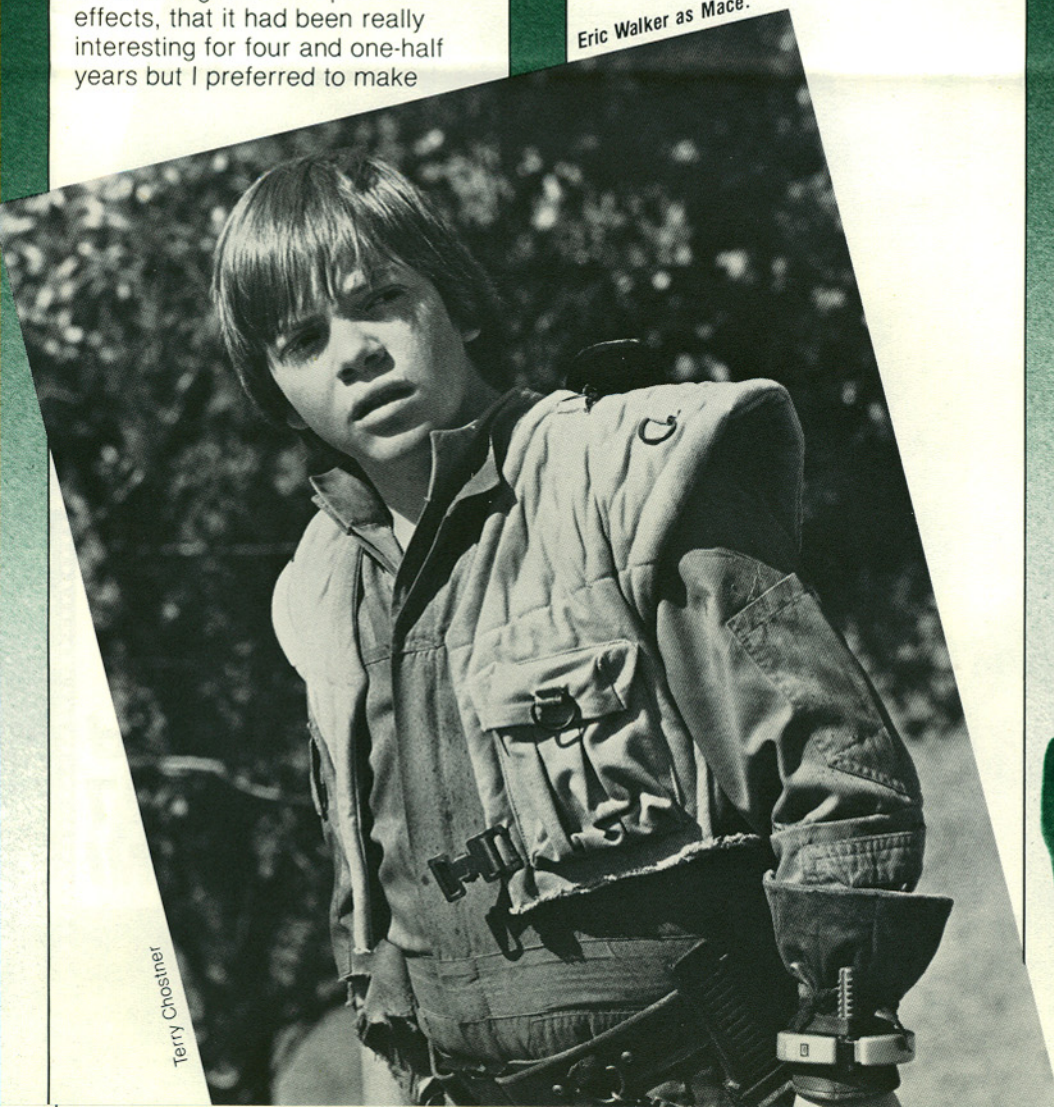
films. When I resigned as head of ILM George offered me the job of producer on this film, THE EWOK MOVIE.

BT: What can you tell us about THE EWOK MOVIE?

TS: THE EWOK MOVIE is a two-hour-long film made primarily for television. It will be shown in theaters outside of the United States. It will run on ABC television sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas, although a date has not been pinpointed yet.

The film is a Lucasfilm/Korty Films production. John Korty is providing the actors, the directing staff, himself, and the extras. Lucasfilm is providing the story, production staff and script. George

Eric Walker as Mace.



Terry Chostner

Lucas is the executive producer; John Korty the director; I am the producer; Joe Johnston the production designer; John C. Nutt the editor. The music will be based on John Williams' music but he is unavailable to direct it. George Lucas wrote the story and Bob Carrau wrote the script based on George's story.

We began working on it in April and here it is June and we are filming—a very fast production schedule. We have the advantage of having talented people available who have worked together before. We had our choice of the best people from ILM, who came on this project and worked in an area they hadn't worked in very much before—a total film production. There has been a tremendous amount of enthusiasm on the part of these people. We're all having fun making a complete movie, rather than just the special effects. Joe Johnston, who has been attending USC and was the art director at ILM for many years, is the production designer. He is a genius. In anything concerning STAR WARS or the work of George





Lucas I think he knows more about the look of things than any other human being. Joe wrote a book on the Ewoks, so he's been thinking a lot about them. We're also profiting from the fact that Ewoks are already established, and we have their costumes. There are very few television films that come close to the production value that there will be in this movie.

BT: Does it take place after the events in JEDI?

TS: We don't know. It isn't specified. The Ewoks have been on the moon of Endor for a long time before JEDI, before the Empire came along and caused trouble. This may take place after JEDI because a little Ewok has a wooden toy that is carved to look somewhat like an Imperial two-legged walker. So if one is looking into this archeologically, one might say that the evidence shows the Imperials had been there.

BT: Who is going to be appearing in the film?

TS: We have Warrick Davis, a superb actor, playing Wicket, along with about eight or nine of



Joe Johnston

the best Ewoks who were in JEDI. We have a young boy by the name of Erik Walker playing the principal role of "Mace," and we have a little four-year-old girl, Aubree Miller, playing "Cindel." It was a very big decision to pick someone as young as Aubree to play a role in the movie. She is just perfect for the part, but the rules of California require that when you have an actor that young, they can only work three hours a day. She has a lead role in the film and so this has been a really difficult production problem, to film and work around her.

BT: How did you cast for the film?

TS: Everyone was chosen by audition, except for Warrick Davis and the Ewoks, who were chosen because of past performances. John Korty and I went to LA and auditioned people there, and up here in Marin county. Aubree was chosen because she was, by far, the most charming and appropriate person for the role.

BT: Where are you filming?

TS: Unlike most made-for-television movies, a lot of this film is being done on location in the country. We live in No. California and can film in the giant redwood trees without having to go too far. We have also found a desert landscape in Marin County. With the aid of matte paintings we are going to convert the Marin landscape into a world never seen before. A big segment of the film was shot on George Lucas' ranch using some of its interesting landscape.

Today the parking lot is filled with cars, the compound looks like a circus with the tent and catering trucks, actors and Ewoks running all over the place, cameras, lights, reflectors. Nearly a hundred



Terry O'Connell

people are actively putting together the different reality that forms the world of the Ewoks.

A full-sized, live Ewok will fly a skin-glider in this film—it's not going to be a special effect. When we were discussing the film, George Lucas said, "Oh, why don't we really fly one?" I felt that it was impossible to do, and I went



Joe Johnston



to see a hang-glider specialist expecting him to confirm my doubts. However, he thought it was a great idea and quite possible to do, so we're doing it.

BT: Will the film have a different look than JEDI?

TS: In some respects the film will look somewhat like JEDI, and although it won't have the hardware of STAR WARS there is a spaceship in it that plays a small role. There are also lots of special

effects. The Ewok villages look a little different in our film. In JEDI we concentrated on the Ewoks that live in trees. Yet, there are also Ewoks in outskirts areas. Our Ewoks have interesting little ground-based huts that are surrounded by exotic domesticated animals. We have three monsters in this film, one very large monster, one that isn't so big and finally an insidious one about the size of a dog.

BT: Will the Ewok language be the same?

TS: It probably will be. We are still having discussions about that. We are hoping to have a language that

can be learned by listening to it for two hours.

BT: Can we expect a title change?

TS: There may be a title change. We've been working with the title THE EWOK MOVIE. Another possible title is: "THE EWOKS OF ENDOR."

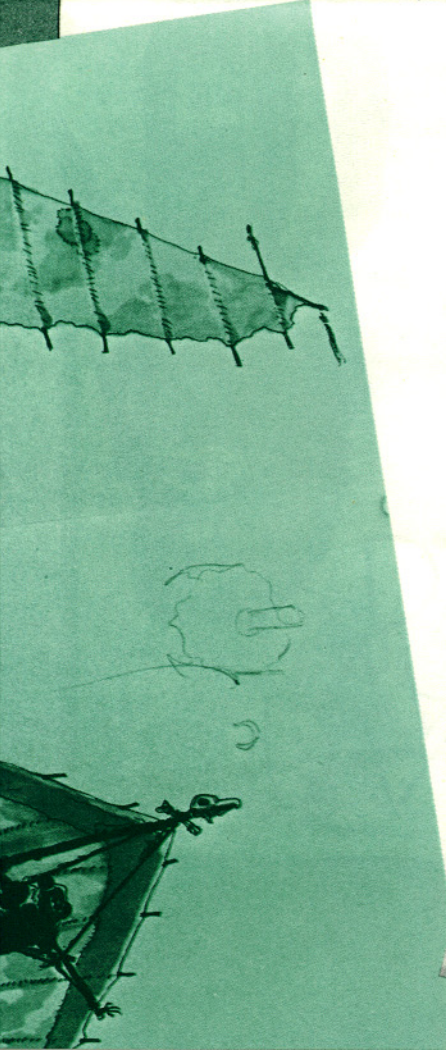
BT: Any final thoughts?

TS: This is a dramatic film. It is all new material, and although set in the STAR WARS universe, is not part of the STAR WARS Saga. We expect this movie will be a national event on television and feel a real obligation to deliver the traditional Lucasfilm quality. For that reason we are working hard to do a film that we can all be proud of.

■ Mary Paterno

Terry Chostner

Aubree Miller as Cindel.



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