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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE | ISSUE 234

STAR WARS INSIDER

INTERVIEWS:

Revenge of the Sith

Author Matthew Stover discusses his classic movie novelization

EXCLUSIVE STAR WARS FICTION!

Incredible Cross-sections

Artist John Mullaney takes us inside the worlds of *Star Wars*

Neel Nation

Skeleton Crew's Robert Timothy Smith

MASTER OF EVIL

Adam Christopher on his new Darth Vader novel



SHE'S GOT IT WHERE IT COUNTS

CAR CULTURE IN THE GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

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"Hello There!"



I met Darth Vader once. He came to my primary school in the guise of the Green Cross Code Man and seemed really nice. Much friendlier without the helmet and cape.

Just a few years later we learned that Vader was Luke Skywalker's father, which came as something of a shock. I was only 11 years old at the time, mind you, so may have confused real life with space fantasy. I don't do that anymore. Honest.

It's Halloween season, so who better to place front and center in this issue than the Dark Lord of the Sith himself, as we look forward to the release of Adam Christopher's new novel *Master of Evil* with an author interview and an exclusive extract from the book. The novelization of *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* is also getting a deluxe re-release this year, and we talk with author Matthew Stover about writing his much-loved adaptation.

On the lighter side, *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew*'s Robert Timothy Smith recalls the fun experience of playing the blue Myykian Neel in the Disney+ series, and artist John R. Mullaney reveals how his stunning cross-section illustrations for DK's *Star Wars* reference books are made.

There's also an exciting new short story by Landry Walker featuring the Crimson Corsair—a teaser for next issue's celebration of the tenth (!) anniversary of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Time flies, especially in hyperspace.

May the Force be with you.



Christopher Cooper
Editor

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Brandon is a writer, digital strategist, and podcaster, with a prodigious talent for crossword puzzles and a love for the *Star Wars* galaxy.



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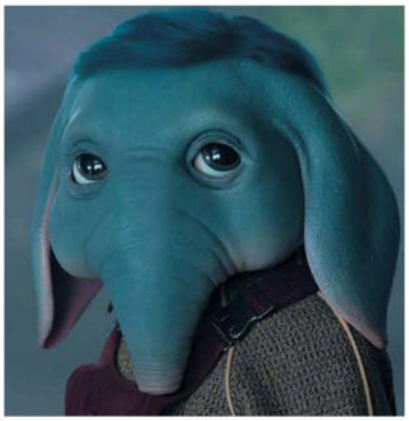
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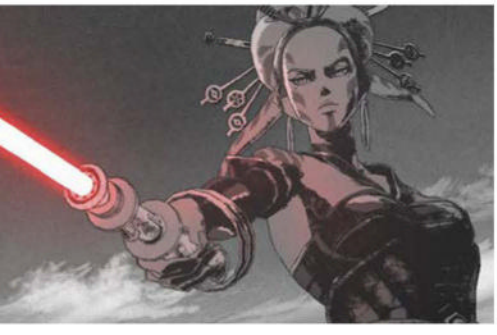
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New Visions

Star Wars: Visions Volume 3 Arrives





Debuting on Disney+ on October 29, a third volume of the experimental animated series *Star Wars: Visions* delivers 9 all-new anime shorts, showcasing unique takes on the mythos of the *Star Wars* galaxy.

Veterans of Volume 1 include Japanese studios Kamikaze Douga, Kinema citrus Co., and Production I.G, who return to their visions of a galaxy far, far away with episodes linked to that first batch of shorts. Directed by Takanobu Mizuno, Kamikaze Douga's "The Duel: Payback" continues the story of Ronin as he continues to hunt down Sith, while "The Lost Ones" from Kinema citrus Co. and directed by Hitoshi Haga, is a sequel to "The Village Bride." Production I.G's episode follows Kara's quest to find her father in "The Ninth Jedi: Child of Hope," directed by Naoyoshi Shiotani.

In keeping with the explorative nature of *Visions*, the remaining 6 episodes center on vibrant new interpretations of the galaxy far, far away. "Yuko's Treasure," from Kinema citrus Co. and directed by Masaki Tachibana, is a cute adventure featuring a bear-shaped droid named Billy. TRIGGER (another studio from *Visions* Volume 1) returns with "The Smuggler," the tale of a rogue named Chita in an action-packed underworld adventure. WIT Studio's "The Bounty Hunters" involves hunter Sevn and her unusual sidekick IV-A4, in a short directed by Junichi Yamamoto.

"The Song of Four Wings" from director Hiroyasu Kobayashi and Project Studio Q, takes place on an icy world inspired by Hoth, as rebel princess Crane and her droid track Imperial operations close to a secret rebel base. Director Tadahiro Yoshihira and Polygon Pictures



bring us "The Bird of Paradise," in which a blinded Jedi Padawan is tempted by the dark side. Finally, "BLACK" explores a stormtrooper's experience in combat and the internal struggle it causes, courtesy of director Shinya Ohira and david production.

In addition, fans can also look forward to *Star Wars: Visions Presents*, a new format that allows filmmakers to create longer-form storytelling under the *Visions* umbrella. The first such venture will be a series that continues the story of Kara from "The Ninth Jedi: Child of Hope," entitled "*Star Wars: Visions Presents - The Ninth Jedi*," which will be made by Production I.G and supervising director Kenji Kamiyama. The series is planned to arrive on Disney+ in 2026.

Star Wars: Visions Volume 3 will be available on Disney+ on October 29.



Star Wars: Starfighter Commences Filming

Lucasfilm Announces New Movie's Cast

Principal photography on *Star Wars: Starfighter* is now underway, and Lucasfilm have revealed the actors joining Ryan Gosling in the cast of new feature film, which will arrive in cinemas on May 28, 2027.

Newcomer Flynn Gray (pictured above, alongside Gosling, in a first-look picture from the set) will play a lead role, while former *Doctor Who* star Matt Smith and Oscar nominated actor Amy Adams bring a wealth of experience to the cast. Mia Goth, soon to be seen in Guillermo Del Torro's *Frankenstein*, will be familiar to horror fans from her dual roles as Maxine Minx and Pearl in the slasher movie *X* series. British actor Aaron Pierre provided the voice of eponymous lion hero in the 2024 Disney movie *Musafa: The Lion King*, while fellow brits Simon Bird (best known for his role in the TV comedy series and movie spin-offs *The Inbetweeners*), Jamael Westman (*Hedda*), and Daniel Ings (*The Gentleman*) complete the stellar cast.

"I feel a profound sense of excitement and honor as we begin production on *Star Wars: Starfighter*," director Shawn Levy said as the cast was announced. "From the day Kathy Kennedy called me up, inviting me to develop an original adventure in this incredible *Star Wars* galaxy, this experience has been a dream come true, creatively and personally. *Star Wars* shaped my sense of what story can do, how characters and cinematic moments can live with us forever. To join this storytelling galaxy with such brilliant collaborators onscreen and off, is the thrill of a lifetime."

A standalone story set a few years after the events of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, the movie—produced by Shawn Levy and Kathleen Kennedy with a script by Jonathan Tropper—opens up a new era for galactic storytelling. Executive producers are Ryan Gosling, Dan Levine, Mary McLaglen, and Josh McLaglen.

Hope on the Big Screen

Star Wars: A New Hope Returns to Theaters

Mark the date in your calendar! On April 30, 2027, the movie that started it all will be back in cinemas for a limited run celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The re-release commemorates the half century since *Star Wars: A New Hope* debuted on May 25, 1977, and





is timed to coincide with the annual May 4 "public holiday" known as *Star Wars* Day—a popular fan event around the world. The movie is set to screen in theaters in the U.S.A. and beyond as part of Lucasfilm's year-long celebration of the landmark movie. Further details of what promises to be a memorable year will be found on **StarWars.com** closer to the time.

History On Display

Star Wars Exhibits at Lucas Museum

The Lucas Museum of Narrative art is set to include a number of priceless *Star Wars* artifacts when it opens in Los Angeles in 2026, as confirmed by George Lucas himself during a panel on the museum at San Diego Comic-Con in July.

Displays will include concept art, props, maquettes and models from the original and prequel trilogies, along with several large pieces including Luke Skywalker's X-34





Photo by Eric Charbonneau / Lucas Museum of Narrative Art via Getty Images

Landspeeder from *A New Hope,* speeder bikes from *Return of the Jedi,* a reproduction of General Grievious' TSMEU Wheel Bike from *Revenge of the Sith,* and Anakin Skywalker's N-1 Starfighter from *The Phantom Menace.*

The mission behind the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art is "to inspire and connect people through the exploration of visual stories and their influence in society," and will be comprised of galleries, state-of-the-art theaters, dedicated learning spaces, and landscaped green spaces in and around the building's 300,000-square feet.

Speaking at Comic-Con, Lucas defined the importance of art as being, "about a connection, an emotional connection with the work. Not how much it cost or which celebrity did it or whatever. It's more a personal thing. And I don't think it's anything that anybody else can tell you. If you have an emotional connection, then it's art."



Lucasfilm Animation Celebrates

20 Years of Animated Adventures

Fans lucky enough to attend San Diego Comic-Con this year were treated to an exhibition of incredible artwork covering 20 years of Lucasfilm Animation, the team behind *Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Rebels, Resistance, The Bad Batch, Star Wars: Tales,* and the soon-to-be-released *Star Wars: Maul—Shadow Lord.*





Along with maquettes, concept art, and exhibits from the Lucasfilm Archives, a number of never-before-seen sketches by Lucasfilm's Chief Creative Officer Dave Filoni were on display. He also penned a special message paying tribute to his colleagues, saying, "George Lucas always believed in animation and believed in our team. He said 'Dare to be great,' and that's what we've done for the last 20 years. I hope we do it for 20 more."



PRODUCTION DIARY

Star Wars movies and television programs coming from a galaxy far, far away....

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PIECES OF THE PAST

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Disney+

COMING SOON

STAR WARS
VISIONS
ビジョンズ

Volume Three
Disney+, October 29, 2025

POST PRODUCTION

STAR WARS
THE MANDALORIAN AND GROGU

Starring Pedro Pascal and Sigourney Weaver
Directed by Jon Favreau

IN PRODUCTION

STAR WARS
AHSOKA

Season Two
Starring Rosario Dawson
Disney+

STAR WARS
STARFIGHTER

Starring Ryan Gosling and Amy Adams
Directed by Shawn Levy

Revenge of the Myth

Fall to the dark side with this Darth Maul megalith warrior

Following his unfathomable fall on Naboo, Darth Maul's vengeful return struck fear into many and eventually found him leading the Crimson Dawn criminal syndicate. As part of Sideshow's Mythos series, the Darth Maul Mythos Premium Format Figure envisions Maul's forgotten years as a disciple of the dark side.

The immense quarter-scale presentation measures 25.39 inches tall, depicting the Zabrak leaping from Sith ruins bearing Emperor Palpatine's likeness. Robotic legs, an LED light-up lightsaber, and a fully sculpted costume composed of weathered black skirts, belts, and accoutrements round out the ensemble. Priced $970, the polystone Darth Maul Mythos Premium Format Figure is expected to ship between late 2025 and early 2026 and is available to pre-order on **Sideshow.com**.

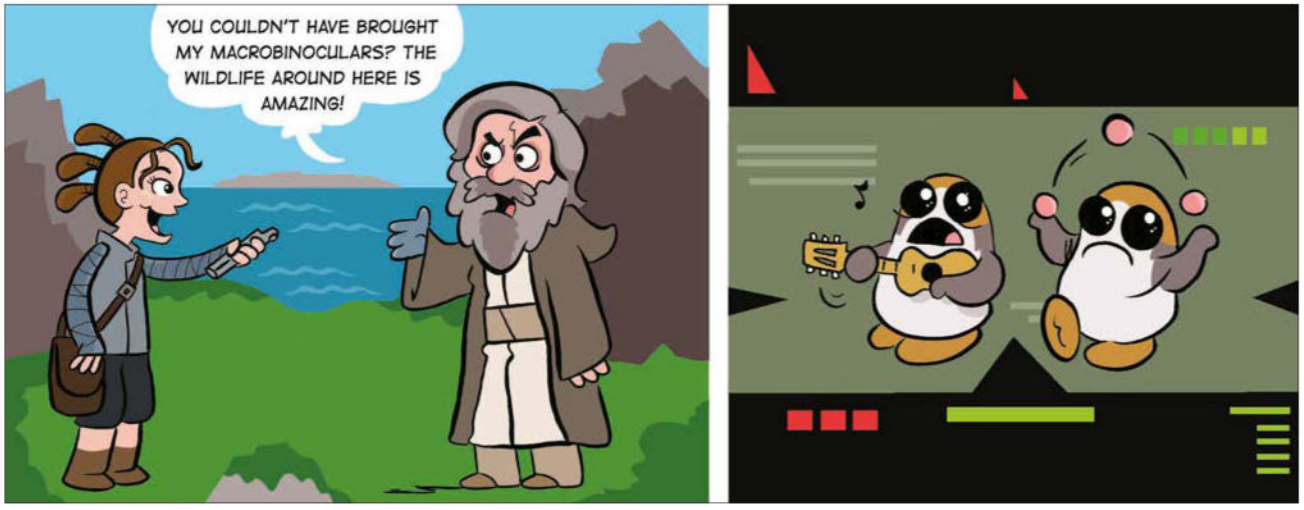






THE LIGHT SIDE

By Jamie Cosley

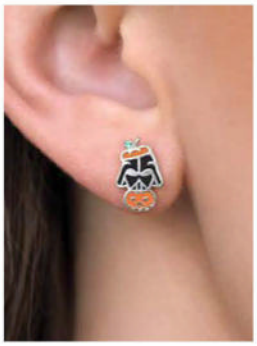


Sith-or-Treat

Stellar *Star Wars* studs perfect for a haunting Halloween candy run

Darth Vader's impenetrable mask terrified all who gazed upon it, making the Dark Lord's helmet the perfect scary symbol for any Halloween costume or ensemble.

The *Star Wars* X Girls Crew Darth Vader Jack-O'-Lantern Stud Earrings provide a friendlier take on the scariest season, as Vader's helmet sits atop a grinning jack-o'-lantern and sports a pumpkin-inspired cap on its head. Measuring approximately 1 centimeter in size, these standout studs are rhodium plated over brass with a protective coating. Sterling silver posts, plated butterfly backings, hand-painted enamel, and cubic zirconia stones tie the whimsical look together, leaving the jewelry perfectly suited for a night of trick-or-treating or festive events. Available on **HerUniverse.com**, the Darth Vader Jack-O'-Lantern Stud Earrings retail for $45.





Time to Take Flight

Launch into hyperspace with this exciting X-wing timepiece

Despite being weapons of war, Rebel Alliance X-wings stood as a symbol of hope to a galaxy ravaged by the Empire's merciless might. Inspired by the classic look of *Star Wars: A New Hope*, the X-wing and TIE Fighter Watch for Adults by Citizen sets you on the right course with its dial that simulates a retro, vector graphics view of the X-wing targeting computer. Outfitted with glow-in-the-dark elements and Eco-Drive technology, the watch's luxurious amenities also include its stainless-steel case, brown genuine leather strap, water resistance to 100 meters, and a Death Star graphic etched onto the back of the case. The X-wing and TIE Fighter Watch can be purchased on **DisneyStore.com**, where it can be added to your collection for $425.





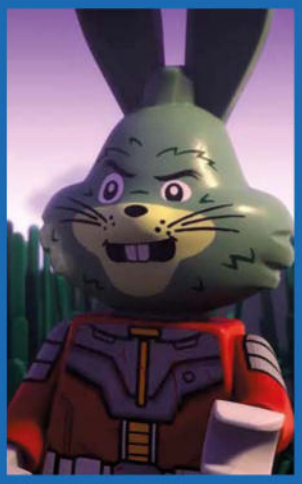
THE STAR WARS DOT COLUMN

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



Even before E.T. ran into a trick-or-treater dressed as Yoda, *Star Wars* has been an essential part of Halloween. Bringing cosplay to fans of all ages, it's also a chance to celebrate the scarier side of the galaxy, with everything from haunting new tales to terrifying treats. No tricks this time, I promise.

Pieces of Legends Past

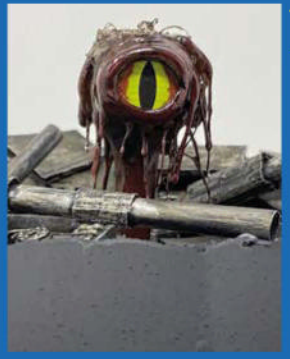


Jaxxon? Now that's a name I've not heard in a long time. *Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy–Pieces of the Past* debuted on Disney+ last month, and we've been living for the deep cuts and other references in this four-piece sequel series. Just when you thought it couldn't get more mixed up, Jaxxon the Lepi returns with a very meta observation on his existence thanks to the voice acting of Ben Schwartz. Read about all our favorite Easter eggs on the site now.

Beware the Nightlander

This Halloween, writer Cavan Scott — who brought you *Star Wars Adventures: Tales from Vader's Castle* among other fan-favorite stories — returns with *Star Wars: Tales from the Nightlands*. Featuring a creepy design from legendary concept artist Iain McCaig — who brought you Darth Maul among other iconic designs, — the Dark Horse Comics mini-series introduces a new galactic boogeyman to haunt your dreams.





D.I.Y. Dianoga

Looking to theme your front yard with *Star Wars* goodness (or badness, depending on your point of view) this Halloween? Give your front yard a full Death Star trash compactor makeover, complete with Dianoga creature, with our cool pumpkin craft project from Kelly Knox. Find out how on StarWars.com.

The Brick Brigade

Build your own *Star Wars* adventures with these legendary LEGO® sets

Filled with exciting experiences and heroic escapades, the *Star Wars* galaxy also affords audiences with the opportunity to imagine their own adventures alongside their favorite characters. The latest LEGO® *Star Wars* sets continue this thrilling tradition, delighting fans with a 9-inch tall Wicket the Ewok figure, a buildable The Force Burner Snowspeeder playset as seen in LEGO *Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy* Season 2, a 14 1/2-inch tall Ultimate Collection Series edition AT-ST Walker, and a battle droid with STAP building set that measures over 15 inches in height.





From large-scale builds to lighthearted playsets, constructing these collectible creatures and craft will supply you with endless hours of *Star Wars* fun. To purchase the 1,010-piece Wicket the Ewok ($129.99), 349-piece The Force Burner Snowspeeder ($54.99), 1,513-piece AT-ST Walker ($199.99), or 1,088-piece Battle Droid with STAP building sets ($139.99), head over to **LEGO.com**.

Eras of Empire

Reenact the Rebellion with these fantastic finds

The Empire's authoritarian rule spanned more than two decades, affecting thousands of star systems and their innumerable inhabitants. Hasbro's storied line of *Star Wars* collectibles chronicles every stage of the Galactic Civil War through its diverse assortment of premium helmets and action figures.

Harkening back to *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*'s elite soldiers, Hasbro's The Black Series Imperial Death Trooper Electronic Helmet ($99.99) is a full-scale wearable roleplay item that includes light effects and an adjustable fit for most head sizes. If you're feeling rebellious, Hasbro's The Vintage Collection Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi figure ($16.99) reflects the reclusive Jedi Master's look from *Star Wars: A New Hope*, complete with lightsaber and unlit hilt accessories to match the 3.75-inch scale figure. Explore the fabled *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* multimedia storyline with Hasbro's The Black Series Dash Rendar 6-inch scale figure, equipped with multiple articulation points that enable you to pose him on any shelf. The Death Trooper Electronic Helmet, The Vintage Collection Ben Kenobi, and The Black Series Dash Rendar can all be acquired on **HasbroPulse.com**, where you'll also find a host of other *Star Wars* treasures for your collection.





DARTH VADER DELIGHTS

THESE DARK LORD INSPIRED COLLECTIBLES ARE "MOST IMPRESSIVE."

A SITH LORD ASSEMBLED



Witness as Darth Vader becomes more machine now than man

After being left for dead on Mustafar, Anakin Skywalker was transported to Coruscant, where he awoke to find himself confined to the iconic life-supporting suit that would define his time as Darth Vader. Sideshow and Hot Toys have captured that powerful moment in their Darth Vader (Deluxe Version) Sixth Scale Collectible Figure, crafting an immensely detailed rendition of Vader's transformation. The figure comes complete with a helmeted head with detachable dome, a battle-damaged head sculpt, multiple pairs of interchangeable gloved hands, LED light-up lightsaber, operating table-themed base, two articulated droids, and much more. Standing over 13 3/4-inches tall, the Darth Vader (Deluxe Version) Sixth Scale Collectible Figure retails for $495 on **Sideshow.com**.

DEATH STAR DEFENDER



Protect the Empire's superweapon with a Sith Lord's starfighter

Darth Vader himself hopped into a cockpit to defend the Death Star from rebel starfighters at the Battle of Yavin, and Hasbro has now added Darth Vader's TIE Advanced to its Vintage Collection arsenal. The 3.75-inch scale vehicle and action figure set boasts an intricate cockpit interior, while an interchangeable wing panel gives you the ability to recreate the TIE's battle-damaged look. Additional accessories include an alternate set of Darth Vader hands, an unlit hilt, and Vader's red lightsaber. Head over to **HasbroPulse.com**, where you can pick up your own TIE Advanced for $139.99.

A CASUAL CAPE



Mix these dark side threads into your everyday style

Darth Vader's flowing black cape contributed to the Sith Lord's mystique when he first wowed audiences by stepping foot onto the *Tantive IV*, and Her Universe's enables you to channel that look for your own wardrobe with the Darth Vader Cape Jumpsuit. Defined by its embroidered detailing around the waistband modeled after Vader's suit, a halter neckline, and a removable chiffon cape, the jumpsuit also features back smocking, side seam pockets, a polyester lining, and a back zipper closure. The Darth Vader Cape Jumpsuit is priced at $84.90 on **HerUniverse.com**.

AN IMPERIAL'S MARCH



Travel the galaxy with the Sith by your side

From Darth Vader's signature armor to legions of helmeted stormtroopers, the Imperial aesthetic reigned supreme during Emperor Palpatine's rule. Bioworld's Darth Vader Built-Up Backpack channels these distinctive traits into its sturdy design, incorporating Imperial characteristics into its 18 1/2-inch tall by 12 3/4-inch-wide frame. The Galactic Empire's logo stands out all over the polyester pack, with exquisite details such as an enamel metal badge, a faux leather applique with embroidered edge, front flap pockets with snaps, a laptop zipper compartment, and a fully lined interior. Obtain your own Sith-inspired bag on **EntertainmentEarth.com**, where the Darth Vader Built-Up Backpack retails for $79.99.

Book Club

From the legacy of Vader to the rise of new heroes, the latest *Star Wars* books span the full scope of the saga



Behind the Mask

Celebrate a legendary cinematic villain in *Star Wars Icons: Darth Vader*

Few characters in cinematic history have left as indelible a mark on pop culture as Darth Vader. From his first appearance in 1977's *Star Wars: A New Hope,* the black-armored Sith Lord with the death's-head helmet, labored mechanical breathing, and a backstory born of tragedy has become a universal symbol of power, fear, and redemption.

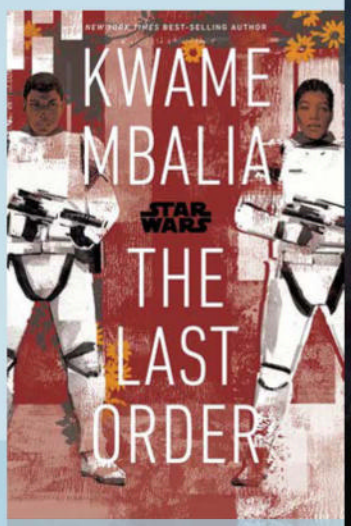
Now, fans can explore the full legacy of this generation-defining character in *Star Wars Icons: Darth Vader.* Written by Anthony Breznican (former correspondent for *Vanity Fair* and a veteran chronicler of blockbuster Hollywood franchises) this 464-page hardcover tome offers a comprehensive, visually stunning journey through the life and legacy of Anakin Skywalker's alter ego. From the character's earliest conceptual origins in George Lucas's rough drafts to his evolution across the original trilogy, prequels, and many animated series, comics, novels, and videogames, this book is the ultimate tribute to the Chosen One—the true Dark Lord of the Sith.

Featuring exclusive interviews with key creatives alongside rare behind-the-scenes photography, concept art, and collectible inserts, *Star Wars Icons: Darth Vader* is simultaneously a scholarly deep dive into Hollywood history and a *Star Wars* fan's dream come true. Readers will uncover the creative decisions that shaped Vader's character, his cultural impact over the span of nearly five decades, and his enduring mystery and cultural pull.

Whether you're a lifelong devotee or a new fan of the saga, this deluxe volume is a must-have addition to any *Star Wars* collection. Dare to explore the shadowy path of one of the most iconic villains in all of fiction, and discover what truly lies behind the mask.

Star Wars Icons: Darth Vader, a keepsake hardcover volume from publisher Insight Editions is on sale this fall.

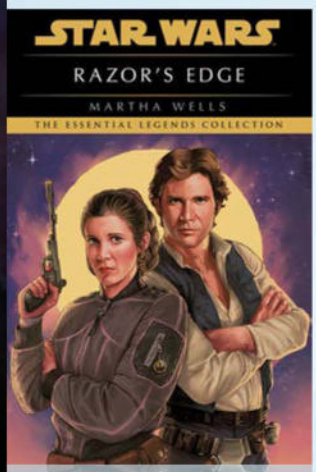
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Star Wars: The Last Order

Arriving in bookstores on October 21 from Disney • Lucasfilm Press is *Star Wars: The Last Order,* marking the saga debut of *New York Times*-bestselling author Kwame Mbalia. In this YA adventure set after the events of *The Rise of Skywalker,* Finn links up with Jannah to stop a First Order officer who is guilty of abducting helpless children from across the galaxy. Because Finn and Jannah are both former stormtroopers, the mission makes them confront painful truths about their cruel upbringings, and how those upbringings led them to who they are now.

02

Star Wars: Master of Evil

Bestselling author Adam Christopher (*Shadow of the Sith*) delves into Darth Vader's dark transformation in the aftermath of the tragic events depicted in *Revenge of the Sith.* This gripping novel from publisher Random House Worlds, on sale November 11, follows Vader's obsessive quest to unlock the secrets of life and death. But as Vader's master, Emperor Palpatine, keeps the prize just out of reach, Vader is drawn deeper into the shadows of Mustafar while bleeding his kyber crystal and confronting a Force-wielding shaman. For Vader, all weakness must die if he is to become a true master of evil.

03

Star Wars Legends: Razor's Edge

Princess Leia must lead a critical mission to secure supplies for the Rebel base on Hoth–but when the deal goes wrong, Leia and Han are thrust into outlaw space where the marauding pirates are revealed as survivors of Alderaan's destruction. Torn between compassion for her people and loyalty to the Rebel Alliance, Leia must navigate Imperial threats and a deadly pirate warlord, and the impossible choices she faces could cost her everything. *Star Wars: Razor's Edge* reprints the 2013 novel by Martha Wells, available November 4 from Random House Worlds.

Comics Roundup

From nightmares to new beginnings, unforgettable journeys await in the latest *Star Wars* comics

Guided by the light of a blade

VIZ Media's thrilling new sequel-era *Star Wars* manga

In this bold new *Star Wars* manga adventure from VIZ Media, written and illustrated by acclaimed creator Kenny Ruiz, fans will get to explore the galaxy under the iron fist of the First Order, in a story set shortly after the events of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi.*

The groundbreaking tale, which has links to the High Republic era, follows the adventures of Nioka, a clever young tinkerer with big dreams and a mysterious past. Inspired by the legends of the Jedi and the heroism of Luke Skywalker, Nioka longs to wield a lightsaber, and to fight for a cause that's far greater than the servitude offered by the First Order.

But when Nioka stumbles upon an actual lightsaber during an asteroid salvage mission, her life changes forever. This weapon is ancient and powerful, but also dangerous—and she's not the only one who wants it! With enemies closing in, Nioka must protect the lightsaber and keep herself out of trouble, while discovering what it truly means to be a Jedi. Alongside her loyal crewmate Barun, Nioka faces a journey of danger, self-discovery, and destiny. She soon learns that mastering the lightsaber isn't just about your skills—it's about whether you have the courage to face your fears.





Blending classic *Star Wars* themes with the dynamic visual energy of the manga format, a host of heartfelt new characters, and thrilling action, this is a must-read for anyone who's ever dreamed of holding a lightsaber. *Star Wars: Path of the Lightsaber,* Vol. 1, published by VIZ Media, is in stores November 11.

Star Wars: Tales from the Nightlands #2

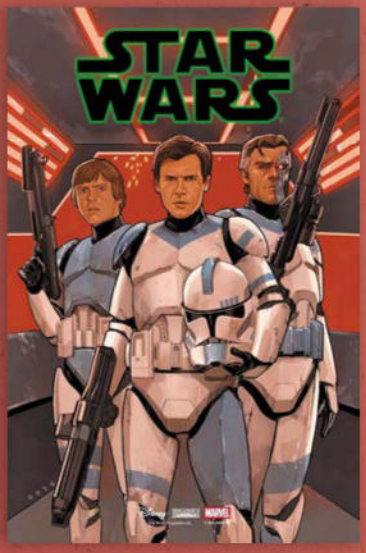
The nightmare deepens! Haunted by Darth Vader's revelation after their duel at Cloud City, Luke Skywalker finds himself desperate for answers. His journey leads him into the shadows of the unknown, and face-to-face with the terrifying Nightlander.

Written by bestselling author Cavan Scott with illustrations by Vincenzo Riccardi, this horror-infused tale from publisher Dark Horse Comics blends myth, mystery, and menace in a way never seen in *Star Wars* before! Featuring a creature designed by concept artist Iain McCaig, *Star Wars: Tales from the Nightlands* #2 is on sale October 22.



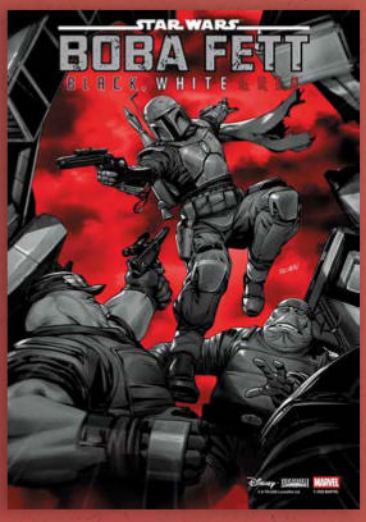
Star Wars #6

The galaxy is teetering on the edge of chaos! Issue #6 of Marvel's ongoing *Star Wars* comic sees the New Republic battling a rising storm, as Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, and cyborg bounty hunter Valance confront lethal holdovers from the Clone Wars. Meanwhile, Princess Leia makes a daring move to counter the threat, and Rebel pilot Rynn Zenat uncovers a vital clue about the enigmatic Nagai. Written by Alex Segura with art by Phil Noto, this issue is packed with action, intrigue, and revelations. Featuring multiple variant covers, *Star Wars* #6 is available from Marvel Comics on October 1.



Star Wars: Boba Fett – Black, White, & Red #2 (of 4)

The hunt is on in the second installment of *Star Wars: Boba Fett – Black, White & Red,* as legendary bounty hunter Boba Fett returns with a fresh target in his sights. This time, the quarry is Samu—a slippery criminal with a knack for escape. But Samu is about to learn that there's nothing you can do to outrun the galaxy's deadliest tracker! This issue, written by Saladin Ahmed with art by Ramon Rosanas and a cover by Derrick Chew, delivers high-stakes action and explosive confrontations in equal measure. Remember—Boba Fett always gets his bounty.



Incoming

Don't Miss These Upcoming Releases

OCTOBER

***Han Solo: Hunt for the Falcon* #2**
Marvel Comics
Writer: Rodney Barnes
Artist & Cover Artist: Ramon Rosanas

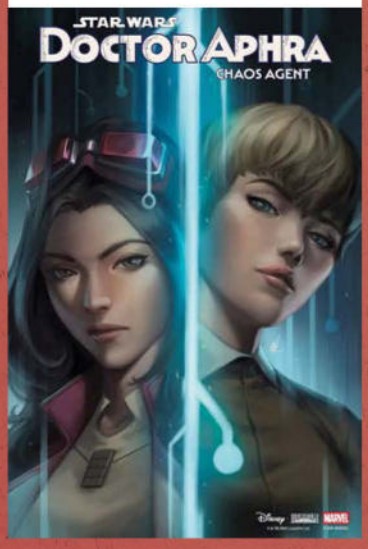
***Legacy of Vader* #9**
Marvel Comics
Writer: Charles Soule
Artist: Stefano Raffaele
Cover Artist: Derrick Chew

***Doctor Aphra: Chaos Agent* #5**
Marvel Comics
Writer: Cherish Chen
Artist: Steven Cummings
Cover Artist: Ejikure

NOVEMBER

***Hyperspace Stories: Tides of Terror* #3**
Dark Horse Comics
Writer: George Mann
Artists: Luis Morocho & Le Beau Underwood
Cover Artist: Eduardo Mello

***Tales from the Nightlands* #3**
Dark Horse Comics
Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist : Robert Hack
Cover Artist: Francesco Francavilla



NEEL ROBERT TIMOTHY SMITH NATION

Actor Robert Timothy Smith reveals what it was like to play everyone's favorite Myykian in *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew.*

WORDS: BRANDON WAINERDI

Even before the premiere of *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew,* the blue-skinned, long-trunked alien Neel had earned a keen fanbase, with #NeelNation trending on social media. Proving to be a rather perfect *Star Wars* hero in trailers and promotional clips, Neel boasted incredible charm, lovable humor, and a big heart—attributes shared by the talented young actor who played him, Robert Timothy Smith.

With an impressive résumé of movie and TV roles under his belt, including co-starring with Jack Black in *Dear Santa* (2024), Smith was already a familiar face onscreen when he arrived in the *Star Wars* galaxy. With the Disney+ show in the rearview, *Star Wars Insider* took time with Smith to talk through his process of getting into character (and costume), as well as his experiences on the complex, highly technical sets of *Skeleton Crew.*

What drew Smith to acting and performing, and how did that lead to stepping into Neel's red overalls? As Smith puts it, "I've always been a big fan of movies in general. I feel like there's a big beauty to film that sometimes I don't think people fully appreciate. I pretty quickly fell in love with the medium and wanted to be a part of it." Combining that love with his big personality and flair for performance, it was a perfect match: "I've always felt that maybe I was meant to be an actor. It was an obvious choice to at least try to start doing this," he says.

> **"Neel is a very nice person, and he wants to be everybody's best friend."**

Smith's ebullient personality was even more of an asset than expected when cameras started rolling on *Skeleton Crew.* "I have an enthusiastic kind of personality," he admits. "I'm always talking and making jokes, and a lot of that I really brought into Neel. I love what they did with the character. The whole filming process and seeing the show really, truly get built, was really cool."

And while Neel is a newcomer to the *Star Wars* galaxy, Smith has been a longtime fan of the franchise. "Oh, I've always loved *Star Wars*!" he shares. "My favorite genres of movies are mostly science fiction, action, horror—all kinds of nerdy cinematic watches. *Star Wars* really built the genre of sci-fi movies that I like, and it's so cool. The fact that I'm now part of it, there are no words to describe that feeling."

His favorite character in the franchise? "I've definitely always been a Han Solo 'stan'," Smith reveals. "I love Han Solo. He is the greatest character in *Star Wars,* and Harrison Ford's performance especially is so great. I also just love Harrison Ford, and I think he does a great job in all of his roles, including *Indiana Jones.* He's amazing." ▶



01 Robert Timothy Smith as Neel.

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02 Neel's character arc took him from nervous kid to hero of the hour.

03 Neel in his school uniform.

"Neel tends to be more of a scared character and I'm more of a daredevil."

First Steps, Larger World

Initially, the road to stepping aboard the *Onyx Cinder* was a little mysterious. As a big fan, Smith was immediately suspicious of the secrecy surrounding his first audition: "We all kind of guessed that it was *Star Wars,* because the script mentioned a temple or something," he remembers. "So, when we found out that it really was *Star Wars,* we were like, 'Oh my God, this is insane.'"

After being cast, the long process of crafting the character, both in acting terms and the technology that would be used to create Neel, really began. Paramount to that effort were Jon Watts and Christopher Ford, the showrunners and co-creators of *Skeleton Crew.* "They were so nice," says Smith. "They literally built the character of Neel around me, and I think that was the case for all the other kids in the 'Crew'. They told me to bring what I wanted to see in him."

As a character, at least at the outset of the series, Neel is defined by his relationships: his love for his family and his loyalty to his best friend, Wim. Smith

adds, "Neel is a very nice person, and he wants to be everybody's best friend. He wants to make sure everybody's loved, because he's like the glue in the group. I think people hopefully agree that Neel would be a really good best friend, and I love that about him."

Team Neel

In addition to the collaboration with the filmmakers, Smith also faced something rather unique among the rest of the young cast: an intricate, partly animatronic costume built by Legacy Effects, which required fittings and testing. "I mean, that was definitely a different experience," Smith laughs. "It wasn't your average Tuesday, but it was so fun, so weird, and I kind of loved it. It was just super cool."

In addition to Smith, Neel was brought to life by a team affectionately dubbed "Team Neel." Comprised of Smith, Jason Matthews (eye puppeteer), Rick Galinson (the face, trunk, and ears), and Kacie Barrowman (performance capture), Team Neel worked together in an intricate dance, all playing off the actions and ad-libs of Smith. "On set, I wore the whole suit, including the overalls, as well as a camera rig to capture facial expressions. I didn't have to wear the mask, but I did have gloves on which were pretty cool and pretty creepy. I loved it all."



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The on-screen component of Neel was doubled by the aforementioned Kacie Barrowman, a veteran in the industry who recently worked on *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022). After a few takes of studying Smith's performance, she would step in to don the full animatronic head, designed with tiny perforations for her to be able to see the set around her. "Kacie is probably one of the nicest people I've ever known in my life," says Smith as he explains how they worked together. "I would shoot a couple of takes when we're doing a scene, and then they would call for a 'Kacie pass.' ▶

06 Neel (Smith) with new friend Hayna (Hala Finley) on At Achrann.

07 The crew on Lanupa in Episode 5, "You Have a Lot to Learn About Pirates."



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Image courtesy of Legacy Effects

MAKING THE MYYKIAN

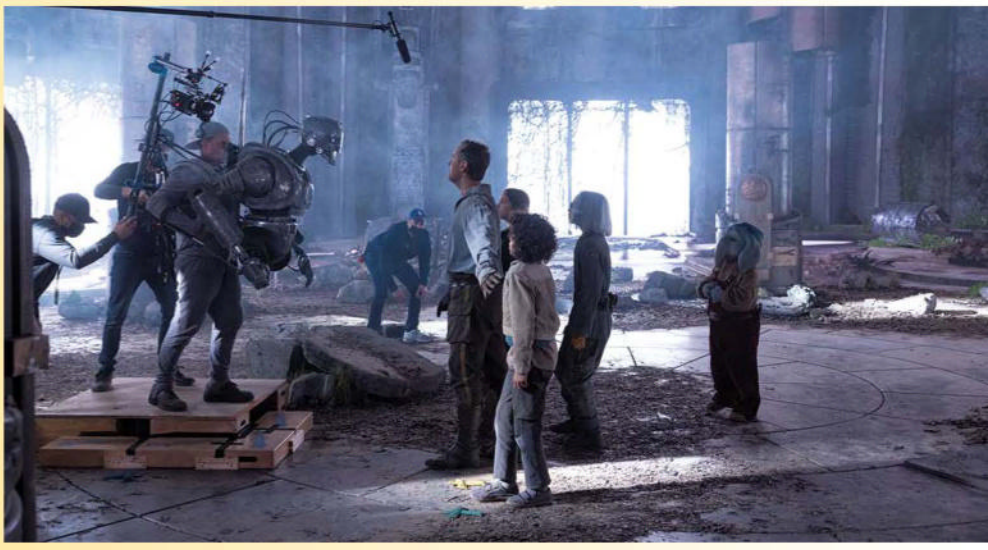
From the multiple puppeteers inside Jabba the Hutt at Elstree Studios to the luggabeast's performers in the Abu Dhabi desert, it can take a village of crewmembers to bring a *Star Wars* alien or creature to the screen. That was no different for the kind-hearted Myykian.

In order to realize Robert Timothy Smith's performance as the *Skeleton Crew*'s most nervous passenger, a team from Legacy Effects designed and operated an intricate animatronic costume based on a design by veteran concept artist Aaron McBride.

A camera rig captured Smith's facial expressions during the shoot, while Kacie Barrowman donned the heavy animatronic Neel mask whose eyes, trunk, face, and ears were operated by multiple puppeteers just out of the shot. Both performances would be combined and enhanced by Industrial Light & Magic, cleaning up and adding detail using CGI to create the incredibly believable illusion that Neel fully existed within each scene.



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06 Behind the scenes during filming of *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew*, with Kacie Barrowman in the Neel costume.

She'd put on the big elephant head and go in and basically copy what I had done." From there, the footage was sent to ILM to layer in the digital effects and finalize the shots.

After all of the ad-libs and "Kacie passes" throughout the shoot, the character evolved and began to closely resemble Smith, with one key difference: "Neel tends to be more of a scared character and I'm more of a daredevil. I want to do actual cool things, like I want to go skydiving when I'm 18 years old," the actor says. "But, at the end of the day, I think I'm very, very similar to Neel in a lot of respects. I am a little bit quirkier, but I tend to state the obvious sometimes. It was really fun to be able to bring that with me into the character. Overall, I think that Neel is honestly the closest character to myself that I'll maybe ever play."

Crew Building

The young actors behind the core heroes of *Skeleton Crew* bonded almost immediately. "It was a really nice process," says Smith. "Before filming started, we got in and were able to do activities together like golf and bowling—fun things so we could get to know each other." This was quite different from some of his previous on-set experiences. "On a lot of film sets, you get there, meet the person, and immediately the director tells you, 'Okay, you guys are best friends and have a long history together.' But, in reality, you have nothing because you just met. When you really know somebody, you don't have to fake that kind of relationship," Smith continues. "As soon as we

"As soon as we all met each other, we immediately clicked."

all met each other, we immediately clicked. All of our personalities were similar and meshed well together, so it was a lot of fun."

Acting on ILM's StageCraft virtual set and more physical sets like the *Onyx Cinder* were big highlights for the young actor. "The Volume is this high definition, 360-degree-like screen and it's a tremendous help as a performer," explains Smith. "As an actor, you need to imagine stuff, no matter the type of project. So, when you don't have to imagine too much, it not only makes your performance so much better, but also the way you react with your fellow actor better too. Two actors could be thinking differently in a green screen environment because you can't both be imagining it the same way, but when you're able to hold something or see something 'in real life,' you can share the reaction."

Beyond the confines of a film studio, Smith has begun to take his first steps into an even larger world: the convention circuit. "I just did my first comic convention, and I think that was really fun!" Smith exclaims. "I had seen on social media people using #NeelNation, which was really cool. Then being able to meet people in person was amazing. I can't wait to meet even more *Star Wars* fans."

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08 Neel (Robert Timothy Smith), ready for adventure.

09 Neel saves the day in Episode 8, "The Real Good Guys."



01 Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) with his X-34 landspeeder.

"THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY'S PREMISE IS ALMOST A CAR CULTURE MOTIF."

SHE'S GOT IT WHERE IT COUNTS

CAR CULTURE IN THE *STAR WARS* GALAXY



What does a car, or rather a landspeeder, say about the person behind the wheel? *Insider* chats with Maria Romano de León, a car culture expert and lifelong *Star Wars* fan, to learn how speeder bikes, podracers, and other vehicles reflect the personalities of their owners—and how they compare to the real-life automotives and car culture that George Lucas grew up loving.

WORDS:
MELISSA T. MILLER

In fiction, as in reality, modes of transportation are often windows to the soul of those who own them. George Lucas' *American Graffiti* (1973) revealed the filmmaker's love of the car culture of his youth, and that same devotion is similarly on show throughout the *Star Wars* saga. Design elements seen in various *Star Wars* vehicles echo real-world examples, and are often utilized in recognizable "real-life" contexts. From the original trilogy to recent television series, that vision continues thanks to the talented creatives also inspired by the automotive world.

"When I watch a *Star Wars* movie, I see George Lucas's nostalgic love of cars and what they meant in the culture at the time the movies came out," says Maria Romano de León, an exhibits curator who has worked at the San Diego Automotive Museum and the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. "The original trilogy's premise is almost a car culture motif—the piloting skills Luke Skywalker developed in his teenage years on Tatooine ended up saving the galaxy. It's a tale of a junior racer driving his way to the winner's podium. Luke modified his skyhopper to be a little hot rod and raced it with his friends. There are a lot of stories that start that way, for great real-life drivers and fictional heroes alike."



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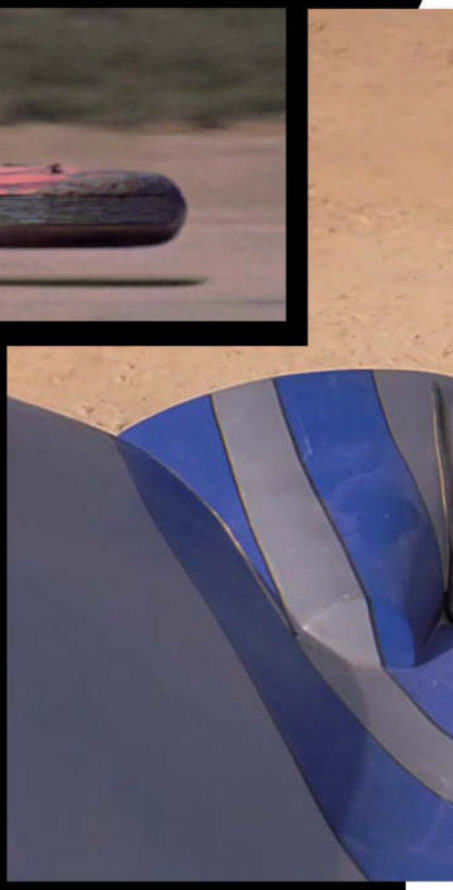
02 Luke kept his speeder mechanically sound despite its rough look.

03 Anakin Skywalker at the controls of his podracer.

Tatooine Races

Like most teenager's first cars, Luke's landspeeder was little more than an old banger. However, it was joyriding in his T-16 skyhopper (seen in the background of the Skywalker garage in *Star Wars: A New Hope*) that earned him his reputation as an ace pilot—and the ire of his Uncle Owen. "Luke was a bored teenager on an obscure planet who was a really good pilot," says de León.

If Luke Skywalker's story represents the hero's journey, were his piloting exploits an attempt to escape an ordinary life as a moisture farmer on Tatooine? "It's a character archetype that I see across Lucas' films—the disaffected youth that is talented and yearns to do bigger things somewhere else," says de León. "It's like a fable—the solo pilot can defeat the Death Star. One guy can knock down Imperial walkers. It's the underdog winning in the face of insurmountable odds."

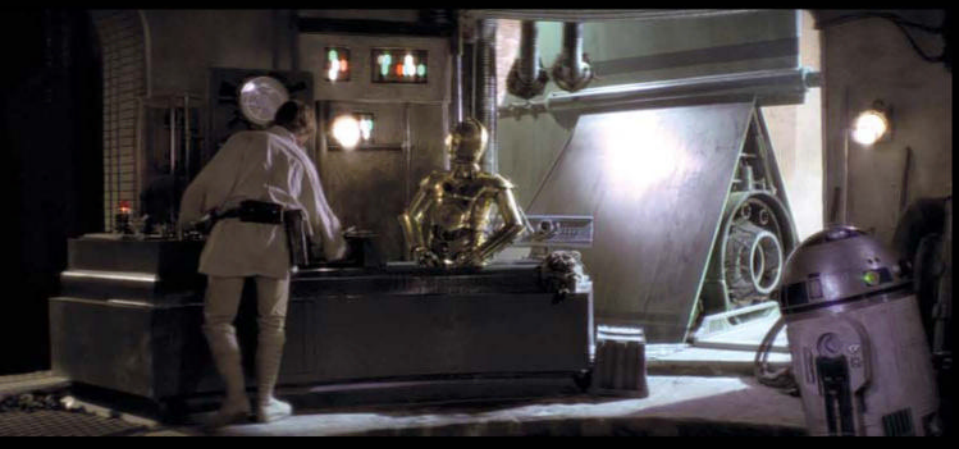


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Speeding through the canyons of Tatooine was something of a tradition in the Skywalker family. "Anakin was into podracing and Luke had his skyhopper, so racing culture was a common thread between them, even though they grew into very different people," suggests de León. "Some of that may have come from finding a way to relieve the boredom of living on Tatooine, but it could also stem from aspiring to the more glamorous life lived by famous podracers, the money, the travel. And the involvement of the Hutts in the sport presented other opportunities for skilled pilots in the economically depressed Outer Rim."

de León points out that podracing had (some) rules that paralleled real-life racing culture. "When you have rules, things become fairer for competitors," she says. "They also make the sport less

04 Luke's T-16 skyhopper, parked in the Skywalker garage.



04



"ANAKIN WAS INTO PODRACING AND LUKE HAD HIS SKYHOPPER, SO RACING CULTURE WAS A COMMON THREAD BETWEEN THEM."

such as requiring safety restraints or having speed restrictions to avoid hitting spectators."

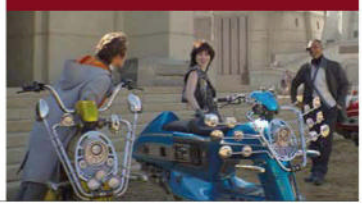
Podracing reminds de León of rally car racing, which began in Europe and is popular around the world. "Rally races take place on roads that follow the natural landscape," she says. "Sometimes those roads are ancient and some run through mountainous areas not unlike Beggar's Canyon." Rally car racing can take place on a variety of terrain, including deserts, snow, and salt flats—all of which we've seen vehicles speed across in *Star Wars*. "Podracing also feels like a Formula One race, especially with the flags at the beginning and a more varied track than NASCAR," adds de León. "It does seem that the pods are sponsored and maybe, like in real life, that is represented in the livery—the paint job, stickers, and overall color scheme."

Whether in a skyhopper or a podracer, the Skywalkers used their racing prowess to secure destinies off-world. And even though those skills didn't pass from father to son through training together, like in some real-life racing families, the effect of inherited midi-chlorians can't be ruled out. "It's interesting that Luke and Anakin excel in so many aspects of flying, but that also connects to their use of the Force," says de León. "What makes drivers great in real life is being very attuned to the environment and having a very quick reaction time, with the ability to withstand natural forces that affect the body, which sure sounds a lot like the Force!" ▶

KIDS THESE DAYS

The Book of Boba Fett showed off what the next generation of youth on Tatooine were riding and racing. The shiny speeder bikes of the Mods stood out against the drab background of Mos Espa, exactly as intended. "No matter what galaxy, you'll always have angsty gangs of kids," suggests de León. "Having those super customized neon grav scoots is such a teen thing to do, because it makes them stand out and lets them express their personalities. That seemed really intentional to me in the show."

The Mod's colorful chrome repulsorcraft remind de León of lowriders that are popular in urban areas and come in car, motorcycle, and even bicycle versions. "They often have gorgeous, unique paint jobs, with bodies done in Kandy paint that's bright, shiny, and glittery. Chrome *everything*," explains de León. "And then they just cruise, like just go ride around slowly. People see them all together, and it makes the whole environment more beautiful." Young people were likely rebelling against their surroundings on planets throughout the galaxy far, far away. "If you put the Mods and their bikes on the neon streets of Coruscant, no one would notice them. I bet the teens there would cruise in rat rods, vehicles that are purposely drab and look unfinished," says de León. "They would have ugly bikes that look tough and scary, because they'd want to look different."





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MANDO'S NEW RIDE

Asked what *Star Wars* ship she would personally want to own, de León's answer would make her Mos Eisley mechanic Peli Motto's favorite customer. Even before watching *The Book of Boba Fett*, she dreamed of a Naboo N-1 starfighter with a resto mod—meaning it looks like a classic on the outside but has modern conveniences and technology inside. "That sequence was such a car culture moment. The design is beautiful and well-engineered, like a 1930s Chrysler," says de León. Missing vapor manifold? No problem, so long as you've got a mechanic as intrepid as Motto on your side to fabricate some new parts. Fuel is always expensive, however, so de León suggests replacing the carburetor with a coaxium injection system. "It looks original on the outside, with its elegant lines, but functions like a safer, more modern vehicle," de León adds. "And I always wanted to be a Jedi, so I'd make mine Sith-resistant."



"THE PHYSICAL SPACES WE INHABIT, INCLUDING VEHICLES, INFORM OUR IDENTITY IN IMPORTANT WAYS."

Smugglers Run

The *Millennium Falcon*'s appearance and utility over the years also reminds de León of some different car cultures. "Lando Calrissian fits in the luxury car collector category," she suggests. "I think he was more into aesthetic mods he could do himself, like a banging sound system." No one would have dared to call the ship 'a piece of junk' back when he owned it, as we learned in *Solo: A Star Wars Story*. "The *Falcon* never looked better than when Lando owned it—who even knew that the walls were white at some point?" jokes de León. "That tracks with his personality. He was really fastidious in how he presented himself, while Han Solo always looked messy, wearing the same clothes, not polished at all."

05 Under Lando Calrissian's ownership, the *Millennium Falcon* was far from "a piece of junk."

The *Millennium Falcon* may have lost it's factory-fresh sparkle after Solo won it in a Sabacc game, but we do know that he and Chewbacca worked extensively on improving its mechanics themselves. de León sees Solo as more of an early hot rodder, focused more on performance than aesthetic considerations. "Han brags that his ship made the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs. It's a race for smugglers, like a whiskey run," she says. "In the Prohibition era of the 1920s and early 1930s in the United States, whiskey runners and moonshiners were known for having extremely high-performance cars that would blend in with their surroundings to avoid arousing suspicion, just like the *Falcon*. On Earth, the mass-produced Model A Truck was a common sight and had a powerful

engine, which made it the perfect choice to modify."

Similarly, Solo's "special modifications" to the *Millennium Falcon* helped him evade Imperial entanglements. "Even 100 years ago, police cars were generally more powerful than the vehicles a regular consumer could buy," says de León. "Bootleggers altered cars, giving them reinforced suspensions, increased horsepower, and hidden compartments, hoping to outrun and outsmart any law enforcement they might meet along the way. The 1936 Ford Model 48 Pickup was a favorite of moonshiners. It featured an engine bay large enough to fit a Cadillac ambulance engine, creating a vehicle that blended in but was capable of surprisingly high speeds."



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06 The sleeker lines of Calrissian's *Falcon*.

07 TIE fighters pursued the *Falcon* with Rey in the pilot's seat.

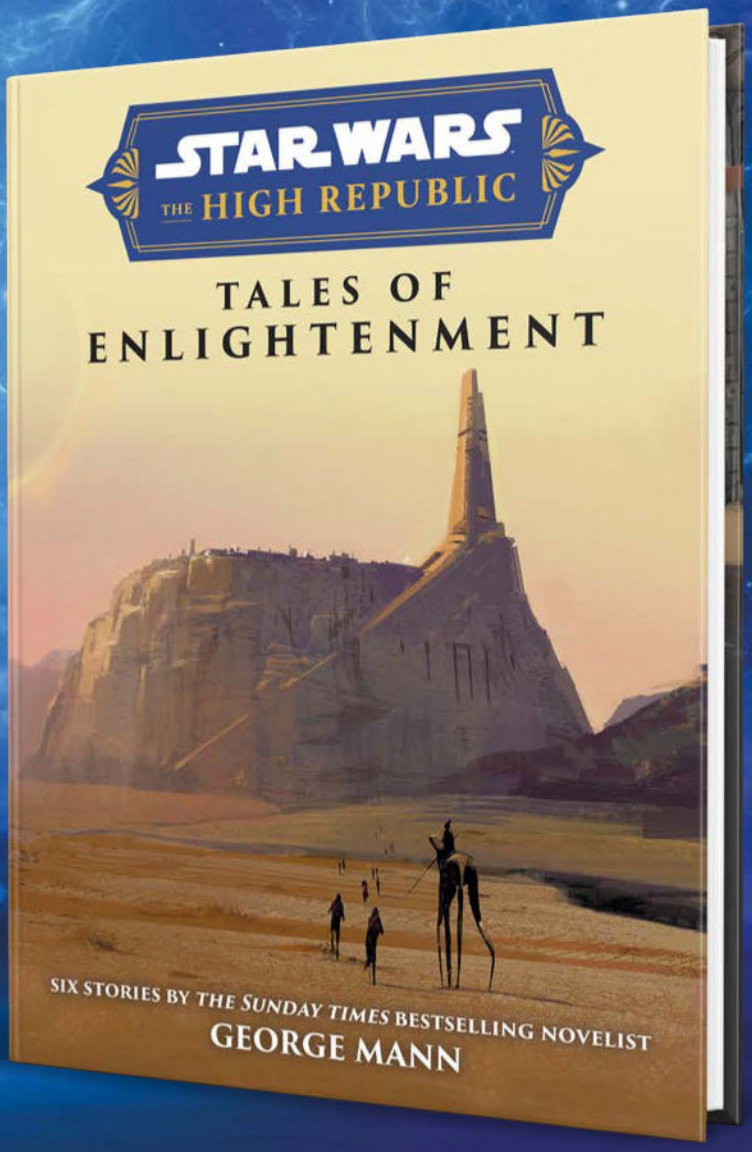
Punch It!

Smuggling operations led to car racing culture in America, with young drivers competing against each other for entertainment. Cars that were publicly available and then modified for performance, like those created for whiskey running, became known as stock cars.

Even as stock car racing became increasingly popular in the 1930s and 1940s, it couldn't outrun its association with illegal activity. "Many famous drivers of the era had multiple bootlegging-related run-ins with authorities," says de León. "So, in 1947, top driver Bill France organized a meeting to standardize stock car racing rules and distance the sport from its moonshining roots, creating the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR)." Similarly, the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) was founded in 1951 to govern the emerging sport of drag racing. "The NHRA was born in the western U.S. because they would race on salt flats and dry lakes, just trying to go as fast as they could possibly go," says de León.

Everyone's favorite bucket of bolts was passed on to Rey in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens,* but the battered ship visibly bore the hallmarks of Han Solo's rough and ready personality throughout the sequel trilogy. This detail wasn't lost on de León's car culture sensibilities. "Many car collectors I have come across own one sentimental car, often that belonged to a deceased parent or family member, that doesn't quite fit into their collection or match their personality," she says. "They want to keep it in the condition they remember as a way to remain close to that person, or to give a tangible space to their precious memories. We assign such strong sentiments to place. The physical spaces we inhabit, including vehicles, inform our identity in important ways, and I think Rey is a great representation of that."

ACTION, ADVENTURE AND INTRIGUE FROM THE ERA OF THE HIGH REPUBLIC.





NEW DIGEST-SIZED EDITION!

11 epic stories, 2 unmissable collections featuring tales by *The New York Times* bestselling authors Justina Ireland, Cavan Scott, and Charles Soule, and *The Sunday Times* bestselling author George Mann.

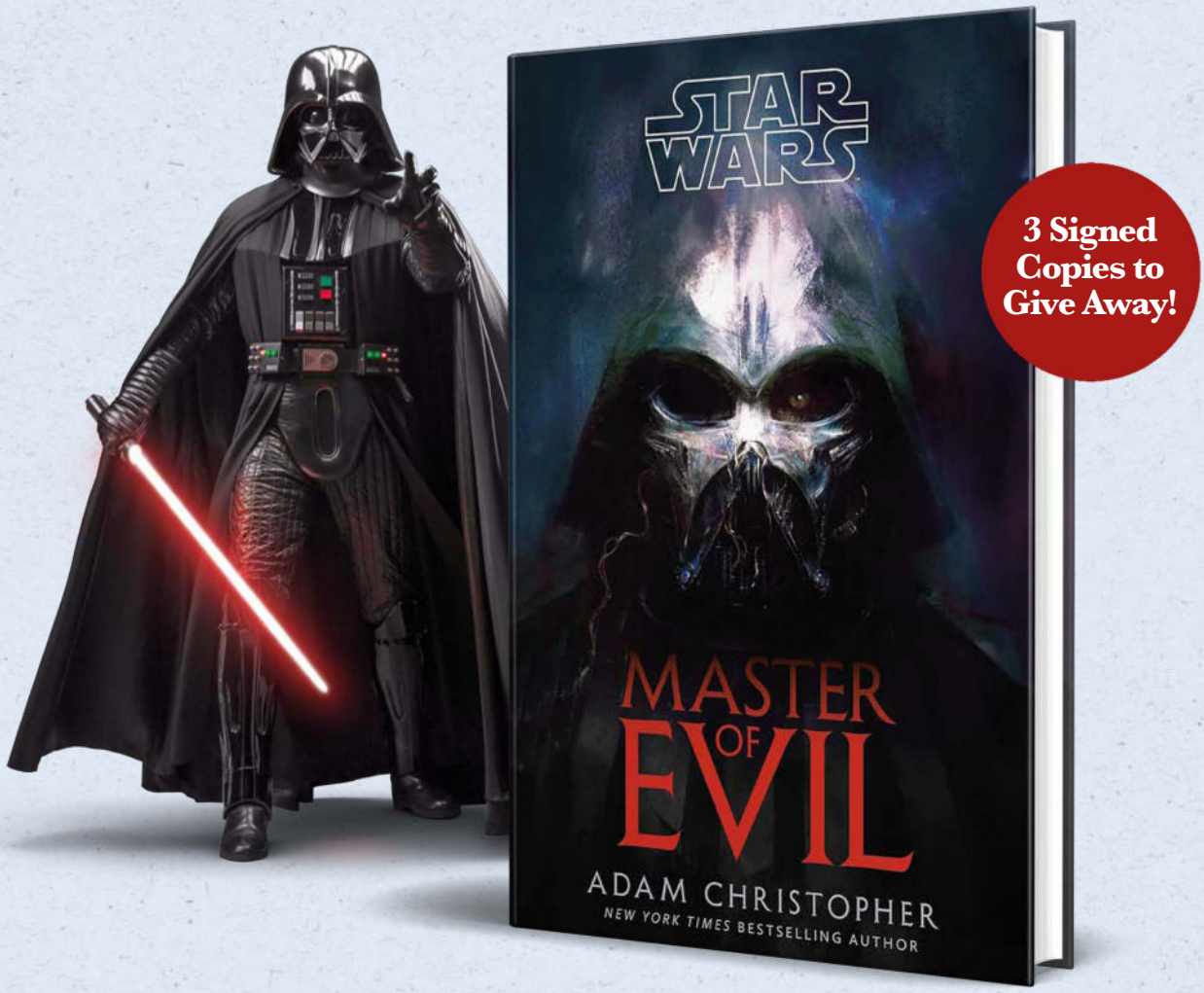
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Heart of Darkness

Win a signed copy of Adam Christopher's new novel, *Star Wars: Master of Evil*

Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith **may have shown Anakin Skywalker's turn to the dark side and the birth of Darth Vader, but there is much more to be learned about the once innocent boy's descent into evil. Adam Christopher's blistering new novel, *Star Wars: Master of Evil*, delves deeper than ever before into Vader's continuing transformation into the Dark Lord of the Sith—and *Insider* has three copies, signed by the author, to give away!**

The unfolding story reveals a Vader haunted by the promises of the dark side, seeking the ultimate power that his master has hinted at but withheld—the power to conquer death itself. On the volcanic world of Mustafar, Vader undertakes a dark ritual, and unleashes a power far greater than he anticipated, giving him a glimpse into the limitless potential of the Force. As the Emperor's true motives reveal themselves, Vader falls deeper into obsession. Haunted by the echoes of his past, he begins to undertstand the true resolution to his quest: only once all weakness is purged can he become a master of evil.

For your chance to win a signed copy of the novel, just send us the correct answer to this *Star Wars* trivia question:

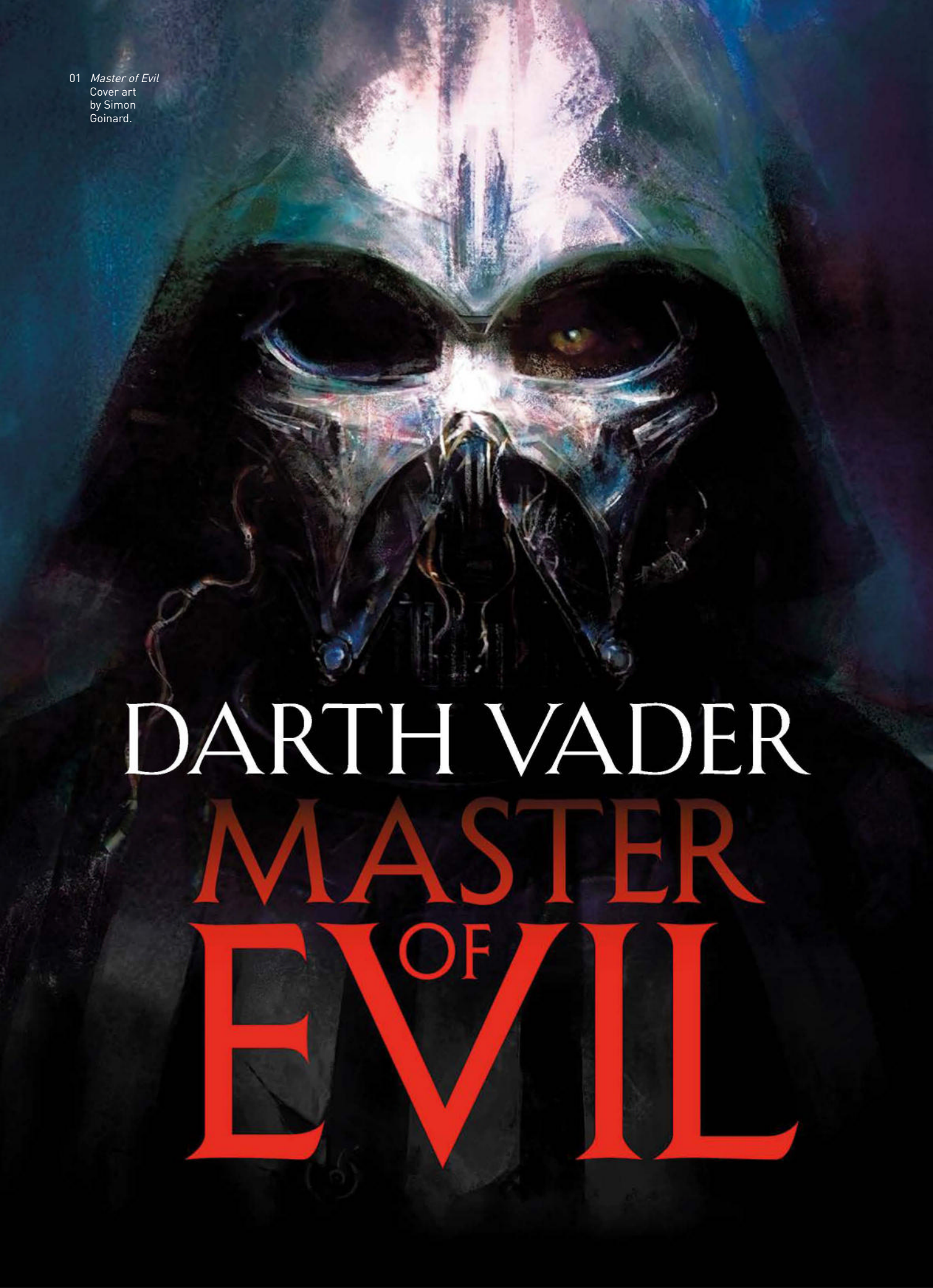
What figure was Anakin Skywalker's midi-chlorian count greater than?

A. 2,000
B. 20,000
C. 200,000

Send your answer via email to **insidercomp@titanemail.com** or our usual postal address (see 'Contact Us' on page 3), marked "EVIL MASTER" by January 31, 2026. Terms and conditions are available at titanmagazines.com
May the Force be with you!

www.penguinrandomhouse.com

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01 *Master of Evil* Cover art by Simon Goinard.

New York Times bestselling author Adam Christopher introduces *Star Wars: Master of Evil*, his new novel following Darth Vader's search for the secrets of life and death—featuring an exclusive excerpt from the book!

WORDS: MEG DOWELL

Darth Vader remains one of the most written-about characters in *Star Wars*, with a wealth of books and comics exploring the former Jedi's journey into darkness. But just when you might think there couldn't possibly be more to reveal about the iconic Sith Lord, another story emerges that looks at Vader in a whole new way.

Adam Christopher's new novel, *Master of Evil*, puts the focus on the fallen Jedi's exploits directly after the events of *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*. That the entire story takes place in a narrative gap between events in Charles Soule's 2017 *Darth Vader* comic series proves that there is always room in a galaxy far, far away to expand upon what we *think* we already know about the man beneath the black helmet.

***Star Wars Insider*: Many *Star Wars* stories prior to *Master of Evil* have put Darth Vader at the center of the narrative. What makes your new novel different?**

Adam Christopher: Darth Vader was one of the first characters we met in *Star Wars: A New Hope*, and from his first moment on screen we got such an impression of his power. He was so immediately dramatic and iconic. Vader has been in lots of comics and videogames, but there hasn't been a Darth Vader novel for ten years. So, with it being the 20th anniversary of *Revenge of the Sith* this year, I think it's really good timing to go back to the moment of Vader's creation, and what happened next.

You can do things in a novel that you can't do anywhere else, and that's why novels are what they are. There are certain limitations with what a comic can do, and the time frame on comic-book stories is often very compressed. A novel is juicy. You can really dig into a story.



02 Author Adam Christopher.

Photo: © Wes Ellis/ © LFL, LTD

> "IT HAS BEEN SUCH AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE NEW STORIES WITH AN ICONIC CHARACTER LIKE DARTH VADER."

When *Master of Evil* was first announced, you were quoted as saying the novel is "a big deal" for you. Why is that?

The very first piece of *Star Wars* fiction that I wrote was "End of Watch," a short story in the first *From a Certain Point of View* anthology, when Han Solo is having that "boring conversation" over the communicator in the Death Star cell block. I incorporated a tiny little scene where Tarkin and Vader were in the meeting room. Vader had two lines of dialogue, and in my story, the person could hear it over the communicator in the background. That gave me a kind of weird thrill at the time. Now, with *Master of Evil*, I've been able to create an entire Darth Vader story that slots into the existing mythology. There were a lot of parts that had to work with other parts of lore. It was a really joyful experience because I got to write a Darth Vader book. Not many people can say that. It's such an honor.

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace was the first time I actually went to the movies as an adult to experience new *Star Wars*. I queued up outside a cinema for two hours just to get tickets. It was exciting. For me, this is a book that directly ties into that feeling. For the fan part of me, it has been such an amazing opportunity to create new stories with an iconic character like Darth Vader.



What *Star Wars* stories beyond *Revenge of the Sith* inspired your novel?

The Darth Vader comic was the primary source, especially Charles Soule's run, because that took place specifically between *Revenge of the Sith* and *A New Hope*—it spanned the whole 19-year period. Also, the Disney+ *Obi-Wan Kenobi* series. For me, that was the first time I really understood and connected with the idea that inside Darth Vader's suit is Anakin Skywalker. Up until that point, I pretty much saw them as two separate characters. That show was the first time that they meshed together for me. That's the key thing to understand about Vader: he is Anakin Skywalker.

Little bits and pieces of *Andor* were important because it showed us the kind of inner workings of imperial bureaucracy. *Master of Evil* features the Imperial Security Bureau (ISB), and the book is set right after *Revenge of the Sith,* so it was especially interesting to try and understand how organizations and entities like the ISB and the Royal Guard actually came into being so quickly. It's a melting pot of things I like about *Star Wars* and things I like outside of *Star Wars,* and I poured them into this work about Darth Vader.

***Master of Evil* follows Vader on a quest to discover the path to immortality. Why do you think this was still so important to him, even though he couldn't save those he had already lost?**

It goes back to Palpatine's manipulation of Anakin Skywalker, and all the promises he made to

"VADER DECIDES THAT IF PALPATINE ISN'T GOING TO TELL HIM THOSE SECRETS, THEN HE'S GOING TO FIND THEM OUT FOR HIMSELF."

03 Darth Vader's exploration of the dark side of the Force is central to the *Master of Evil* narrative.

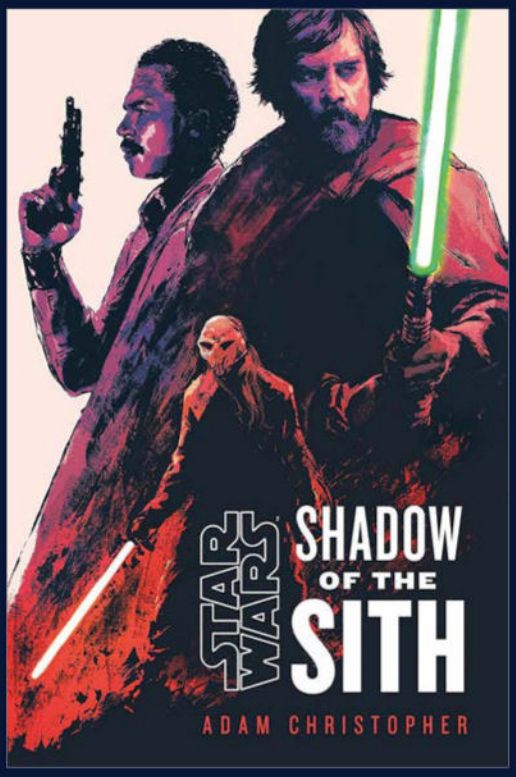
push Anakin over the edge to become his apprentice. Turning Anakin into Darth Vader was entirely based on promises of power, and of secrets that would be revealed. Palpatine was going to lead Vader on a pathway of discovery by offering him everything he wanted, and what he wanted most at the point he finally turned to the dark side was to save Padmé.

There comes a point at which Vader decides that if Palpatine isn't going to tell him those secrets, then he's going to find them out for himself, and that's *Master of Evil*. He's looking for the powers that he was promised but never delivered. And now that he knows what the dark side really is and what he's able to do with it, he goes on a journey to bring Padmé back.

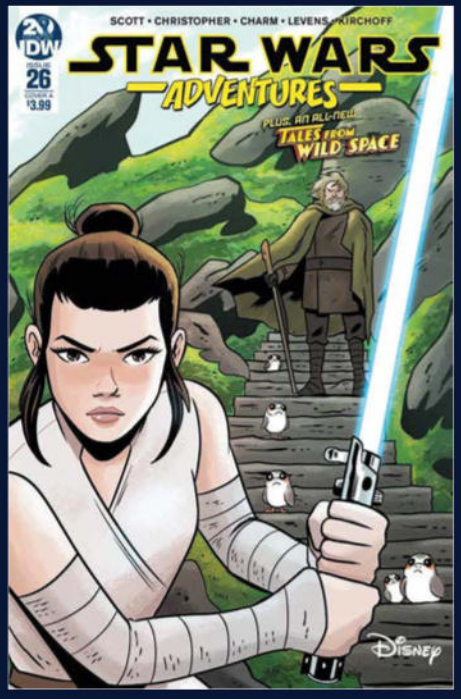
What can you reveal about Halland Goth, who accompanies Vader on this journey?

Goth is probably our main point of view in the book. He's the commander of the Royal Guard. He transitioned from being Palpatine's bodyguard—he's actually one of the guards in the Opera House box in *Revenge of the Sith*. He overhears the conversation that Palpatine and Anakin have. In the book, he's assigned to escort Vader on a series of missions for another purpose, not just as a kind of bodyguard. He's following orders from somebody. And he kind of develops a fascination with Vader.

He's a career soldier. Honorable position. He's also one of these people who thinks, "Finally, the galaxy is going to come together because the Empire is here." Peace and order. And that's exactly what he wanted. Because who were the Jedi? How did they become generals in the Clone Wars? He's very much like, "This New Order is good." But you can imagine this might change throughout the course of the story. He's around Darth Vader all the time, and being around Vader is an interesting experience for Goth for a number of reasons. He's following some orders, and he's a royal guard, but also he has personal connections that eventually take over and drive his interest in Vader.



04



05

04 *Shadow of the Sith*, by Adam Christopher.

05 *Star Wars Adventures* #26.

ADAM CHRISTOPHER'S *STAR WARS* STORIES

"End of Watch"
Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View: A New Hope
Anthology, Del Rey, 2017

Tales from Wildspace: Alone in the Dark Star Wars Adventures
Comic, IDW, 2017

"The Witness"
Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View: The Empire Strikes Back
Anthology, Del Rey, 2020

Star Wars: Shadow of the Sith
Novel, Random House Worlds, 2022

"The Steadfast Soldier"
Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View: Return of the Jedi
Anthology, Random House Worlds, 2023

In *Shadow of the Sith*, you wrote primarily from the perspective of heroes. What was it like to write a *Star Wars* story from the point of view of villains?

Everybody thinks they are the hero of their own story. I like to use *Andor* Season 2 as an example. I would have watched a series of just Dedra Meero and the ISB doing their thing. They may have been the bad guys, but there was a kind of pleasure in watching them work. At least early on, they were quite good at their jobs. With *Master of Evil,* everybody is kind of a bad guy. It was fun in a completely different way to show action and heroism from a different point of view. I love Darth Vader. He's fun to write, no matter how evil he is. ▶

"THIS IS THE STARTING POINT FOR A LOT OF THINGS THAT WE LATER SEE VADER DO AND BECOME. IT'S THE BEGINNING OF HIS JOURNEY INTO DISCOVERING THE SECRETS OF THE DARK SIDE."

What do you hope readers will take away from *Master of Evil*?
That Vader is a complicated character, and there is much more to him than we have ever seen on screen. The more *Star Wars* stories we tell, the more we learn about who such characters are, and the more new *Star Wars* stories will arise from that. And that's the whole point of telling stories. It's all about characters and how they see things, how they act. So, if Darth Vader is one of the most important characters in the saga, then give me more Darth Vader! Let me learn *everything* about him. Let me see what he's been doing in the gaps between the stories that we already have.

Master of Evil is a new story, offering a new insight into this character we think we know so well. But really, it's an origin story. This is the starting point for a lot of things that we later see Vader do and become. It's the beginning of his journey into discovering the secrets of the dark side. And I hope it's character-defining.

Vader is a villain that people have enjoyed learning about for almost 50 years. What new things can there possibly be for a character like that? That's the magic of *Star Wars*—the mythology is so broad and deep, and encompasses many different time periods, so you can take a well-known character like Darth Vader and shine a new light on him, uncover something you've not seen before, and that can lead you to a new appreciation of the things you've already seen. That's what I hope readers will take away from *Master of Evil*. I'm still amazed that I'm the one who got to tell this part of his story.



06 The Dark Lord of the Sith.

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT!

STAR WARS: MASTER OF EVIL

BY ADAM CHRISTOPHER

The Emperor's office at the pinnacle of the Imperial Executive Building was a large, imposing space dominated by the magnificent curve of the floor-to-ceiling window that spanned the far wall, with the angular form of the Emperor's throne positioned on a raised platform before it so he could, should the mood take him, gaze out on the Coruscant cityscape.

Right now, the Emperor was indeed looking out from the office window. Behind the turned throne, Darth Vader knelt, head bowed, the deep, repeating rhythm of his respirator the only sound in the room. He and the Emperor were alone. The two scarlet-robed Royal Guards that provided customary, if perhaps unnecessary, security had been dismissed as soon as the Emperor's apprentice had arrived.

Time passed. In the world outside, silent beyond the glass wall, the air traffic was thick and without end, even as the Coruscant night ran well into the small hours.

Finally, the Emperor spoke. He did not turn around, and from Vader's position before the dais, it seemed like his master's cracked voice came from everywhere but nowhere.

"I sense something within you, my apprentice."

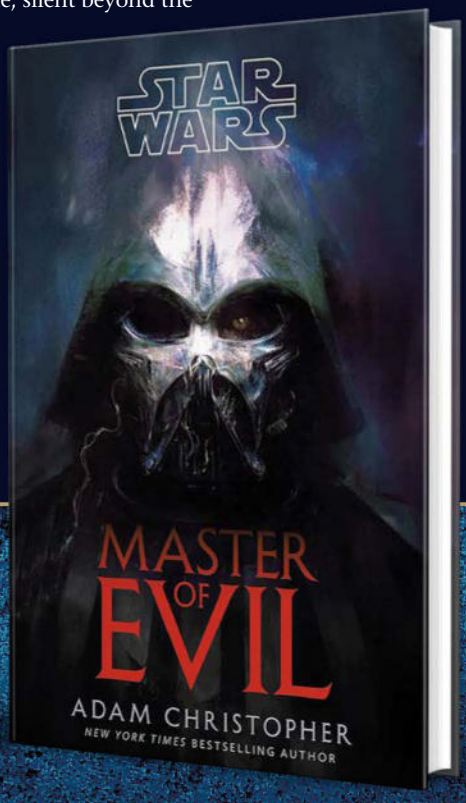
Vader's masked head jerked up at the words, but he did not answer. He just stared at the back of the throne.

"Desire," said the Emperor. He gave a short, low chuckle as the throne turned around of its own accord until the master faced his apprentice. Only the lower portion of the Emperor's face was visible beneath his wide cowl, but eyes of yellow glittered from the dark shadow within.

"You have a thirst for power, Lord Vader. This I am pleased with. But it is your thirst for knowledge that I find . . . interesting." Again, the low chuckle. The Emperor leaned forward, just a little, his voice dropping to a high, sibilant whisper, the voice of an old and wizened man, which he most certainly was not, despite appearances. "Perhaps you saw something in the cave on Mustafar."

Vader still did not speak, but he lowered his head in supplication to his master once more.

"Or perhaps something in that cave saw into you."



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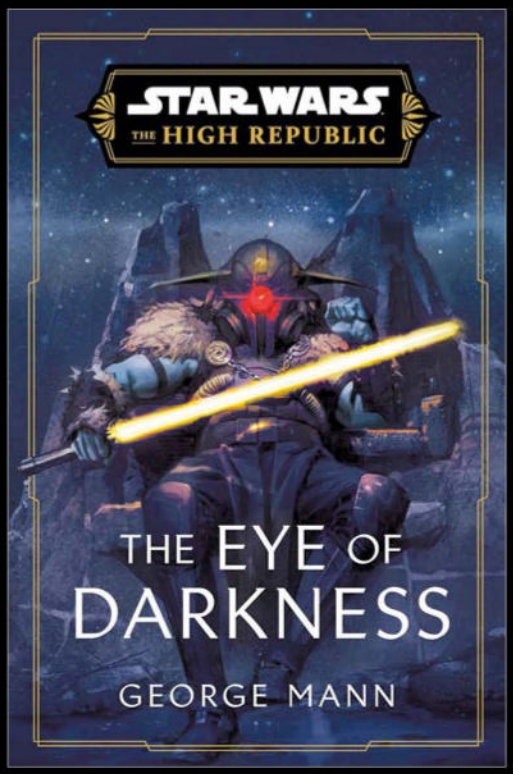


Phase III: Trials of The Jedi

Star Wars Insider looks back at the third phase of Lucasfilm's *The High Republic* publishing initiative, with contributions from authors including Zoraida Córdova, Tessa Gratton, Lydia Kang, George Mann, Daniel José Older, Cavan Scott, Charles Soule and Alyssa Wong.

WORDS: CHELSEA ZUKOWSKI AND AREZOU AMIN

Wave 1



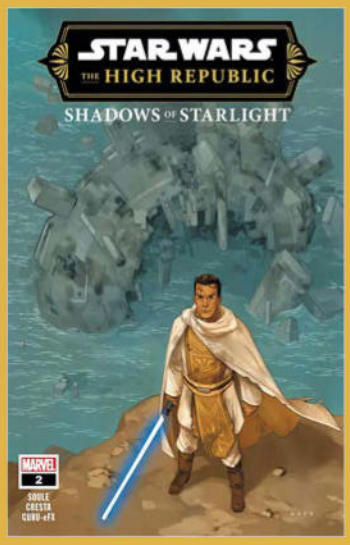
The Eye of Darkness

Writer: George Mann
Random House Worlds, Adult novel I
Avar Kriss is trapped behind the Stormwall, a barrier which places part of the Outer Rim under Nihil occupation. The Jedi work to dismantle the Stormwall, while also contending with Marchion Ro and his horde of Nameless creatures..

"We always knew it was going to be the book where the Jedi have lost," says George Mann. "It introduced a new status quo. Marchion Ro has won and the Stormwall is going up. I had lots of conversations with the team about where all our characters were going; talking about setting up a trajectory that was going to take us through to the end.

"There was this specific moment that unlocked the book for me, where Marchion Ro opens up to Ghira Starros and says 'Nobody realizes that by winning, I've lost, because I have to become what I tried to destroy,'" Mann continues. "What does that do to him, and what path does that put him on?"

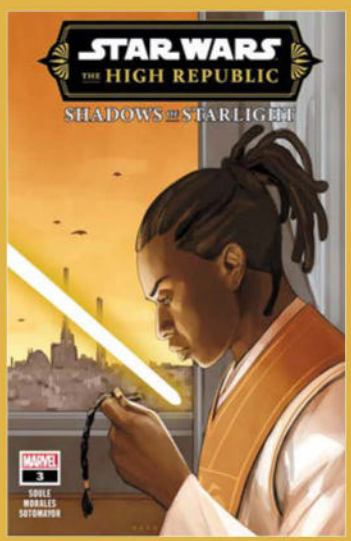




SHADOWS OF STARLIGHT

Writer: Charles Soule
Artists: Ibraim Roberson, Marika Cresta, Jethro Morales, David Messina
Cover Artist: Phil Noto
Marvel Comics, Four issue mini-series
Set during the "missing year" between Phase I and Phase III, following the destruction of Starlight Beacon, Yoda, Avar Kriss, Elzar Mann and Bell Zettifar plan their next moves in the face of Marchion Ro's victory.

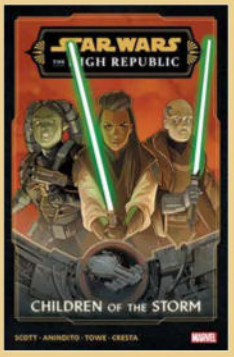
"The Jedi aren't a monolith, despite how they might appear from the outside," says Charles Soule. "That was one of our big goals with the initiative—to create Jedi who were complete, fully-fleshed individuals with needs, desires, flaws, failings. People, in other words."





STAR WARS: THE HIGH REPUBLIC

Writer: Cavan Scott
Artists: Ario Anindito, Jim Towe, Marika Cresta, Laura Braga
Cover Artist: Phil Noto
Marvel Comics, 10 Issues
Collected in two trade paperbacks



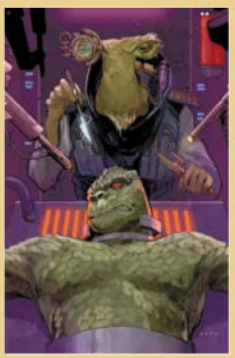


"CHILDREN OF THE STORM" Issues 1-5
Jedi Master Keeve Trennis confronts both the Nihil and the Hutts, and comes face to face with former Tempest Runner Lourna Dee—whose allegiances are not what they once were—as well as her former master, Sskeer.

"THE HUNTED" Issues 6-10
Keeve Trennis, Sskeer, and Lourna Dee team up to stop Baron Boolan, Marchion Ro's Minister of Advancement, from kidnapping more subjects for his twisted experiments.

"Keeve and Sskeer's story has been my throughline for everything. I'm pretty much the only person who's written those characters all the way through, and it's something I never took for granted," says Cavan Scott. "There are things I wanted to say about what happens in a crisis and how people are forced to grow and take on roles that they're perhaps not ready for. What good and bad can come out of that situation. It was my polestar all the way through."





Escape from Valo

Writers: Daniel José Older, Alyssa Wong
Illustrator: Petur Antonsson
Disney • Lucasfilm Press,
Middle Grade novel
Padawan Ram Jomaram teams up with three Jedi younglings who have been in hiding on Valo, to protect the Outer Rim planet and its inhabitants from the occupying Nihil.

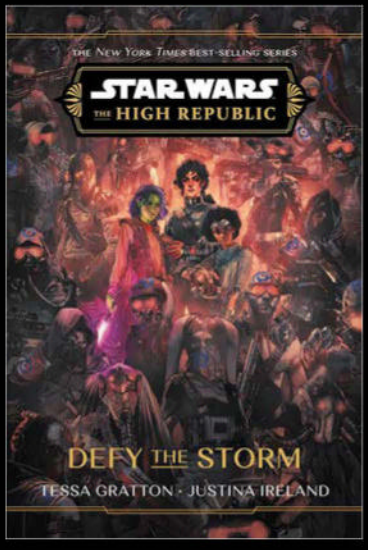


"Ram is a character close to my heart. I love him dearly," reflects Daniel José Older. "He's such a cool guy but he has no idea how cool he is. When we meet him, he's just trying to live his life. Someone pointed it out to me that Ram is almost like a reverse Luke Skywalker. Luke wanted to be fighting bad guys and taking on the Empire, whereas Ram just wants to live a quiet life in his small world, but the galaxy catches up to him."

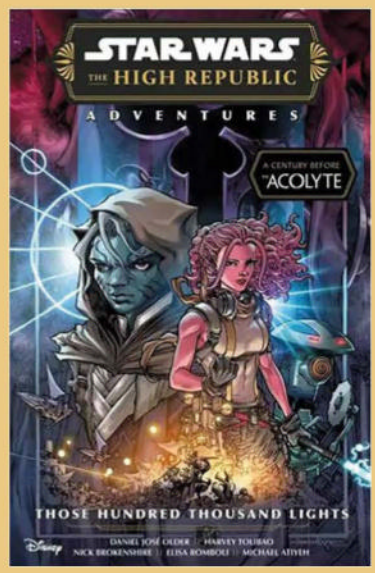


Defy the Storm

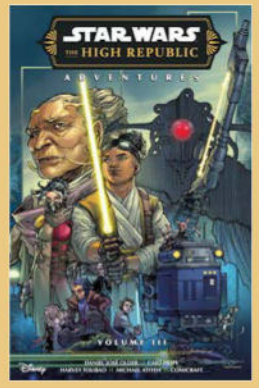
Writers: Tessa Gratton, Justina Ireland
Disney • Lucasfilm Press,
Young Adult novel
Vernestra Rwoh is dragged back into the heart of the fight against the Nihil, and joins some familiar faces to rescue her former Padawan, Imri, from the Occlusion Zone.



"I already knew the end game for the blight, so it was fun to figure out ways to tease what it is, what it could and would actually do, all while maintaining the mystery and pointing fingers in several wrong directions," explains Tessa Gratton. "Unlike the Nameless, who affect all Force users slightly differently, the blight is devastatingly the same. Instead of sharp fear, there's this overwhelming dread I wanted to bring to it. It's inexorable, even for Jedi."











STAR WARS: THE HIGH REPUBLIC ADVENTURES

Writer: Daniel José Older
Artists: Harvey Tolibao, Nick Brokenshire, Elisa Romboli, Toni Bruno, Caio Filipe, LeBeau Underwood
Cover Artists: Harvey Tolibao and Kevin Tolibao, Elisa Romboli
Dark Horse Comics, 20 issues
Collected in five trade paperbacks

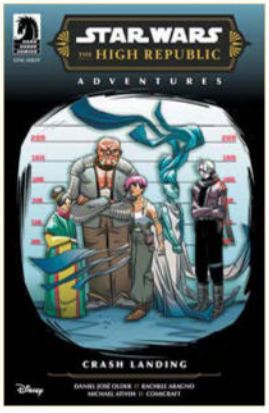
VOLUME 1 Issues 1-5
Zeen Mrala and Jedi Knight Qort search for their friends who were lost in the crash of Starlight Beacon, including Zeen's love, Lula Talisola.

VOLUME 2 Issues 6-10
A reunited Zeen and Lula, along with their friends, brace for the arrival of the Stormwall on Eriadu, and prepare to fight the Nihil occupation.

VOLUME 3 Issues 11-13
Jedi Padawan Ram Jomaram and Jedi Knight Farzala Tarabal embark on a mission to Valo to rescue Padawan Gavi Takitaken and the Scarlet Skulls from the clutches of the Nihil.

VOLUME 4 Issues 14-16
Farzala, Lula, Zeen, Qort and their friends gather to defend the capital of Eriadu from the Warden, a Nihil commander bent on taking over the planet.

VOLUME 5 Issues 17-20
It's war, and the stakes are high as the Jedi freedom fighters and the Nihil invaders on Eriadu prepare for a final showdown.

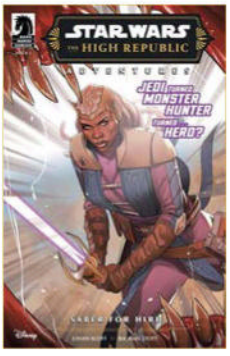


CRASH LANDING

Writer: Daniel José Older
Artist: Rachele Aragno
Cover Artist: Rachele Aragno
Dark Horse Comics,
One Shot
Collected in
The High Republic Adventures: Crash Zone
On Corellia, Alys "Crash" Ongwa and her crew work tirelessly in their struggle to put an end to the Nihil occupation of her home planet.







SABER FOR HIRE

Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist: Rachael Stott
Cover Artist:
Rachael Stott
Dark Horse Comics,
four issue mini-series
Former Jedi Ty Yorrick finds work as a saber for hire until she discovers a Nihil plot to kidnap Force-attuned children, and must put a stop to it.



The High Republic: Tales from the Occlusion Zone

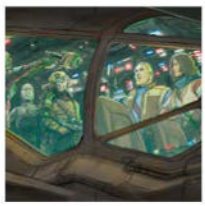
Author: Lydia Kang
Artist: Jake Lunt Davies
Titan Comics

"We wanted these stories to feature non-Jedi—the people who don't have the Force to help them figure their way out of things. We also wanted to go behind the lines of the Occlusion Zone and see what happens when you get stuck back there," Lydia Kang explains. "We threw a lot of terrible things at them; made things go from bad to worse to even worse then brought them out of the Occlusion Zone to Eriadu just when things were about to explode. We basically put those characters through the mill for nine stories."

"No Big Deal"
***Star Wars Insider* #222**
Joss and Pikka Adren are sent to intercept a Nihil vessel near the Stormwall broadcasting a distress signal.



"Friend or Foe?"
***Star Wars Insider* #223**
While on a rescue mission, The Adrens end up on the wrong side of the Stormwall.



"Survivors"
***Star Wars Insider* #224**
Stranded in the Occlusion Zone, Joss and Pikka find unexpected allies.



"Pathogen"
***Star Wars Insider* #225**
The Adrens and their new friends explore a Nihil prison ship in trouble.



"Family Ties"
***Star Wars Insider* #226**
Joss and Pikka encounter an old acquaintance infected with the blight.

Wave 2

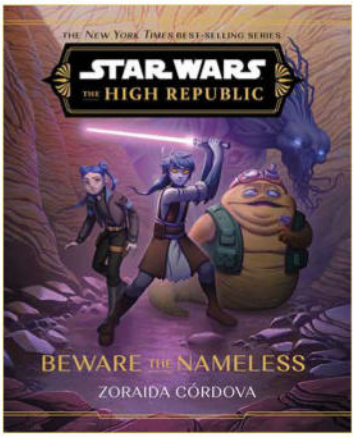
Temptation of the Force



Writer: Tessa Gratton
Random House Worlds, Adult novel
Avar Kriss and Elzar Mann are finally reunited outside the Stormwall and embark on a new mission to try and stop the Nihil, while also finally facing their feelings for one another.

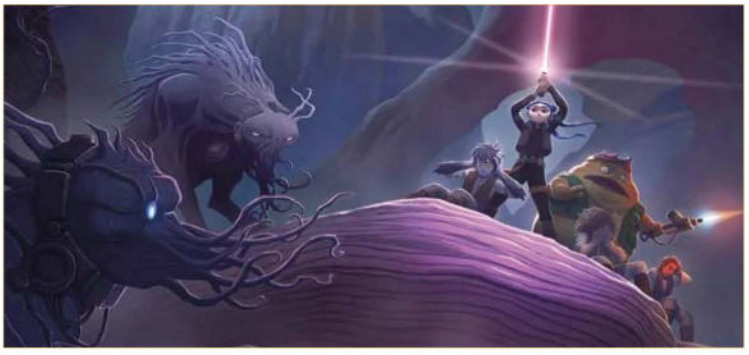
"When I was a kid I loved the space wizards," Tessa Gratton recalls. "I loved Luke and all the new Jedi in the Legends stories, but I was frustrated that Jedi were not supposed to love, because they weren't supposed to get attached to things. I knew that if I was awesome with the Force I'd be a terrible Jedi, because I wouldn't want to give up love (and kissing) or familial bonds. *Temptation* was my chance to passionately explain why I—and the Jedi of the High Republic era—shouldn't have to."

Beware the Nameless



Writer: Zoraida Córdova
Illustrator: Petur Antonsson
Disney • Lucasfilm Press, Middle Grade novel
Three Jedi younglings and a senator's daughter stow away on a ship and wind up on a rescue mission where they encounter a young Hutt on a mission of his own.

"I wanted to show a different side of who the Hutts are," reveals Zoraida Córdova. "Churo is a tween Hutt who doesn't want to be in a cartel and just wants to study bugs and have friends. He's the most unlikely person to help save the day."



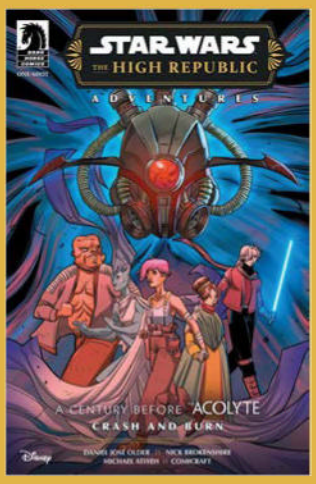


STAR WARS: THE HIGH REPUBLIC ADVENTURES PHASE III ANNUAL

Writers: Charles Soule, Rosemary Soule, Alyssa Wong, Zoraida Córdova, Cavan Scott, Justina Ireland
Artists: Andy Duggan, Liana Kangas, Juan Samu, Nick Brokenshire, Colin Craker
Cover Artists: Eduardo Francisco with Augusto Grillo
Dark Horse Comics, Annual
Collected in *The High Republic Adventures: Crash Zone*



A collection of short stories following Churo the Hutt, Driggit Parse, Vernestra Rwoh, Baron Boolan, and younglings Jon, Bree and Toko.



CRASH AND BURN

Writer: Daniel José Older
Artist: Nick Brokenshire,
Cover Artist: Rachele Aragno
Dark Horse Comics, One Shot
Collected in *The High Republic Adventures: Crash Zone*

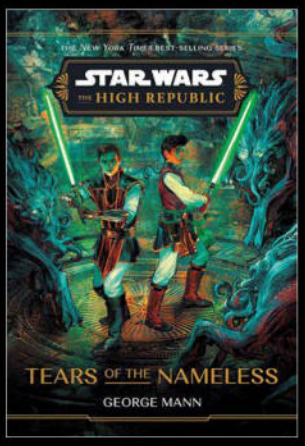
Alys "Crash" Ongwa and her crew team up with the Nihil Krix Kamerat to take down Marchion Ro.



Tears of the Nameless

Writer: George Mann
Disney • Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

When Jedi Knight Reath Silas and Padawan Amadeo Azzazzo are sent on a mission to find ways to stop the Nameless, they come face to face with the creatures once thought to be a myth—and learn the true meaning of fear.



"There's a lot of swashbuckling and lightsaber fights in *Star Wars,* but we thought it was important to think about the personal effect that our story would have on the characters, especially on the younger ones," Mann says. "I've got older teenagers; I've seen how much pressure they put themselves under. Reath and Amadeo see themselves as Jedi. They know they have to be heroes. They have to be the best of the best. And if they don't, people they care about are going to die. What must that do to a teenager?"



THE WEDDING SPECTACULAR

Writer: Daniel José Older
Artists: Harvey Tolibao, Caio Filipe, Andy Duggan, Jo Mi-Gyeong, Toni Bruno, Megan Huang, Nick Brokenshire, Elisa Romboli
Cover Art: Cherriielle
Dark Horse Comics, One Shot
Collected in *The High Republic Adventures* Volume 3

Lula Talisola and Zeen Mrala finally join hands in marriage, despite battle looming on the horizon.

"Lula and Zeen's relationship was a story arc that I knew I wanted to get into from the beginning," says Older. "I wanted to explore what a positive version of a Jedi who has struggled with their faith or with the Order might look like. What if they have these struggles, but confront them directly instead of being burned by them or obsessed with them, or not allowed to deal with them? What happens if they get dealt with in a non-tragic way? I'm not inspired by tragedy, personally, in storytelling. I think it has its place for sure, but I felt this was an important moment, to end and to bring hope into the equation of love in this particular type of storytelling."



Seeds of Starlight

Writer: George Mann
Disney • Lucasfilm Press,
Audible Original novel
Padawan Cam Lindon and Jedi younglings Kildo and Tep Tep venture to Eiram, site of the Starlight Beacon crash, to investigate mysterious disappearances tied to the fallen space station.

Haunted Starlight



Writer: George Mann
Disney • Lucasfilm Press,
Audible Original novel
Padawan Cam Lindon and Jedi younglings Kildo and Tep Tep assist Jedi Master Eve Byre in thwarting an invasion on Eiram.



Tempest Breaker

Writer: Cavan Scott
Random House Worlds, Audio Original novel
Former Nihil Tempest Runner Lourna Dee teams up with the Jedi to track down Baron Boolan, and to seek out just what Marchion Ro is hiding beneath his offer to help the Republic.

ECHOES OF FEAR



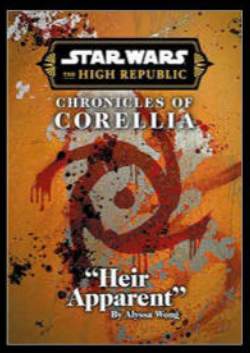
Writer: George Mann
Artists: Vincenzo Federici, Vincenzo Riccardi, Juan Samu, Giorgia Sposito
Cover Art: Eduardo Mello with Valentina Taddeo
Dark Horse Comics,
Four issue mini-series

Reath Silas and Amadeo Azzazzo learn more about the mysterious Echo Stones that may be the key to defeating the Nameless.

"We spent books and books and books building the Nameless up as these horrific monsters; creatures born out of nightmare," George Mann says of the terrifying beasts. "It was about revealing what had happened to them and showing that they were victims, too."

The High Republic: Chronicles of Corellia

Author: Alyssa Wong
***Star Wars Insider*, Titan Comics**

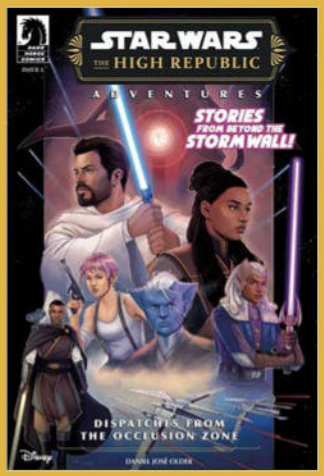


"Heir Apparent"
***Star Wars Insider* #227**
Former Nihil Krix Kamerat and former Padawan Ruu form an uneasy alliance to secure coordinates to cross the Stormwall, using any means necessary to extract the data they need.



"Cracking the Mask"
***Star Wars Insider* #228**
Driggit Parse works to take down the Nihil from the inside by stealing a secret file of valuable schematics.

DISPATCHES FROM THE OCCLUSION ZONE



Writers: Daniel José Older, Alyssa Wong, Cavan Scott
Artists: Paris Alleyne, Valeria Favoccia, Lucas Marangon, Vincenzo Riccardi
Cover Artist: Jake Bartok
Dark Horse Comics,
Four issue mini-series

Jedi Knights Emerick Caphtor and Qort, rebel fighter Ruu, and saber for hire Ty Yorrick strike back against the Nihil from within the Occlusion Zone.



THE EDGE OF BALANCE VOL. 3

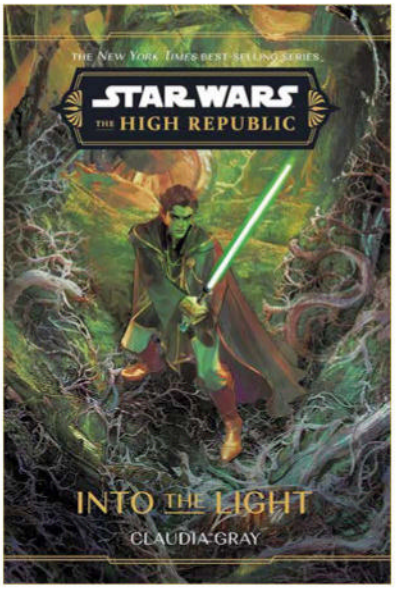
Writers: Daniel José Older, Shima Shinya
Artist: Mizuki Sakakibara
Viz Media

Jedi Knight Lily Tora-Asi defends the Jedi temple on Banchii against the Nihil, while her former master Arkoff uncovers the planet's secrets.





Wave 3

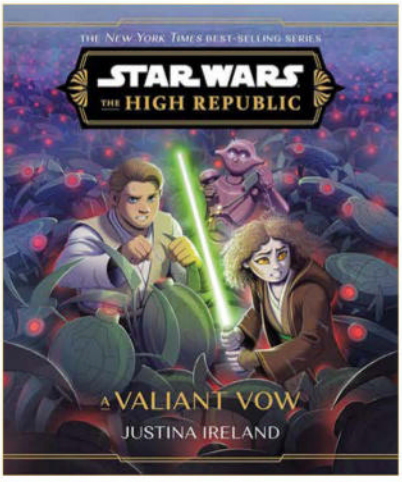


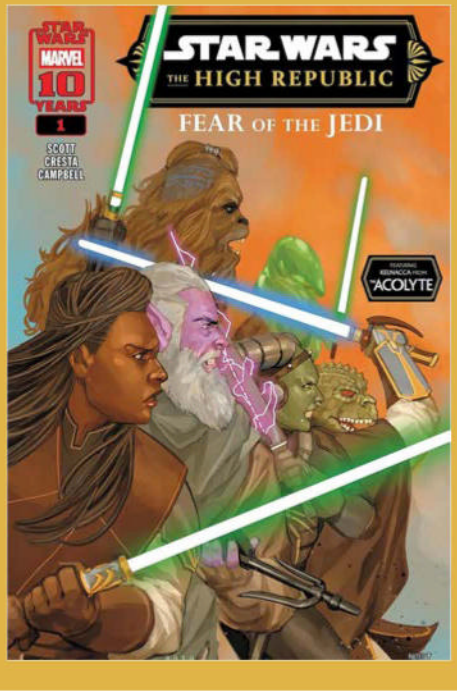
Into the Light

Writer: Claudia Gray
Disney • Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel
Reath Silas heads to Kashyyyk to try and stop the blight, which has taken root there, with the help of his former master Cohmac, and the fallen Jedi Azlin Rell.

A Valiant Vow

Writer: Justina Ireland
Illustrator: Petur Antonsson
Disney • Lucasfilm Press, Middle Grade novel
The blight spreads across Aricho, and scav droids are attacking anyone who approaches the planet, so Jedi Knights Imri Cantaros and Yacek Sparkburn and Jedi youngling Tep Tep, along with her friends Zenny Greylark and Churo the Hutt, rush in to help.



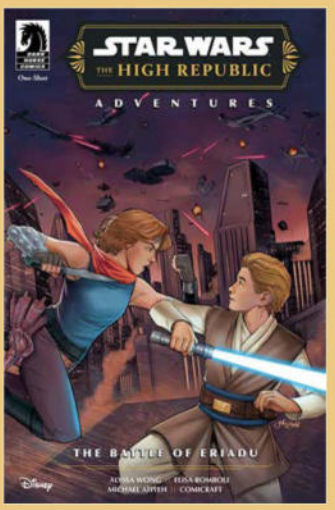


FEAR OF THE JEDI

Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist: Marika Cresta
Cover Artist: Phil Noto
Marvel Comics, 5 Issues

The Jedi face the Nihil over Naboo and Eriadu, led by Keeve Trennis, while Lourna Dee heads out on a mission for vengeance.



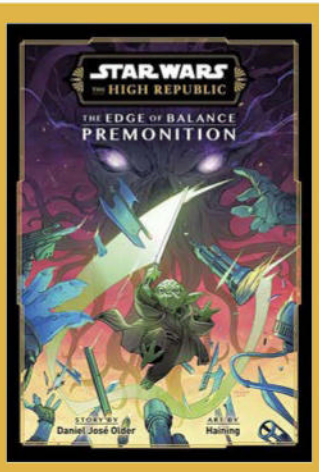


THE BATTLE OF ERIADU

Writer: Alyssa Wong
Artist: Elisa Romboli
Cover Artist: Jake Bartok
Dark Horse Comics,
One Shot, Collected in *The High Republic Adventures* Volume 4

Jedi Padawan Gavi Tavitaken finds himself on the opposite side of the Battle of Eriadu from his former best friend, the Nihil Driggit Parse.





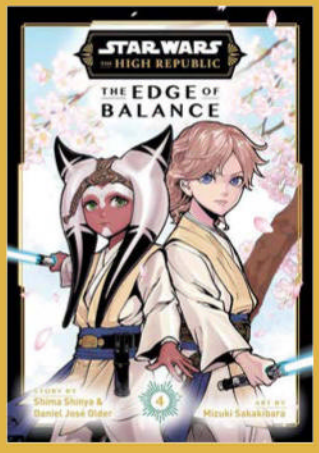


THE EDGE OF BALANCE: PREMONITION

Writer: Daniel José Older
Artist: Haining
Viz Media
After fighting to protect the Jedi Temple on Banchii, Yoda is lured into a trap by none other than leader of the Nihil, Marchion Ro.

THE EDGE OF BALANCE VOL. 4

Writers: Daniel José Older, Shima Shinya
Artist: Mizuki Sakakibara
Viz Media
Jedi Knight Lily Tora-Asi defends the Jedi Temple on Banchii from Baron Boolan with the help of Arkoff and Sav Malagán.







The High Republic: Tales from the Occlusion Zone

Author: Lydia Kang
Artist: Jake Lunt Davies
***Star Wars Insider*, Titan Comics**

"I'm not used to doing short stories in a serialized format, so there was a little bit of a learning curve to make sure that I was getting the stories right," admits Lydia Kang. "It was challenging, but I'm also proud of what we did with those characters and how they get through it. I had a lot of fun writing them."

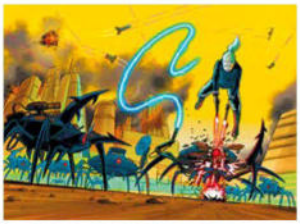
"The Fate of Eriadu"
***Star Wars Insider* #229**
Joss and Pikka Adren return to an Eriadu under Nihil occupation.

"Sparks Fly"
***Star Wars Insider* #230**
Pikka searches for Joss while joining the fight as the Battle of Eriadu begins.

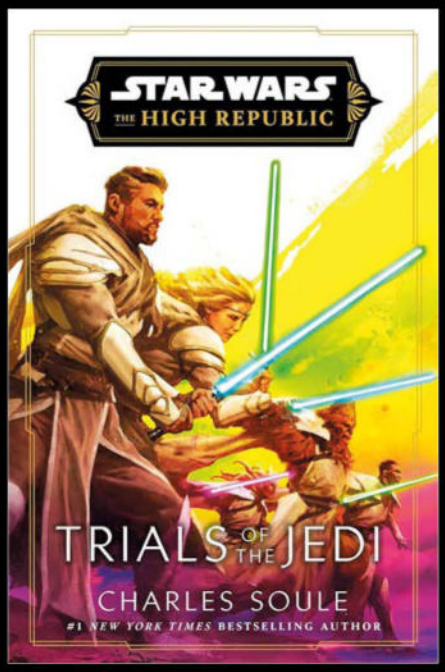
"Out With a Bang"
***Star Wars Insider* #231**
RDC officers Elping Tsoo and Visma Tarko fight back against the Nihil at the Battle of Eriadu.

"The Will to Fight"
***Star Wars Insider* #232**
Pikka and Josh Adren face more than a battle with scav droids.



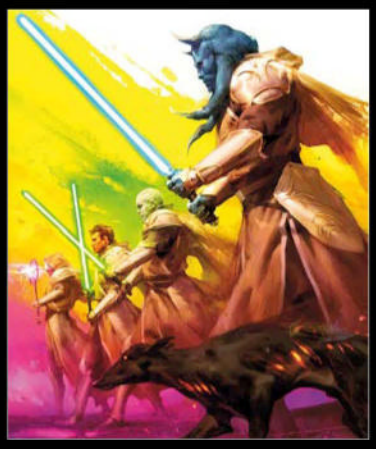






Trials of the Jedi

Writer: Charles Soule
Random House Worlds, Adult novel
Led by Avar Kriss and Elzar Mann, nine Jedi head to the Nameless homeworld to find a way to stop them once and for all while the blight ravages the galaxy and Marchion Ro lies in wait.



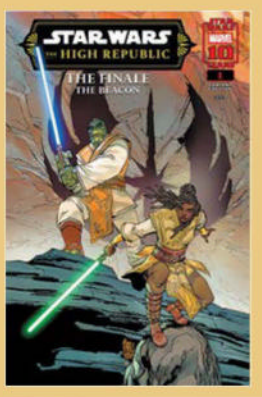
"When I was working on *Light Of The Jedi,* I was mostly focused on kicking this thing off rather than concluding it," says Charles Soule about his two novels that bookend the series. "But it seemed likely fairly early on, or at least possible, that I'd write the last book, so I started considering how it might work in the final beats. I had a pretty solid structure for the ending of the story as long ago as 2023, although it might have been earlier. When you're connecting with other authors' work the way we had to with *The High Republic,* you want to make sure you're planning ahead!"



THE BEACON

Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist: Marika Cresta
Cover Artist: Phil Noto
Marvel Comics, One Shot
Collected in *The High Republic: Fear of the Jedi*
The story comes to an end in this final volume which sees friends and allies from across *The High Republic* saga gather one last time.

"Everything I've written has been leading towards this final moment and those final pages with Keeve, which I think is one of the last things printed in this final phase," says Cavan Scott. "That's a big responsibility as well. Keeve might have one of the final things to say in *The High Republic* initiative."

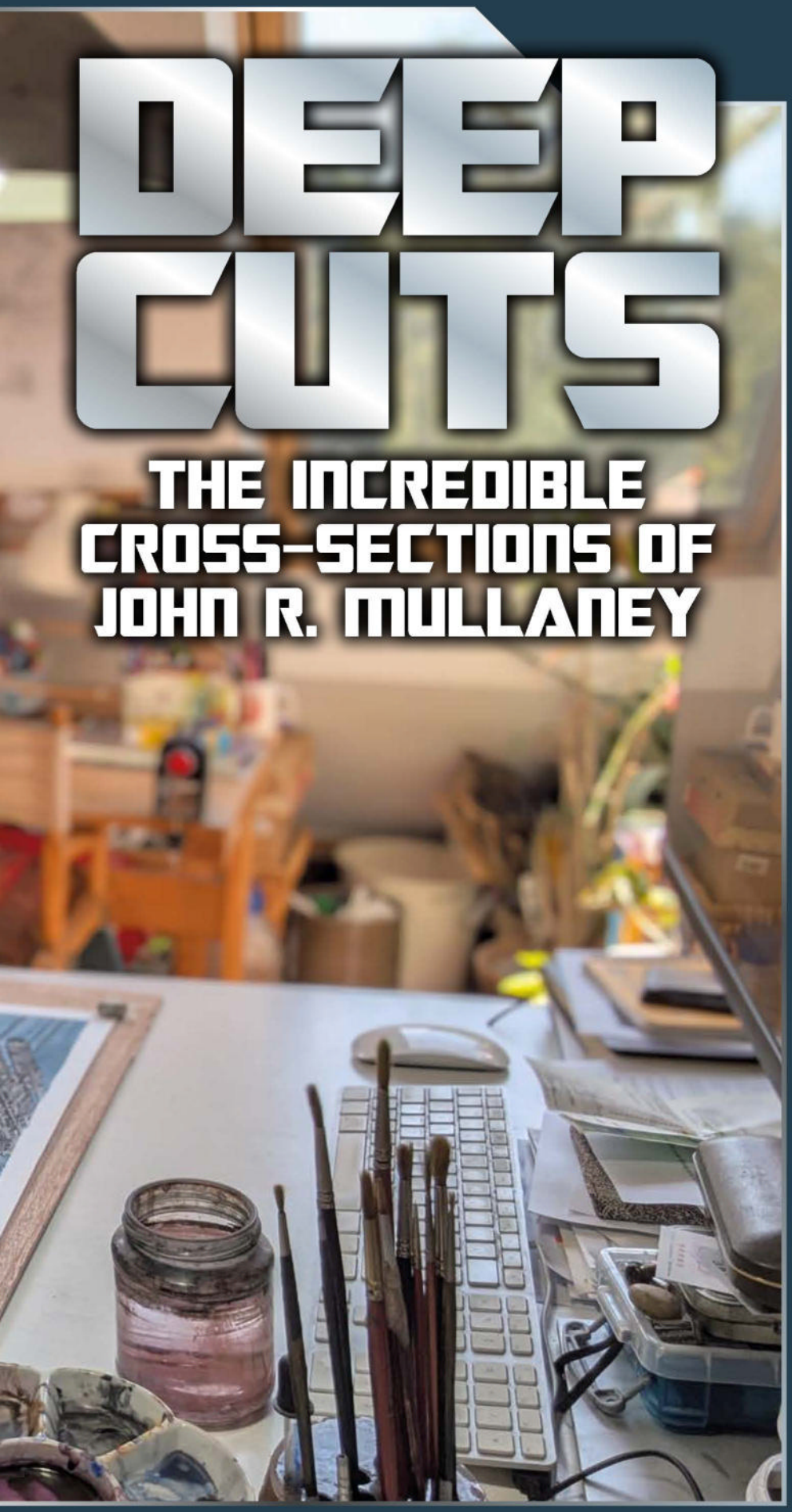








01 Artist John R. Mullaney at work in his studio.



DEEP CUTS

THE INCREDIBLE CROSS-SECTIONS OF JOHN R. MULLANEY

A long-time contributor to DK's popular series of *Star Wars* cutaway reference books, artist John R. Mullaney reveals his approach to slicing open iconic starships and locations.

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER COOPER

John Mullaney never set out to become a full-time artist and illustrator, despite displaying a natural talent for drawing from an early age. His teenage passions were cinema and music, making short films, and playing guitar—passions which continue to this day. But pen and paper were never far from his fingertips.

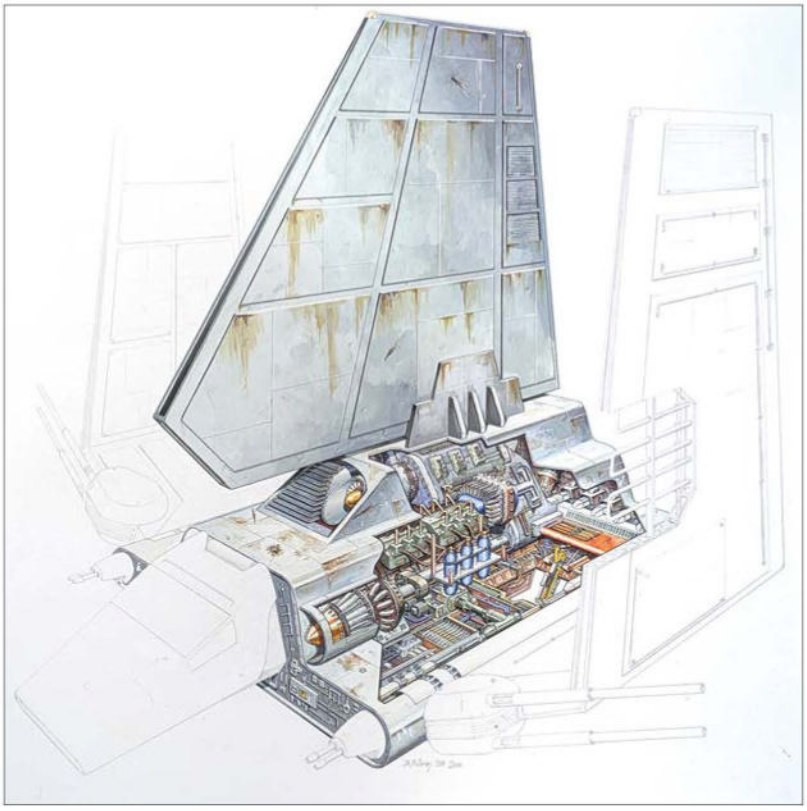
"I was never taught technical drawing. I'm self-taught, really. I've simply studied the work of the artists I admire," says Mullaney, whose incredible *Star Wars* cross-sections have featured in DK's much-loved series of books for more than 20 years. "I did Visual Arts and Literature at Staffordshire University and took a lot of cinema modules, but I'd been developing my skills drawing architecture for years prior to that. After I finished university, I was introduced to an organization called the Society of Architectural Illustration (SAI) by a family friend. I became a member and began to produce architectural illustrations for the property market.

"But I also wanted to work in film and, after doing some TV work experience, I ended up spending the summer of 1999 working as a storyboard artist and art department member on the BBC children's series *Teletubbies*," he continues. "I came back from that and there was a message on my old-school

answering machine from Dorling Kindersley, to whom I'd been recommended by the SAI. DK had approached them looking for additional illustrators to supplement Hans Jenssen and Richard Chasemore on a new *Star Wars: Incredible Cross-Sections* book. Obviously, these artworks take a long time to do, and those guys were snowed under with the work. Initially, I thought the call was a wind-up by friends, because it seemed too good to be true—I'd been very into the first book, and was blown away by the quality of their art. I'd spent hours gazing at their incredible, beautifully drawn and rendered illustrations that sliced open these beloved vehicles."

02 An audition piece of an Imperial shuttle Mullaney created for DK.

03 The Great Temple cross-section Mullaney painted for *Inside the Worlds of the Star Wars Trilogy.*



02

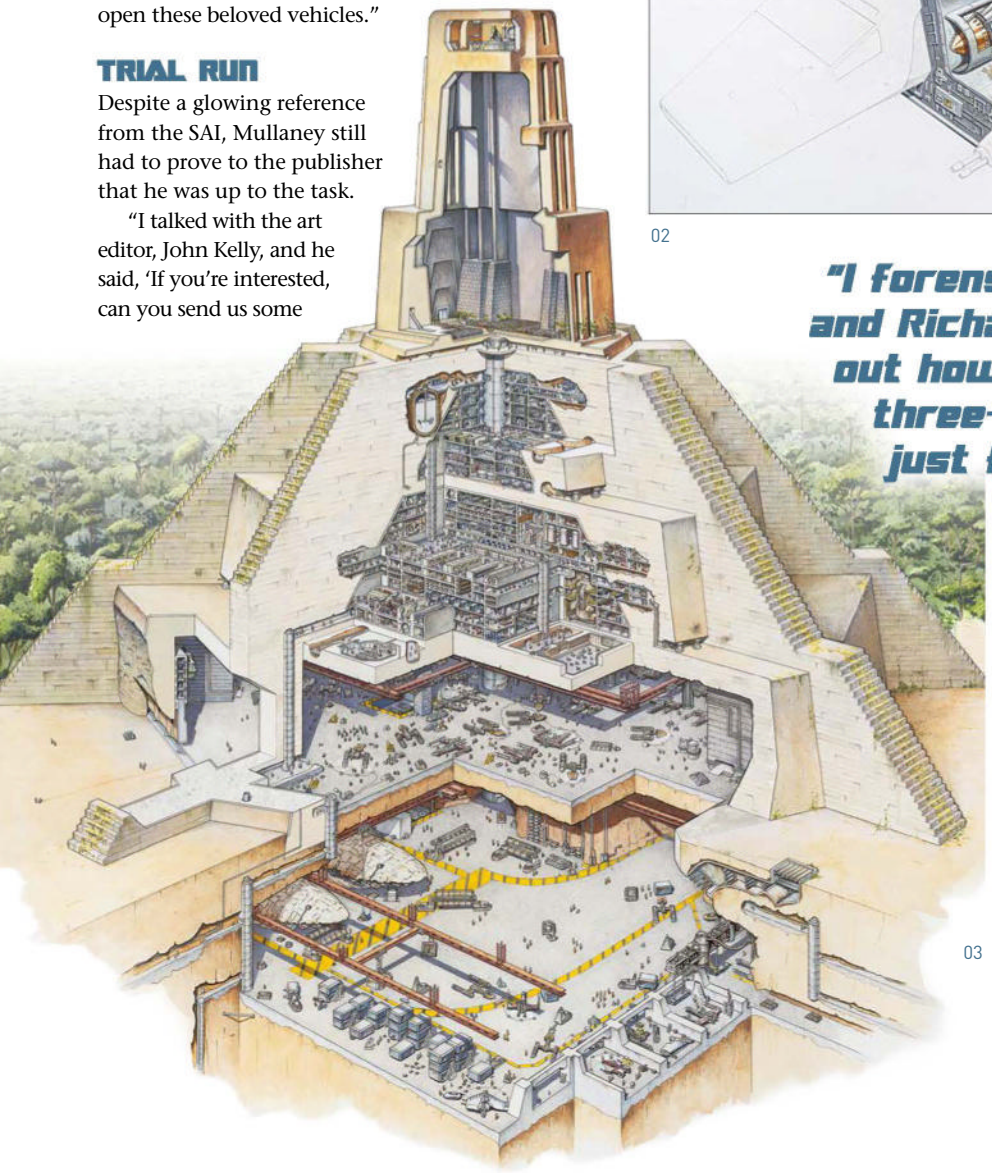
TRIAL RUN

Despite a glowing reference from the SAI, Mullaney still had to prove to the publisher that he was up to the task.

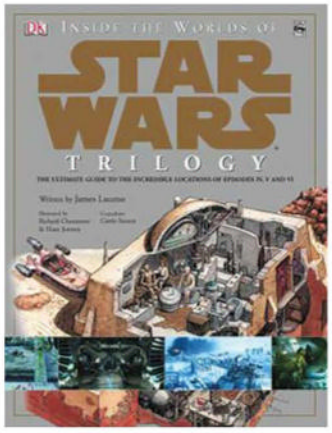
"I talked with the art editor, John Kelly, and he said, 'If you're interested, can you send us some pieces that demonstrate you can do this type of thing.' As an architectural illustrator, I'd done plenty of architectural drawings and artist impressions for property developers and architects, but I'd never done a cutaway before. This was before CGI, and I was one of a very small, niche group of architectural illustrators who worked traditionally, so getting a call for a job that merged those skills with *Star Wars,* which I'd grown up with, I was really hungry to do it," Mullaney recalls.

"I forensically studied Hans and Richard's work, figuring out how they achieved the three-dimensional effect just from ink and paint"

"I studied Hans and Richard's work forensically, figuring out how they achieved the three-dimensional effect just from ink and paint. I copied an AT-AT detail by Hans, and John Kelly wrote back and said, 'That's very nice,



03



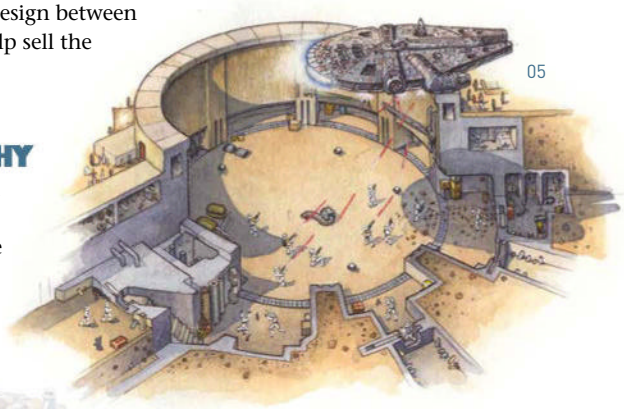
04 The first DK cross-sections book Mullaney worked on.

but you just copied that. Can you do an actual cross-section?' The brief was the Great Temple on Yavin 4, which was what they needed for the book, and my first effort was awful. And they very diplomatically told me so! I said, "OK, give me a few weeks." I began learning the visual grammar of the DK *Star Wars* cutaway house style, and did an audition piece, which they said was better but still not there. "OK. Bear with me," I said, and a few weeks later submitted a cutaway of the Imperial shuttle—one of my favorite ships. In terms of the interior, it couldn't possibly have worked because there were no crew quarters, but basically I was demonstrating that I could achieve those techniques and show engineering components and the like. And that got me the job."

Mullaney's first commission was the aforementioned temple that housed the rebel base in *Star Wars: A New Hope*. "That's still hanging on the wall in my studio," he grins. "It was a real thrill to do that. I referenced some of Hans and Richard's previous designs, like a water tank I borrowed from Hans' Hoth cutaway and some cargo containers. And they wanted the transports from *The Empire Strikes Back* in there. It was important to carry a consistent design between the two bases to help sell the rebel's narrative."

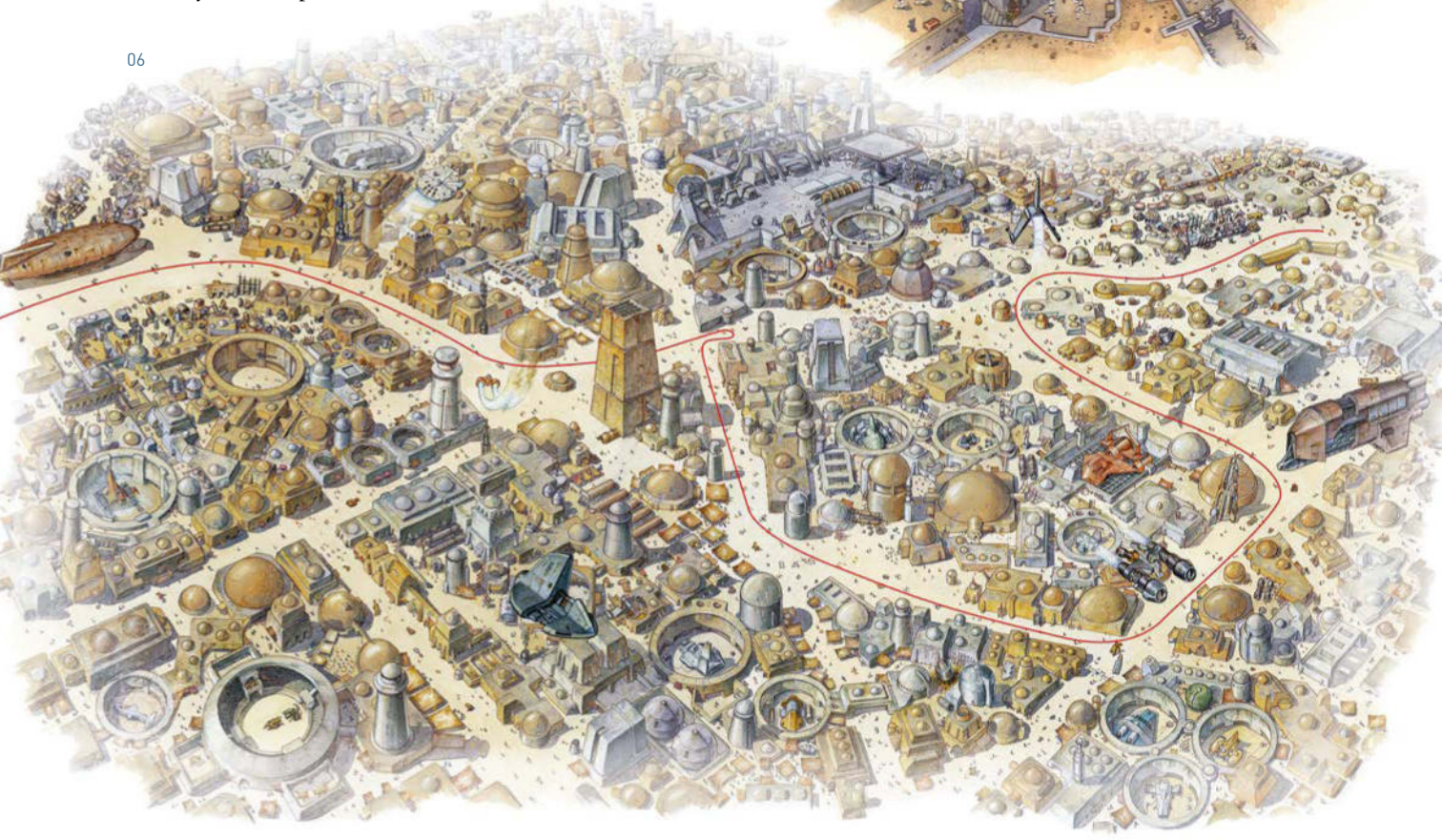
CORELLIAN CARTOGRAPHY

The highly detailed Great Temple illustration was one of several pieces by Mullaney that appeared in *Inside the Worlds of Star Wars Trilogy: The Ultimate Guide to the Incredible Locations of Episodes IV, V, and VI,* which also included an aerial view of Mos Eisley on Tatooine. A Special Edition establishing shot of Luke Skywalker and friends arriving in the spaceport provided the focus of this intricate composition. "It took a huge amount of work to figure out how to reconcile the different shots and make a route that was consistent with what you see in the film," discloses Mullaney. "Curtis Saxton, John, and I exchanged endless emails triangulating the relative positions of buildings by analyzing VHS screengrabs, even using scene shadow directions to ▶



05 An unused artwork Mullaney painted for *Inside the Worlds of...*

06 Mullaney's expansive artwork depicting Luke Skywalker's route through Mos Eisley.



determine the characters' route the spaceport."

The eventual layout added stills from the movie to provide additional context and revealed the circuitous route Luke took to reach the Mos Eisley cantina. What didn't make the final layout was the Concorde airplane Mullaney had hidden in the artwork as an Easter egg for eagle eyed readers. "It was a tribute to having stood at the end of the runway as it took off around that time—it was like watching the *Millennium Falcon* blast out of Mos Eisley. But the art editor spotted it, so the supersonic had to go," Mullaney smiles, ruefully.

More recently, Mullaney illustrated similar street views of Corellia from *Solo: A Star Wars Story* and Nevarro from *The Mandalorian* for the 2024 new edition of S*tar Wars: The Complete Locations*, with the speeder chase through Corellia's industrial landscape in *Solo* proving to be a particular challenge.

"There is a rough animatic of the chase that shows how the production figured that sequence out, but it was quite loose," says Mullaney. "As with Mos Eisley, I had to calculate a route through Corellia that was consistent with what was seen on screen, and that's one of the hardest jobs with this kind of work, because a filmmaker isn't necessarily thinking about making an entire sequence geographically consistent when designing shots in for such a chase, but I have to."

Nevarro from *The Mandalorian* was more straight-forward, despite the on screen location expanding considerably across three seasons. "That was a nice piece to do," he says. "What I hadn't initially appreciated when I was watching the show was how it starts as a very small village and grows into a town. It was fun to include details from all three seasons, including the secret tunnels and lava river."

07 The 2025 edition of *Star Wars: Complete Locations* added new locations, including Nevarro.

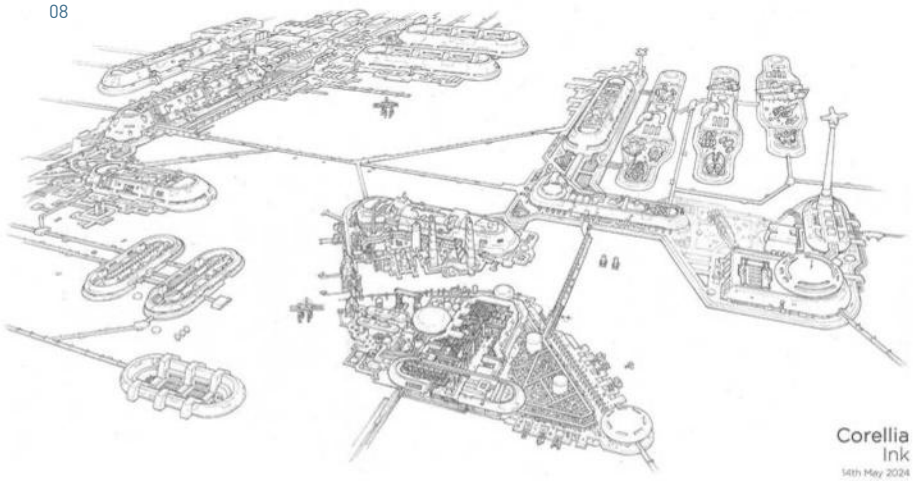
08 Mullaney's ink-stage artwork of Corellia's spaceport from *Solo*.

09 The final painting.

07

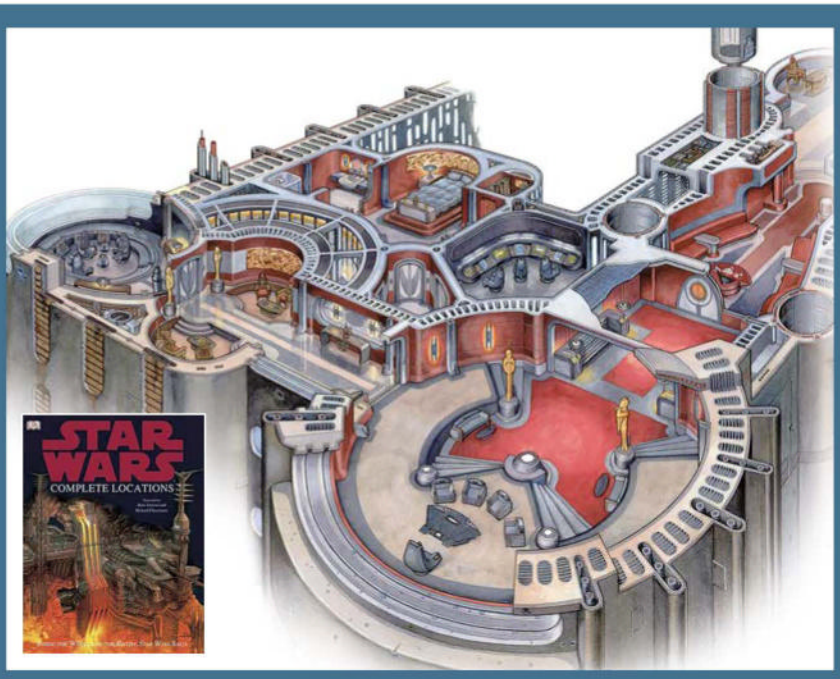


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PALPATINE'S PAD

John's favorite of his many illustrations is the interior of Palpatine's quarters which he was commissioned to paint for *Star Wars: Complete Locations,* published in 2005 to coincide with the release of *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*.

"They provided me with all the production drawings for the set and photographic reference, because we have to show the location exactly as you see in the film," the artist recalls, "but the funny thing was that they also wanted to see Supreme Chancellor Palpatine's bedroom and en-suite, so as well as giving him a comfy bed and walk-in wardrobe, I had to decide if the single most evil character in cinematic history had a hot-tub or a power shower. We went with a power shower. I figured he'd want to feel the Force!"

Mullaney provides further insights into his art on **www.johnRmullaney.com.**

"A filmmaker isn't necessarily thinking about making a sequence geographically consistent when designing shots for such a chase, but I have to."

"Another piece I did was a map of Luke Skywalker's island on Ahch-To from *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* and *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker,*" says Mullaney. "It's a real island off the Southwest coast of Ireland called Skellig Michael, and I literally based my map on a satellite image of the island—a drone shot in *The Last Jedi* shows the exact same coast outline. But the majority of scenes were shot in Northern Ireland, so we had to transpose those locations onto the map. We had some back and forth as to where Rey hands Luke the lightsaber. The initial location would have meant Luke tossed it a good 200 meters! It was fun working out all the specific scene locations."



10 Nevarro, as painted by Mullaney for the 2025 edition of *Complete Worlds.*

THE PROCESS

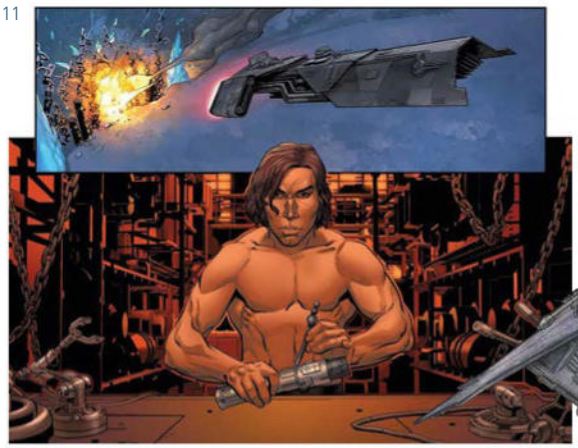
In the early days, Mullaney would plan his compositions using reference photographs provided by Lucasfilm, utilizing technical drawing techniques to work out perspectives and doing everything by hand. He still primarily works using traditional media, and reference material remains a key component, but modern technology has helped with the early and end stages of his process.

"When it comes to vehicles, nowadays I'm sent a digital model of the exterior that I load into my 3D software, which allows me to move the model to the exact angle I want, and gives me a firm grasp of the ship's geometry. I light it and produce a render which gets me off to a great start," he explains.

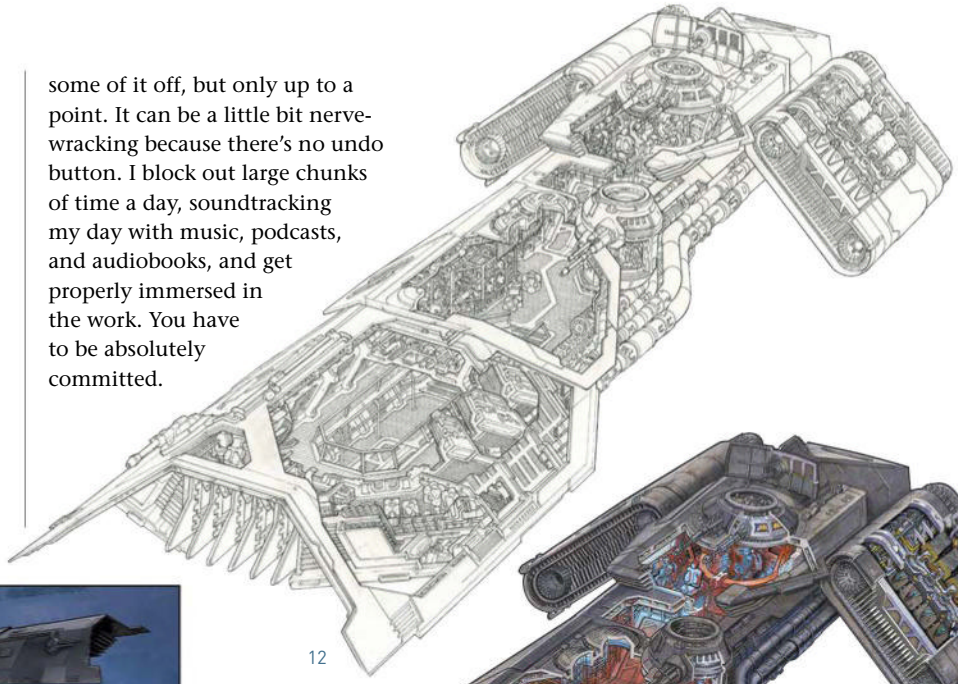
With the angle approved by DK and Lucasfilm, Mullaney makes an A3 printout of the ship so that he can begin the real creative work on tracing paper. "That's when the drawing begins, as I figure out where I want the cut-outs to be ▶

so they can be easily understood and reveal the most internal information whilst retaining enough of the exterior form," he says. "The process requires a lot of adjustments—tracing paper is very forgiving and allows for infinite rubbing out. The artwork evolves over weeks and months as I get notes back from the publisher and Lucasfilm. This preliminary drawing is a precise template for the final artwork, so I make this approval art as detailed as possible. It makes things much easier to have worked out the composition at a small stage before blowing the image up to the A1 scale I eventually work in. Typically, I'll draw around 125 to 140 percent larger than the artwork will finally appear on the page."

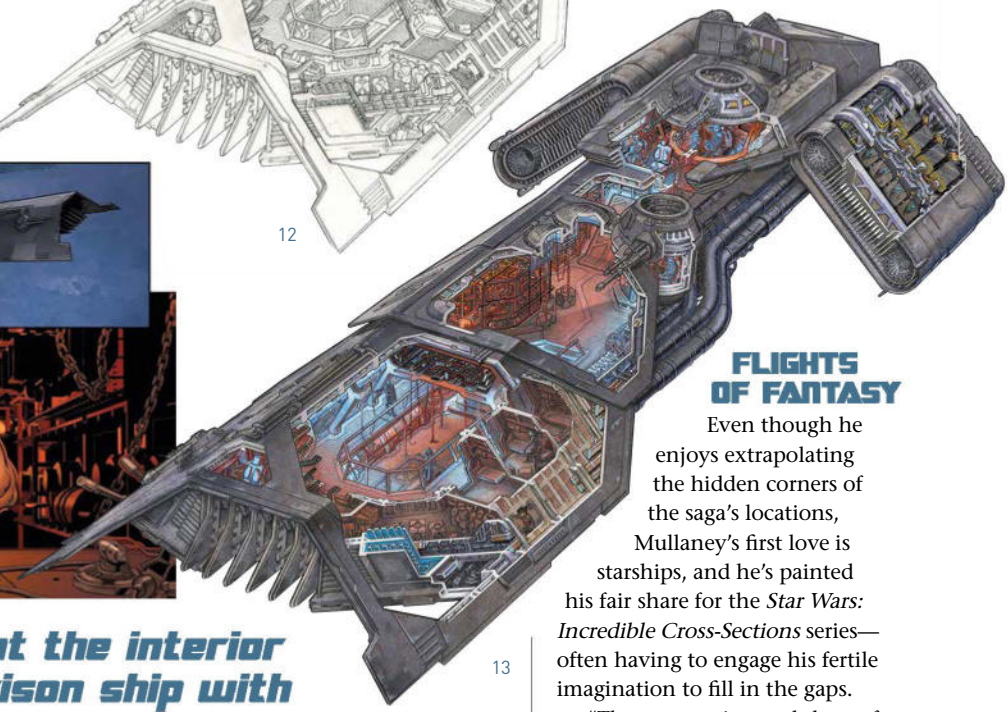
Each illustration can take months to complete, depending on the level of detail. Mullaney paints on 300gsm sheets of smooth white A1 paper, using traditional media. "I ink the artwork, then layer up the color using multiple watercolor washes, with gouache for the highlights," he reveals. "Watercolor can be quite forgiving. You can apply a wash and then you can dab some of it off, but only up to a point. It can be a little bit nerve-wracking because there's no undo button. I block out large chunks of time a day, soundtracking my day with music, podcasts, and audiobooks, and get properly immersed in the work. You have to be absolutely committed. You can't dabble for half an hour, you have to really think ahead, plan where to leave white for highlights, start with a light wash then layer up with slightly darker shades, steadily building it up, so that by the time you get to the darker and more saturated colors, you're only adding very small amounts, and that's what gives you the depth. It's intricate. What I love about doing this kind of work is creating the visual illusion that a flat piece of paper is this three-dimensional piece of technology or location from another world."



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"The brief was that the interior should be like a prison ship with prison style architecture, which is how I came up with the design."

11 The Marvel comic *The Rise of Kylo Ren* provided the only internal reference image for the *Night Buzzard*.

12 Inked art of the *Night Buzzard*.

13 Mullaney's finished art, with added Knights of Ren.

FLIGHTS OF FANTASY

Even though he enjoys extrapolating the hidden corners of the saga's locations, Mullaney's first love is starships, and he's painted his fair share for the *Star Wars: Incredible Cross-Sections* series—often having to engage his fertile imagination to fill in the gaps.

"There are no internal shots of the *Night Buzzard* in *The Rise of Skywalker*," says Mullaney of the angular ship of the Knights of Ren. "All we had for key reference was an exterior render of the model and some panels from a Kylo Ren comic that showed an interior cage-like background, so I had to match that detail. The brief was that the interior should be like a prison ship with prison style architecture, which is how I came up with the design."

In the published image, the Knights can be spotted at various locations around the ship. For purposes of flexibility and achieving greater detail, Mullaney drew and painted each character separately and composited them into the finished cross-section in Photoshop (which he uses to complete his art). "I had to plan where each

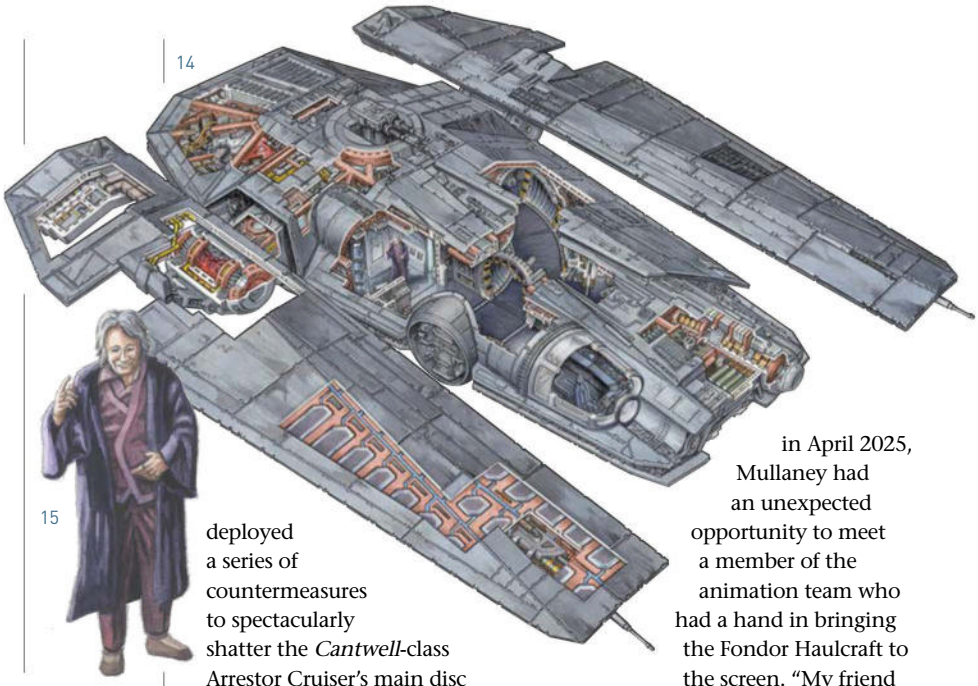
character would be and make sure their position and lighting matched so that they would composite correctly," he says.

Mullaney's cross-section of Luthen Rael's Fondor Haulcraft is another piece where he laid a character into his artwork. "DK wanted to include that moment in the first season of Andor where Luthen transforms into his antiquities dealer persona. He holds himself in a very particular way, and I always work from a character model, often myself, for reference. In that instance, I was staying with my friend Nick—who was an extra in *Andor*—and asked him to put on his bathrobe (to approximate Luthen's gown) and go out into the car park below his apartment and to adopt that same Luthen pose, so that I could take reference photos from the first floor to simulate the artwork's elevated viewpoint. What the neighbors thought Nick was doing, I don't know, but it worked."

The artist was also keen to live up to the reputation of Rael's gadget-packed ship as the James Bond car of the *Star Wars* galaxy, which he describes as "a thrill" to illustrate.

"I genuinely think that scene where Luthen takes on an Imperial cruiser in Season 1, Episode 11, 'Daughter of Ferrix,' is one of the most thrilling sequences in the whole of *Star Wars,* if not in all science-fiction films and TV," enthuses Mullaney. Fans will remember how Rael deployed a series of countermeasures to spectacularly shatter the *Cantwell*-class Arrestor Cruiser's main disc array, and blasted TIE fighters with a barrel-roll laser beam.

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14 The Fondor Haulcraft art featured in *Dawn of the Rebellion: The Visual Guide.*

15 Mullaney's rendition of Luthen Rael.

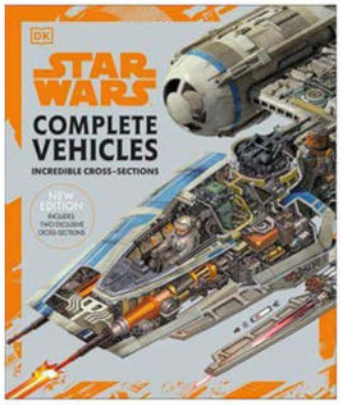
16 The *Night Buzzard* appeared in the 2020 edition of *Star Wars: Complete Vehicles.*

17 John R. Mullaney with ILM senior animator Josh Thornhill.

"I had to figure out how to fit that laser inside the ship. Pablo Hidalgo—Lucasfilm's director of franchise content and strategy—has consulted on many of my recent artworks, and he wanted to show how the modulating wing configuration worked, as well as including an escape pod, so that all went in," says Mullaney. "I also referenced images of high-performance car engines to give the engineering a suitably techy engine design."

During an exclusive London gallery exhibition of his artwork in April 2025, Mullaney had an unexpected opportunity to meet a member of the animation team who had a hand in bringing the Fondor Haulcraft to the screen. "My friend Ram introduced me to his friend, Josh Thornhill, who turned out to be a Senior Animator at Industrial Light & Magic that worked on those shots," he recalls. "It was an amazing coincidence for us to meet. Neither of us were aware of the other's role working on this same ship, and it was a real privilege to meet a creative at the other end of the production chain. I had to ask him whether the two wedge-shaped countermeasures firing mechanisms on the back of the ship were a reference to the famous *Back to the Future* DeLorean. That also turned out to be a coincidence, but it was great to swap notes."

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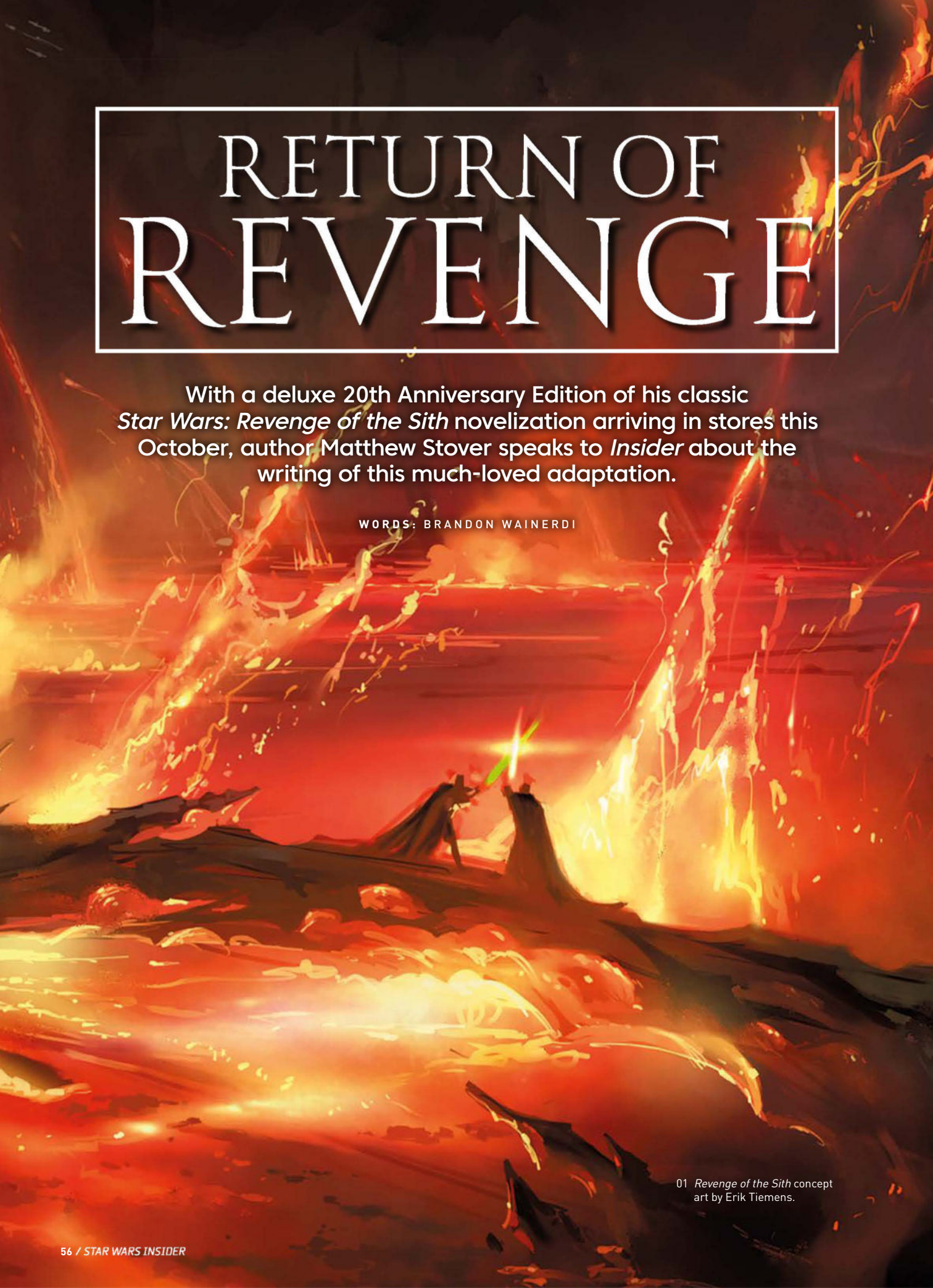
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RETURN OF REVENGE

With a deluxe 20th Anniversary Edition of his classic *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* novelization arriving in stores this October, author Matthew Stover speaks to *Insider* about the writing of this much-loved adaptation.

WORDS: BRANDON WAINERDI



01 *Revenge of the Sith* concept art by Erik Tiemens.

It is well-celebrated that on May 19, 2005, *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* premiered in theaters across the globe. However, over a month earlier, the film's novelization—penned by fan favorite author Matthew Stover—first hit bookstore shelves. Nestling within its pages was not just the play-by-play plot of the then "final chapter" of the saga, but a further exploration of the characters and themes that make the *Star Wars* mythos so powerful. After two decades, it still remains a favorite Jedi text for many fans and is set to be discovered by a new generation when a deluxe 20th anniversary edition publishes on October 14th.

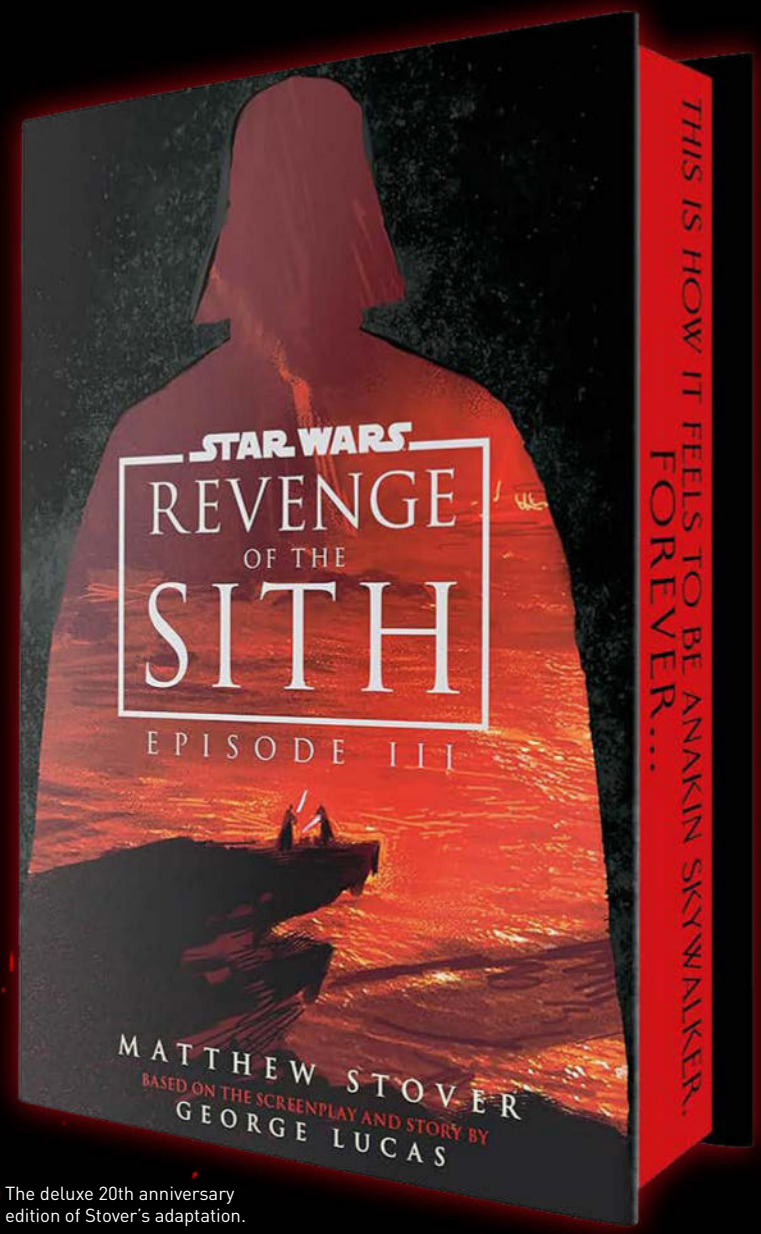
Star Wars Insider recently spoke with Stover about his reflections and his over 170 annotations to this anniversary edition, as well as his appreciation for the lasting power of words he wrote twenty years ago.

***Star Wars Insider:* What were your earliest creative inspirations?**
Matthew Stover: My dad had a particular gift for making up stories, always some kind of fairy tale. If he was in the right mood, sitting out on the back patio in the summer, he could stay there for an hour and just tell you a story. And then my older brother had a rather extensive collection of science fiction mass market paperbacks and old pulp magazines—he filled an entire walk-in closet in our big old house. It was his library and that's what I read growing up.

But the "worst" thing that happened to me was in fourth grade, when some nice lady at my church loaned me a copy of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. And then yeah, it was done for, it was over. Whatever it was, whatever I did, I *had* to have something to do with creating stories that were that cool.

What was your first interaction with *Star Wars*?
I saw *A New Hope* on June 15, 1977. I was 15 and saw the ad for it on a late-night TV monster movie show. I saw the ad and thought, "Wow, that looks dumb, but there's Alec Guinness and Peter Cushing, and here's a dude grabbing a kiss from a girl and swinging across this canyon." And so, on a sunny afternoon that summer, a kid I knew from church showed up at my door because he had been looking for somebody to go see this movie with and, well, I was home. So, we ended up seeing *Star Wars* and then we just stayed in the theater and watched it again.

(I'm pretty positive that it was June 15, 1977 because I used the numeric of that date as an initiation code in my novel *Shatterpoint*.)



02 The deluxe 20th anniversary edition of Stover's adaptation.

"I WAS COMPLETELY TAKEN WITH THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF MYSTIC KNIGHTS WITH MAGICAL POWERS GUARDING PEACE AND ORDER IN THE GALAXY."

What were the elements of the movie that you gravitated towards most?
It was always the Jedi. *Star Wars* is simply a fantasy quest with trappings of a science fiction story, so I was completely taken with the whole concept of mystic knights with magical powers guarding peace and order in the galaxy.

How early did you have an inkling that you wanted to write professionally?
I read an interview with Ray Bradbury, who had famously sold his first short story when he was 16. I started writing when I was 12, give or take, because my mother subscribed to the *Ellery Queen* mystery magazine, a monthly digest of short stories. Every month they would publish a "department of first stories," one story in every issue by a previously unpublished author. So, I took my chances and *started.*

What is your writing process? Has it changed over the years?
If I'm telling a story that really has a hold on my imagination, it's difficult for me to think about anything else. Part of the reason I tended bar while I was writing was because that was something I could do that occupied my full attention at the front of my brain, but didn't get in the back of my head and create ongoing anxieties. When I've got a good story going, all the rest of that is gone and the back of my head is full of story.

From there, I almost always work from an outline. It's very important for me, psychologically, because I need to know what happens next. I've never been able to write well in that "seat of the pants" mode, where you go where the story takes you. My brain doesn't work that way. I always end up surprising myself, though, because my books never end up being about what I thought they were about at the start. I used to say that an outline is like a battle plan—Napoleon famously said that no battle plan survives contact with the enemy. It's the exact same as an outline. No outline survives contact with the actual story.

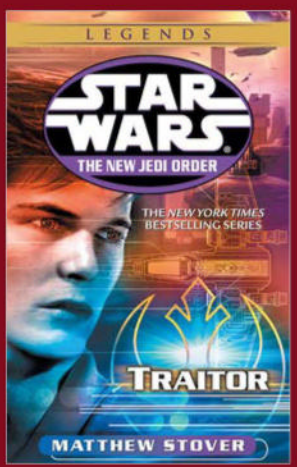
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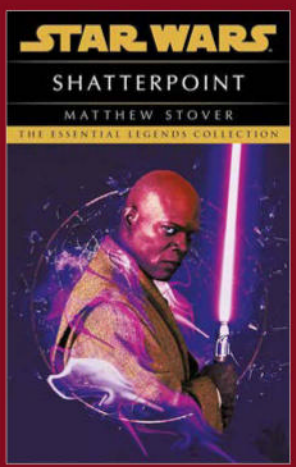
03 *Revenge of the Sith* concept art by Ryan Church.

04 Christopher's
05 *Star Wars*
06 novels: *Traitor*; *Shatterpoint*; and *Luke Skywalker and the Shadows of Mindor.*

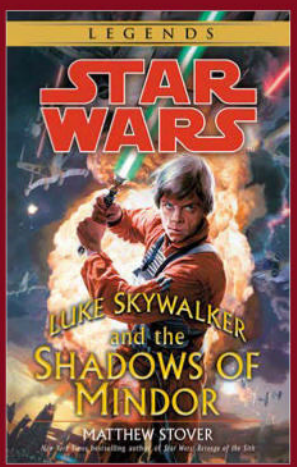
How did you become involved with Lucasfilm and writing for *Star Wars*?
My publishing history is somewhat checkered (laughs). After my first two novels didn't sell very well, I switched publishers to Del Rey. They set out to do the *New Jedi Order* and started looking for writers to fill out the 21 or 22 book series that they had initially planned. They already had some guys lined up, who had a lot of experience in the field, like R.A. Salvatore, or were already



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"THERE WERE CERTAIN CHOICES I MADE WHILE WRITING THE BOOK THAT I'M NOW SURPRISED BY HOW WELL THEY WORK FOR ME."

established *Star Wars* authors, like Michael A. Stackpole. But they were looking around and asked me about writing *Traitor*.

Initially I wasn't going to do it, because writing is hard for me and I didn't want to work that hard on a project I didn't own. But when I was at GenCon that year, both Bob (R.A.) Salvatore and Mike Stackpole cornered me on a balcony. I think it was Bob who said, "Are you nuts? Listen, your first print run of a *Star Wars* mass market paperback will be 250,000 copies and they'll expect to sell that out. Do you want people to read your stuff or not?"

When did the call come to work on the *Revenge of the Sith* novelization?

There was no hint that I was even under consideration. This was after *Shatterpoint*, and Lucasfilm and Del Rey were pretty happy with me. I took a phone call from New York from Shelly Shapiro, who ran *Star Wars* publishing for Del Rey at the time. She called me up and said, "Hey man, how are you? Listen, I was going to call your agent, but I thought I'd just check with you first: do you want to write the novelization for *Episode III*?" It didn't even have a name at that point.

When I began writing the book, I typed out the title page, which simply said, "Episode III: An Untitled *Star Wars* Story by Matthew Woodring Stover, based on the screenplay by George Lucas". I just sat there for the longest time and looked at it. It was an amazing feeling.

The characterizations in the novel are exquisitely done, especially Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker. How did you get into their heads?

Obi-Wan Kenobi has appeared in a lot of *Star Wars* fiction, and he has long been one of my favorite characters. I particularly enjoyed Ewan McGregor in the role. So, Obi-Wan as a character just kind of exists in my head, because I've seen him in the movies and read him in the books so many times. He's like the ghost of Hamlet's father—he might only appear at the beginning, but his shadow is cast throughout the entire saga. At that point in time, I was leaning on the prequel- ▶

MATTHEW STOVER'S *STAR WARS* STORIES

The New Jedi Order: Traitor
Del Rey, July 2002

Shatterpoint
Del Rey, June 2003

"Equipment"
Published in *Star Wars: Short Story Collection*
Hasbro, August 2003

Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith
Movie Novelization
Del Rey, April 2005

Luke Skywalker and the Shadows of Mindor
Del Rey, December 2008

"The Tenebrous Way"
Star Wars Insider #130,
Titan Magazines,
December 2011

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07 *Revenge of the Sith* concept art by Eric Tiemens.

era novels, especially Alan Dean Foster's *The Approaching Storm* and James Luceno's *Labyrinth of Evil.* But mostly I was looking directly at the movies themselves and just seeing how other people had approached the character.

Some of my impressions and ideas about Anakin, however, were entirely mistaken and *that* story appears in the new annotated edition of the book.

Is there a favorite, non-movie moment that you remember putting in the book?
There is a little vignette about Padmé and Anakin's relationship that I was particularly proud of, because it was one of those things that I noticed that the movies never explained. C-3PO was built by Anakin but ended up in Padmé's service, while R2-D2 was built on Naboo by the Royal engineers and was now Anakin's. What was that about? So, there's a story in the novel that it was a gift between the couple. I'm not even sure I made that up! I may have taken that from some other writer, but that's one thing I particularly like.

How do you channel your extensive personal martial arts experience to write your incredible fight scenes?
Believe it or not, a lot of it is simply the result of experience. It's one of the things that used to bug me when I was reading my brother's pulp stories—a lot of fight scenes just aren't realistic. Because I watched *The Green Hornet* as a kid, I was already a Bruce Lee fan, so I wanted to learn how to fight. I started to take taekwondo and aikido, and a kung fu style, and Jiu Jitsu. I also did a year of judo. It was just fun.

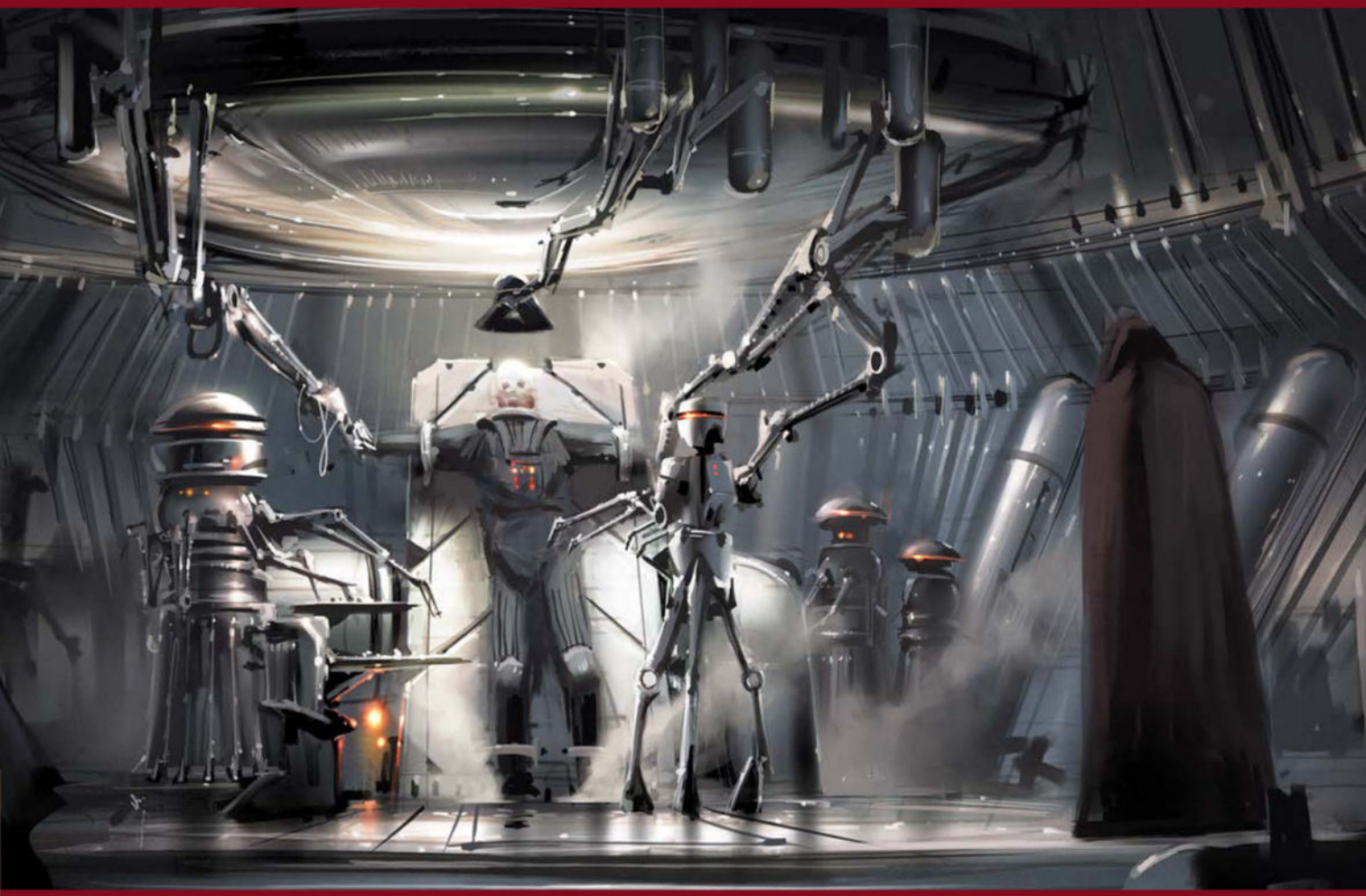
I think what makes my fight scenes work for a lot of people is that they can *feel* it while it's happening. When you're fighting, there are things you pay attention to and things you ignore. Sometimes the things you ignore are maybe important to the plot or story, but that's not what's going on right now. I write it until I can look at it and go, "Yeah, I buy that."

What was it like revisiting the work, for the purpose of annotation?
I am, by nature, a storyteller. I was reluctant to do it at first, because I've never annotated anything. I couldn't think of any way to approach it that wouldn't sound stupid or obvious, or like me blowing my own horn. But my editor, who is awesome, said, "Well, I think a lot of people would be interested in this kind of book and would be interested in some of the storytelling decisions you made. A lot of people, especially *Star Wars* fans, want to write their own books someday, and I think they want to know *how* you made these choices."



08 *Revenge of the Sith* concept art by Ryan Church.

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09 *Revenge of the Sith* concept art by Ryan Church.

"If I wanted to write a scene that thrilled me, it thrills me. If I wanted to write a scene that broke hearts, I break my own heart."

I think a lot of the reason that this book became as "famous" as it did is less to do with me specifically, but because I was backstopped by an exceptional editorial team who did a really good job keeping my eyes on the ball. Of course, there were speed bumps along the way, but a couple of those stories have made it into the annotations, and I'd hate to spoil them.

There were certain choices I made while writing the book that I'm now surprised by how well they work for me. When I'm writing something I really care about, the magic of the words works just as well on me as it does on anybody else reading it. In some cases, it might actually work *better* because I specifically wrote it in a way that was going to work on me specifically. If I wanted to write a scene that thrilled me, it thrills me. If I wanted to write a scene that broke hearts, I break my own heart. There are spots in the *Revenge of the Sith* novelization that make me a little misty eyed to this day.

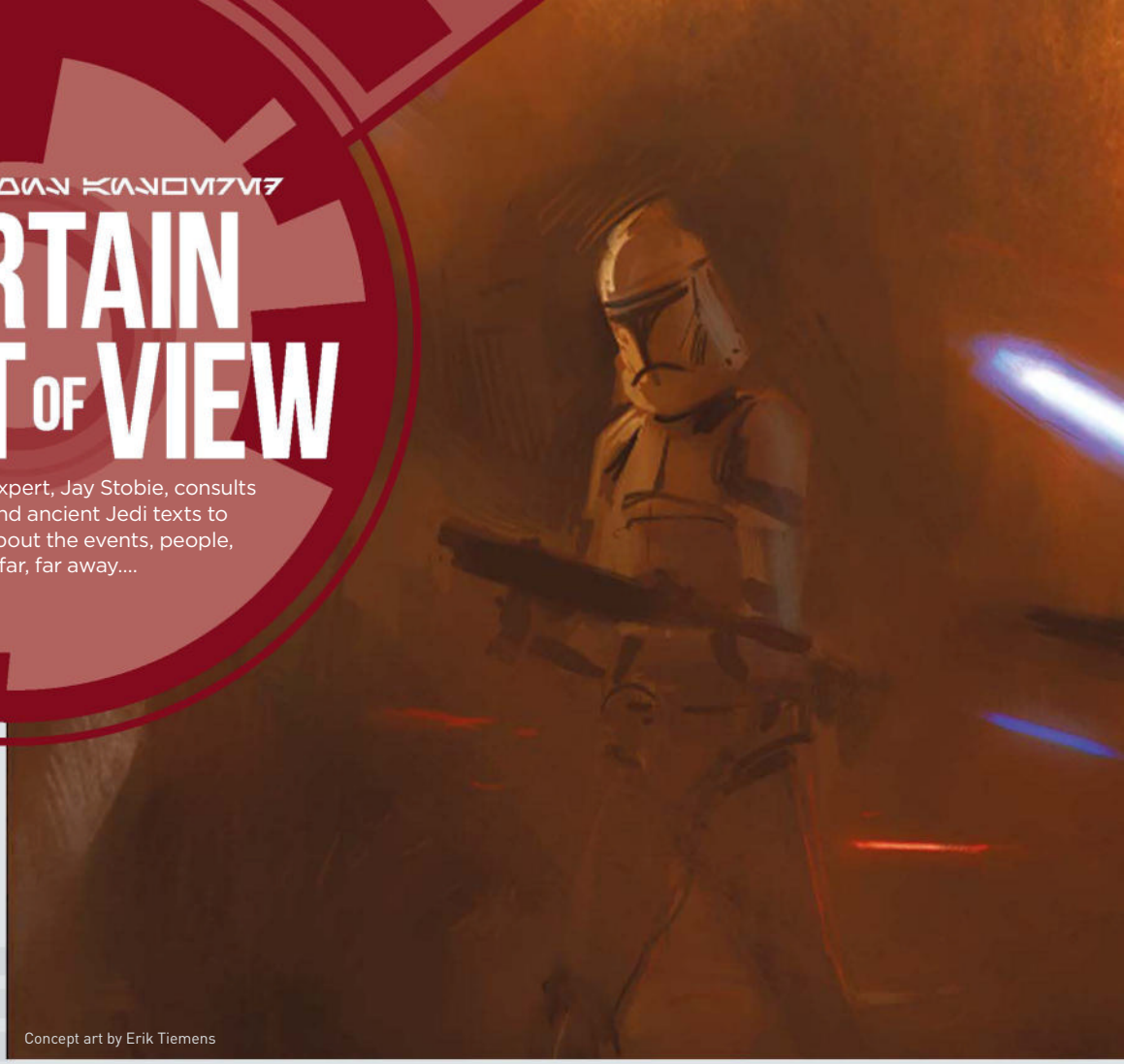
Do you have a grasp of the legacy of the novel, 20 years on from its publication?
Honestly, it's just an amazing thing that something I wrote means so much to so many people. When I was reading Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein growing up, those books were important to me. What I really wanted to do when I began writing was to write books that were going to be important to people, that they would *remember*. So far, that seems to be working.

The fandom has always been really kind to this book. It has been overwhelmingly positive and has always been spectacular.

***Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith: Episode III* (Deluxe Edition), featuring a foreword by George Lucas, is published by Random House Worlds on October 14.**

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 Erik Tiemens

"Why did the Clone Wars happen? Surely, the Separatists could have simply chosen to leave the Republic without resorting to force, considering this was before the rise of the Empire and, therefore, they weren't considered 'colonies'?"
Dr. Roy Jackson, USA

For the Separatists, the origins of the Clone Wars were fixed in genuine grievances that they levied against the Republic. Along with discontent over heavy taxes and the perception that the Core Worlds received favoritism, the planetary systems that eventually joined Count Dooku's Separatist movement often viewed the Republic as an ineffective government. Ironically, one only needed to look at Supreme Chancellor Valorum's woefully bureaucratic response to Queen Amidala's appeals about the Trade Federation's blockade of Naboo as an example of why leaving the Republic held such appeal for Separatist supporters.

Such discontent did not have to lead to war. However, Count Dooku seized on the Separatists' concerns to drum up the crisis to greater heights, proposing a new government and rallying systems to the Separatist cause. While some Republic officials, such as Senators Amidala and Organa, pushed for a peaceful approach, others advocated for the creation of a standing army to defend the

Palpatine's Plots

Nute Gunray



As the Viceroy of the Trade Federation, Nute Gunray was manipulated by Darth Sidious into invading Naboo. Although he evaded imprisonment, Gunray found refuge as a member of Count Dooku's Separatist Council, unaware that he had once again been lured into another facet of Palpatine's web of deceit.

Queen Amidala



Alarmed by the Trade Federation's invasion of her planet, Queen Amidala called for a no-confidence vote in Supreme Chancellor Valorum. While Amidala was motivated by a desire to save her people, she too had been duped by Senator Palpatine's scheme and unwittingly opened the door for him to be elected as the new Supreme Chancellor.

Count Dooku



Working in tandem with Palpatine, Count Dooku led the Separatists as they battled the Republic in the Clone Wars. However, Dooku also co-opted Master Sifo-Dyas's plan to raise a clone army on Kamino, ensuring that the Republic had a standing army to further Palpatine's plot to stoke the Clone Wars.

Republic. With talks of a potential Separatist threat looming, the atmosphere became so susceptible to conflict that the Battle of Geonosis was enough to spark an all-out war between the Republic and Separatists.

As natural as the progression of those events felt, there was another key factor at play—the undercover Sith Lord Darth Sidious, better known as Supreme Chancellor Palpatine who tipped the scales in favor of war. After orchestrating the blockade of Naboo to have himself elected as the leader of the Republic, he guided Count Dooku in stoking the Separatist flame *and* co-opting ▶



Master Yoda



Unbeknownst to Master Yoda and the Jedi, Palpatine instigated the Clone Wars, a struggle which forced the Jedi to become generals rather than peacekeepers. The dark tide of the ongoing conflict helped to cloud the Jedi Council's connection to the Force, ultimately allowing Palpatine to outmaneuver them and enact Order 66.

Anakin Skywalker

Palpatine befriended Anakin Skywalker at a young age, gradually using his influence to corrupt the Jedi and encourage him to explore the dark side. Not long after urging Anakin to execute Count Dooku, Palpatine succeeded in luring Anakin to his side as his new apprentice, Darth Vader.



the clone army that Master Sifo-Dyas had ordered on Kamino. By doing so, Palpatine essentially positioned both sides so that a conflict would be inevitable. With war breaking out at Geonosis, the chance for the Separatists to leave the Republic by diplomatic means had been lost.

Palpatine's Powerplay

Palpatine's ambition also kept the conflict going, as it afforded him the opportunity to amass more power for himself. Having a ready-made clone army prepared to clash with the Separatists' battle droids guaranteed that the hostilities would continue to rage, as did suppressing any renewed peace efforts. When Separatist Senator Mina Bonteri reconnected with Senator Amidala in an attempt to revive peace talks with the Republic, Palpatine ensured that Count Dooku arranged for Bonteri's 'mysterious' death. Of course, Dooku's involvement in Bonteri's assassination remained a secret, which allowed him to publicly mourn her loss while scuttling the peace process.

With this in mind, let us turn to your question about the Separatists' ability to secede from the Republic without force. Considering that the Republic was a democracy, the Separatists and their Republic counterparts *should* have been able to handle their differences without resorting to conflict. Concessions from either party could have led to an amicable separation or even brought the Separatists back into the Republic fold. Yet, unbeknownst to either side, a powerful figure was conspiring against them and



manipulating the situation. Whether before or during the war, Palpatine and his apprentice were always on hand to foil those who sought diplomatic resolutions to the Separatist crisis.

But, *why*? Why was Palpatine so very determined to plunge the galaxy into war? After all, at the conflict's conclusion, the Separatist and Republic territories were reunited into a single government, just as they had been prior to the grueling fight—but that government was no longer the Republic. It was the first Galactic Empire. From Palpatine's perspective, the Clone Wars were intended to enable him to accumulate power, replace a democratically elected government with an authoritarian regime, and—in a parallel plot—extinguish the Jedi.

With the Republic and Jedi Council gone, Chancellor Palpatine became *Emperor* Palpatine, and a Sith Lord ascended to rule the galaxy. Now free to do as he wished, the Emperor began to tighten his grip, continuing to purge Jedi survivors and pushing forward with the Death Star's construction so that he could do away with the Imperial Senate entirely. The war happened solely for Palpatine's benefit. So, perhaps the simplest answer to the question of why the Separatists weren't able to leave the Republic peacefully is this: Palpatine didn't want them to.

SEPARATIST CIRCUMSTANCES

32 BSW4:
Darth Sidious (alias Senator Palpatine) manipulated the Trade Federation into a blockade of Naboo. Although the Trade Federation was defeated, they went on to become a covert supporter of the Separatist Movement.

24 BSW4:
Count Dooku delivered the Raxus Address, a public repudiation of what he saw as the Republic's corruption. Dooku announced the creation of the Confederacy of Independent Systems and rallied other planets to become part of the Separatist Movement.

22 BSW4:
The Separatist Crisis boiled over into an open conflict on Geonosis, where a Republic force composed of Jedi and clone troopers clashed with Separatist droids, igniting the devastatingly destructive Clone Wars.

21 BSW4:
Separatist Senator Mina Bonteri championed peace talks between her government and the Republic. However, Bonteri was assassinated, an act which Count Dooku blamed on the Republic.

19 BSW4:
Following the deaths of Count Dooku and General Grievous, the Confederacy of Independent Systems finally met its end on Mustafar, when Darth Vader slaughtered the remaining Separatist leaders.

19 BSW4:
Supreme Chancellor Palpatine revealed a Jedi plot to end his life, and announced the Republic would be reorganized into the Galactic Empire.



Rebellious Tendencies

The Confederacy of Independent Systems and Rebel Alliance paralleled one another in the sense that they each challenged the status quo, and ultimately some Separatists even became rebels. However, while the Separatists rallied around legitimate critiques against the Republic, Palpatine's hidden influence was undeniable.

On the other hand, the Rebellion was a natural culmination of the galaxy's growing dissatisfaction with the Empire's authoritarian rule, ultimately coalescing from splintered factions. These bands of rogues differed greatly from the Separatists, who joined Count Dooku's cause on a planetary scale and included business entities, such as the Techno Union.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

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MAY THE 'GOURD' BE WITH YOU

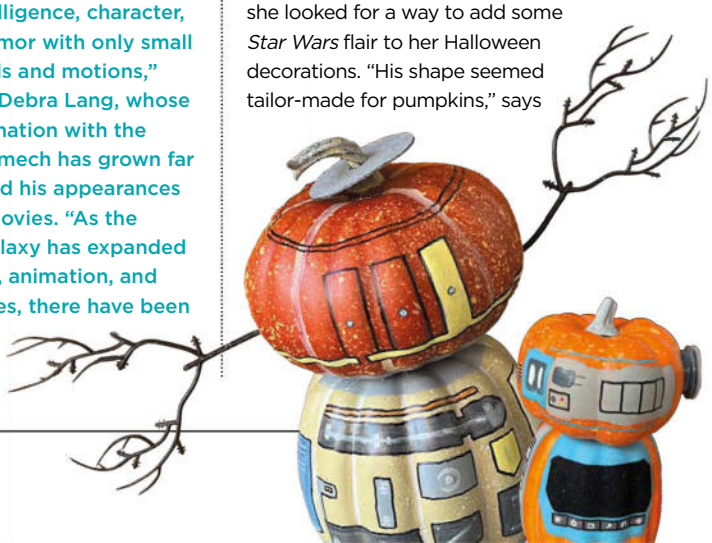
These are the pumpkins you're looking for





"Since the first time I saw *Star Wars: A New Hope* in 1977, I have been captivated by R2-D2 and how this small droid conveys so much intelligence, character, and humor with only small sounds and motions," says Debra Lang, whose fascination with the astromech has grown far beyond his appearances in the movies. "As the *Star Wars* galaxy has expanded through novels, animation, and live-action series, there have been new small droids that have built on Artoo's legacy and endeared themselves to me," she adds.

One such droid was BB-8, who sprang into Debra's imagination as she looked for a way to add some *Star Wars* flair to her Halloween decorations. "His shape seemed tailor-made for pumpkins," says



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Debra. "When they were young, my daughters and I would paint pumpkins instead of carving them, so taking inspiration from BB-8 was a great way to honor that family tradition," Debra adds. "I used a foam pumpkin and acrylic paint so he could be reused every Halloween."

Debra ultimately decided that BB-8 needed a friend, opting to expand her droid pumpkin collection by fashioning one inspired by R2-D2. "It's now become an annual event to add a new droid each year, and I enjoy studying images and playing with different techniques and pumpkin shapes to create something that represents each droid's unique personality," says Debra. "As I look at them all now, I can see what was special to me as a fan each year."



ARTISTS' ALLEY

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

01 "NEEL" AND "BAZIL" BY K.WOO

"I keep an ever-growing list of characters and images I enjoy from different fandoms, and each week I randomly choose a few to draw," says artist K.Woo. "*Star Wars* is a fandom I've been in forever, so it's represented a lot on the prompt list.





I always enjoy drawing characters from the *Star Wars* galaxy—there's so much variety and richness that it's a different experience every time, and it's an especially fun challenge to try to capture the personalities of the droids and creatures."

02 "YORD" BY DANIELE GAVERINI

Daniele Gaverini's interest in Yord Fandar began even before *Star Wars: The Acolyte* debuted on Disney+, as he was captivated by the character's appearance in the series' trailer. "I love the High Republic era a lot, and I liked Yord right away," Daniele explains. "Yord has a yellow lightsaber!"

Getting to know Yord over the course of the series also helped inspire Daniele's art. "Yord is a strong person, who is committed and always gives the best of himself, but he also cares greatly for the people around him. That's what inspired me to create this piece of art."



BOUNTY HUNTERS
Scouring the galaxy for the stars of *Star Wars*.

MANNY JACINTO: The Power of Two

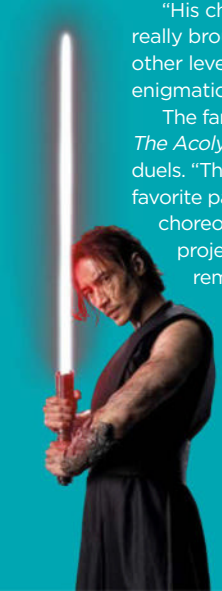


01 Ashla Stargazer (right) and Era Leighway (left) pose with Manny Jacinto (center).

"I am a passionate fan of everything *Star Wars*-related," says Ashla Stargazer, who visited a local convention with her sister, Era Leighway, when they heard that Manny Jacinto (Qimir and the Stranger in *The Acolyte*) was coming to town.

"His character and performance really brought the show to a whole other level," says Ashla about Jacinto's enigmatic, Force-wielding dark-sider.

The fan was particularly enamored by *The Acolyte*'s stunning and intricate duels. "The lightsaber battles were my favorite part, and some of the best choreography of any *Star Wars* project, in my opinion," Ashla remarks. "He told us how much he appreciated fan support, as he poured his heart and soul into the role. We will treasure our meeting with such a kind-hearted Sith."



02 Manny Jacinto as The Stranger in *Star Wars: The Acolyte*.



A COLLECTOR'S QUARRY

Taking *Star Wars* toys out into the real world



"*Star Wars* has been a part of my life since I was about six years old," shares Larissa, whose hobbies include toy photography and cosplay. "I recall sitting in front of the TV, eating peach pie with my mother as we popped a Blockbuster copy of *Star Wars: A New Hope* in the VCR and was told we could turn it off if it was too scary. Needless to say, the adventures of Luke, Leia, and Han hooked me into the franchise!"

Larissa eventually elected to pair her talents with the collection of Funko Pop! and Hasbro Black Series figures she had assembled in the mid 2010s. "I decided it would be fun to photograph these toys in various scenarios," she reflects, citing a trip to Ireland that included a visit to one of the huts made famous in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* as her primary inspiration. "I fell in love with the challenge of scaling the world down to make toys appear life-size. I also discovered there is a community of toy photographers online and have since joined under the name 'The Digital Toy Box.'"





Larissa observes, "Photographing toys is a wonderful creative outlet, and it doesn't have to be expensive. While dioramas and Photoshop look amazing, you can also photograph toys outdoors or use paper as a background. You can also buy toys used, giving a new home to a figure and supporting a small business in the process. Creativity, like the vastness of space in *Star Wars,* knows no limits!"



Larissa, photographed by Donald Bryan Holmes

THE STYLE STRIKES BACK

Scavenging secondhand garments to transform into cool *Star Wars* cosplay

For cosplayer Ceit Ryder, a lifelong enthusiasm for *Star Wars* began with her memories of the original trilogy. "I've been a *Star Wars* fan since I was a kid, when the original trilogy aired on television on consecutive nights. Our dad sat us kids down and said, 'You need to watch this!' And the rest of the summer we played rebels versus stormtroopers in the backyard," she remembers. "In high school, I found the novels and fell in love with the *Heir to the Empire* trilogy. I read all three in about a week and a half."

A passion for *Star Wars* films and literature ultimately inspired Ceit's own creative pursuits, particularly as they related to her costuming background. "Surprisingly, I was a costumer as a teen and in college but didn't cosplay *Star Wars* characters until after *Star Wars: The Force Awakens,*" she reveals. Ceit focused on Rey, saying, "I wanted to make the cosplay out of as many scavenged materials as possible, and that really started me along my path."





Since that time, Ceit has assembled countless everyday outfits and casual cosplays that are based upon various *Star Wars* characters, including Qi'ra from *Solo: A Star Wars Story* and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*'s Lyra Erso. "My goal with all of my cosplays is to use as many repurposed materials as possible," Ceit states. "I like to look for secondhand clothing that might be the right fabric, cut, and color and then use that. My favorite tool is my seam ripper, and I love ripping stuff up and sewing it back together in a new way."



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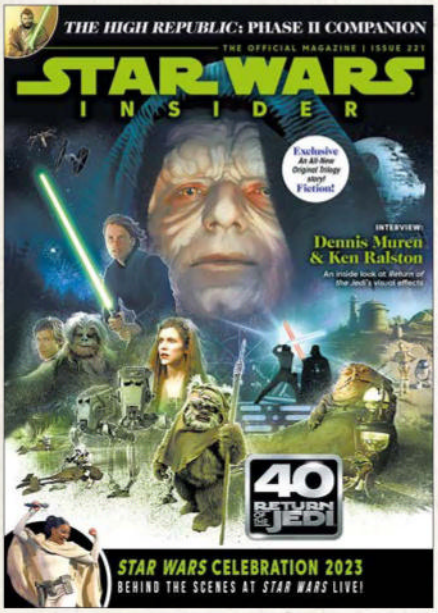
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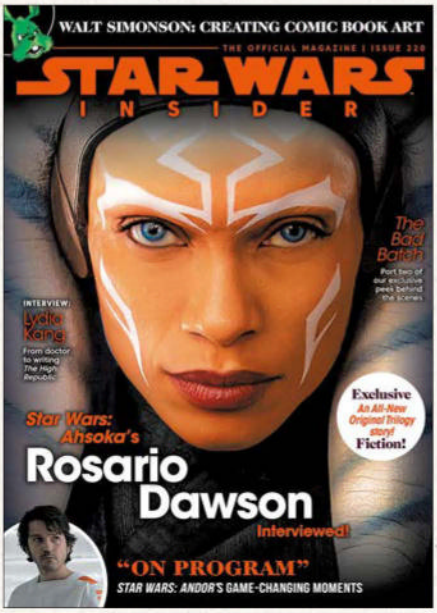
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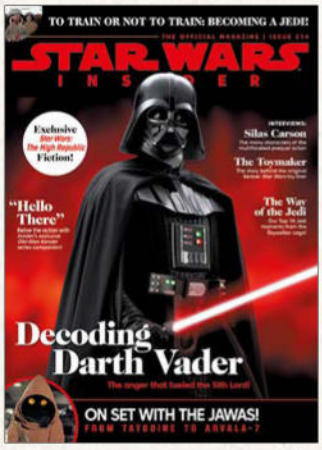














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STAR WARS
GALACTIC TALES

THE CRIMSON CORSAIR AND THE SINISTER SECRET OF THE BINARY STAR

BY LANDRY WALKER

"A traumatic backstory doesn't make you special. Everyone has one."

From the *Book of Hondo*

PRELUDE

In the darkness of his private chambers aboard the *Meson Martinet*, The Crimson Corsair considered his next move.

It was going to be a dangerous one.

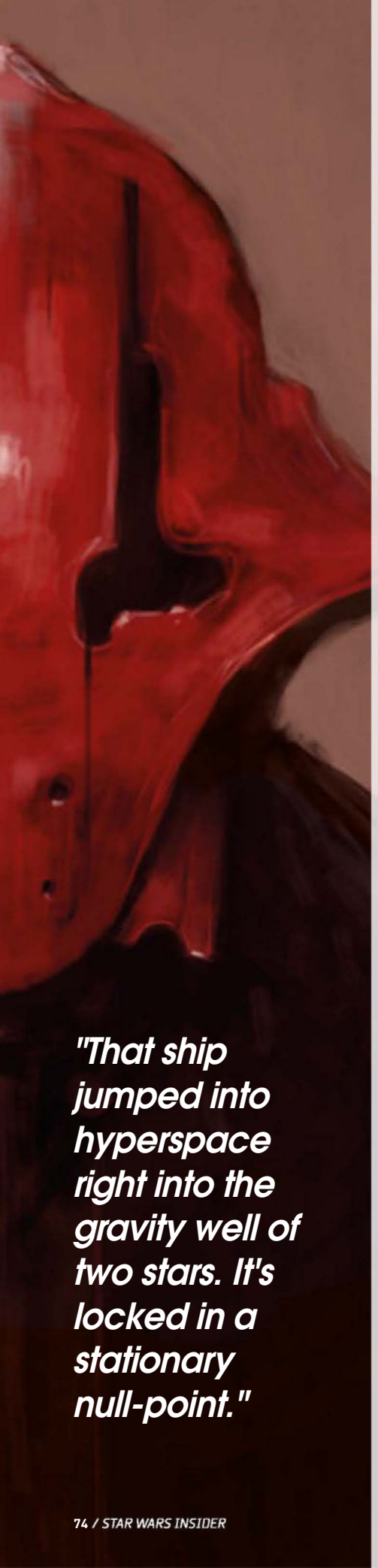
He studied the ragged and tattered star chart. It had taken a long time to track down the wizened old merchant, and it had cost a fortune to get the man to part with the document. But if it paid off, it would easily be worth it.

The thin leather map was faded and old. Several sections had been lost to time—the map dated back to the waning days of the Old Republic. But enough was readable. He could still make out the markings of various star systems and space lanes, all carefully etched onto the material. Better yet were the notes, made by several different hands in many different languages, over several dozen centuries.

Of the thirteen different locations where the Corsair—AKA Sidon Ithano—could find what he was looking for, some were no longer viable, lost during one battle or another. More were too dangerously placed, deep within a black hole or at the heart of a toxic nebula.

But one—only one of them—held hope. And better yet, an Imperial research ship had already tried to claim the prize decades earlier. Tried... and failed.

The Corsair felt the weight of his red Kaleesh mask against his face. He pressed a button and holo images flickered across his workstation. Images of his crew, with coded text detailing their individual profiles. They had served him well. All of them loyal. All of them skilled. His crew would serve as a great distraction for what he was hunting.



"That ship jumped into hyperspace right into the gravity well of two stars. It's locked in a stationary null-point."

MANY YEARS LATER…

"I don't get it."

The grumpy voice belonged to Quiggold, the Gabdorin first mate of the *Meson Martinet*. He was bleary-eyed and wearing a brightly hued fuzzy robe that he had won during a brutal game of sabbac at Port Potentate. It was softer than Corellian silk, and he had been saving it for a relaxing evening sipping a Ringali Sunset, listening to the 5th act of the M'ludic Requiem.

But now he was staring at an old, junked Imperial ship floating between two suns.

"That ship shouldn't be there," said Reveth, the Twi'lek engineer, running a scan unnaturally quickly with her cybernetic fingers. "Looks like it jumped to hyperspace right into the gravity well of two stars. It's locked in a stationary null point – balanced perfectly between two stars and..." She squinted at the viewscreen, her single red lekku twitching. "…judging by the early Imperial design? I'm guessing it's been stuck like that a long time."

Quiggold frowned. He felt the start of a headache. Gesturing at the holo-data he made his decision. "Let's maybe not tell the captain?" He looked at the ship again, it had been perfectly hidden. "I really just want a day off."

"Too late." Reveth nodded, indicating beyond the first mate's slumped shoulder.

Quiggold sighed, turning. There he was, Sidon Ithano. AKA: The Crimson Corsair. AKA: The Blood Buccaneer. AKA: The Conqueror of the Droid Syndicate.

The captain's expression was hidden behind his ever-present red plasteel helmet. But Quiggold was one hundred percent certain the Grim Marauder of Montalvia Mano was amused. That only served to irritate the Gabdorin more. But there was nothing for it. They were pirates, after all. And that old ship? It needed pirating.

"I'll ready the crew," he said.

Quiggold was the first through the docking port. The first mate sniffed disdainfully. The gigantic Gamorrean called *Na'Vrokk* (although everyone called him "Squeaky") came in after, snuffling and squeaking lightly with a bit more optimism.

"Pff." Quiggold shot back at the Gamorrean. "Plunder? It's an old Imperial ship. We'll be lucky to have a single spendable credit on board. The captain's off his game with this one."

Kix came through next, the clone's voice sounding distant through the modulator of his old war bucket of a helmet.

"Weapons. Medical supplies. There might even be rations." Kix said crisply. "This is a military ship. We'll need to be thorough."

Reveth followed behind. "And the nav computer might have data we could salvage. Kix, you take H8 and see if you can download anything. Be careful not to muck around with the engines. We're caught in perfect balance."

The former trooper was confused. "I'm the one with military experience. You're the tech. Why am I…"

Reveth shot Kix a wide smile as she headed down a corridor. "Because looking for things that blow things up is more fun than data screens. And I outrank you."

"Come on Squeaky," she added, grabbing the Gamorrean's arm. "I might need you to carry stuff."

"Outrank…?" Kix muttered; his voice filled with irritation as the pair disappeared. "I was a corporal in the army of the Republic!"

"Yeah," Quiggold said, not really caring. "That's this crazy galaxy for you." He shrugged. "I'm going to go break into the officers' quarters. Good luck with that data."

Then he was gone too.

Kix looked down at the last crew member—the modified mouse droid that was currently housing the memory core of a murder droid called H8-U411. H8 had been a dangerous assassin that tried to initiate a galaxy-wide purge against all living things. Reveth had salvaged the core and the voice modulator, rewiring them into a physically helpless MSE droid. For laughs.

"Move it, dimskug," beeped the tiny, box-shaped droid, aggressively but ineffectively butting his ankle.

Kix resisted the urge to throw the droid out an air lock.

Alone on the *Meson Martinet*, the Crimson Corsair sat at the engineering station. Reveth had run all the standard diagnostic scans, and then some. But that didn't stop the pirate captain from making a few adjustments—an unusual set of parameters far outside the normal spectrum.

A green light blinked on the screen. Exactly as he has expected.

The Corsair checked his blaster and sealed his breather line, and then opened the ventral hatch of the ship before stepping into the cold darkness of space.

Quiggold had a full-blown headache now. There was nothing valuable in the officer quarters. He ran a finger across a sealed door panel. Dead. But fixable.

From his gear bag he produced a jumpkit. Not elegant, but reliable. He wired it into the panel and hit the green switch. The portable battery kicked out a power surge, and for the first time in decades the ship hummed to life. The boost wouldn't last, but he wouldn't need long.

An alarm wailed and red lights flared. Quiggold winced. He hated emergency lights. They never helped, just showed up after you already knew you were in trouble. Like on Alderaan…

Quiggold paused. He hadn't thought about Alderaan in years. But now, suddenly, it was all he could think about.

Kix felt a sense of déjà vu. He had never served aboard an Imperial vessel, having been frozen in stasis before the Empire existed. Still, the ship's design was nearly identical to the old Republic cruisers he'd once called home. He closed his eyes...

He could hear them—his brothers, calling out commands, working consoles, alive again in memory…

Kix shook his head. It was gone. The Republic was gone. His brothers were gone. He was all that was left. Even his armor was salvaged Phase I gear, painted garish purple and red. He was a pirate now. The 501st used to hunt people like him…

His misery was interrupted by the sharp jab of the red-painted MSE droid ramming his ankle.

"Right," Kix said, resuming his scan of the bridge. "Sorry, H8."

"Useless flesh-creature." H8 beeped with malice. "Perhaps your tiny, fallible brain can afford to laze around. I, however, am programmatically required to fulfill our mission—one that depends on your regrettable participation."

Kix muttered something unrepeatable, then nodded towards the desiccated bodies on the command bridge. "No blaster marks. No battle damage." He gently moved a trooper slumped over the hyperspace module. The lever was only half pulled.

"Must be why the ship got stuck in the gravity well. Who knows where it would've ended up otherwise."

Kix shook his head. The corpse, clad in the white armor of the stormtrooper, wasn't that different from the clone armor that all his brothers wore. It brought back memories. Bad ones.

Squeaky shoved aside a couple of broken load lifters like they were made of paper, sending heavy droids clattering through old crates and sealed barrels.

Reveth winced. "We might have been able to salvage some of that."

"Squeee," the Gamorrean replied, in the mess of grunts and squeals that was the Gamorrean language.

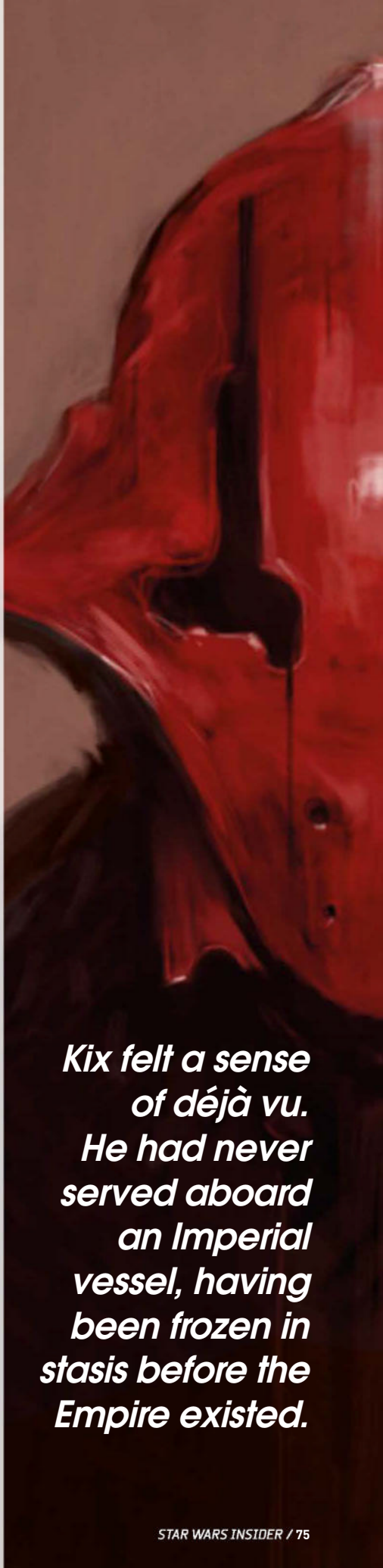
Reveth nodded and drew her blaster. As usual, Squeaky was right. She flipped down a yellow sensor lens and scanned the room.

"No life signs. No active droids. But I'm picking up weird energy waves." She frowned. "Could be solar interference?"

Squeaky's wide snout twitched. He sniffed the air. Something smelled familiar. With a sudden howl, the Gamorrean knocked Reveth clean off her feet. His nostrils flared.

It couldn't be, but it was—snoruuk stew with coolsap sauce and… roasted brognig!

Squeaky dropped to his knees, tongue drooling at the invisible



Kix felt a sense of déjà vu. He had never served aboard an Imperial vessel, having been frozen in stasis before the Empire existed.



Reveth watched the Gamorrean crawl around the deck of the ship, gnawing on half-ruined crates of who-knows-what.

banquet. The taste triggered a flood of memories. Squeaky remembered being back home in the lush forests of Gamorr, before the gladiator pits...

…before exile. Back when Uncle Lugh was alive. When he was Na'Vrokk, son of Vrokk, heir to the Bolgoink Clan.

A stupid smile spread across his tusked face. He bit into a frosted kwellowo and washed it down with a gulp of fermented suug juice.

He was home.

The Crimson Corsair clung to a small access port on the outside of the Imperial ship, protected from the vacuum of space by his modified Kaleesh helmet.

He tore the small durasteel hatch open in one fluid motion, letting it drift away in the vacuum. Inside, light blazed from the heart of the subluminal fuel cell array. Years of stored solar power cascaded like liquid, raw and inert.

Inside that light, something moved. Not mechanical. Not organic.

But alive.

Reveth watched the Gamorrean crawl around the deck of the ship, gnawing on debris from half-ruined crates of who-knows-what as if it was the best meal of his life.

"Hey!" she said, loudly, unsure of how exactly to interrupt a crewmate that suddenly started acting like a nerf-brained lurdo.

Reveth kicked the Gamorrean, but he didn't notice and instead grabbed a fresh fistful of something long rotten and slurped it down whole.

The Twi'lek engineer felt slightly nauseous watching the display, as watching someone eat garbage brought back unwanted memories of her own childhood hunger… she had been just ten years old…

… in the slave pits of Naos III, and all they were given to eat was old rycrit meat, still covered in coarse hairs. A strange cold feeling spread through her body as she remembered her mother was gone. The overseers had taken her away, and Reveth would never see her again.

She learned to repair the droids in the pits. That made her valuable. That kept her alive.

Kix remembered the war. The clone couldn't ever forget it really. But now the memories were flooding through him all at once.

He staggered and fell to his knees. A moment later his mind was somewhere else.

"Commander…" the clone gasped, staggering, pointing his finger at H8. "You… you sound like General Krell!"

The delusional clone yanked out his blasters and began firing, barely missing H8. Then, trembling, Kix grabbed the desiccated body of a stormtrooper and hauled it over his shoulder. Bits of crumbling armor and bone fell as he tried to revive the ancient cadaver.

"Tup! Tup, can you hear me?"

The clone suddenly sprang upright, firing into the walls. "We can't just leave!" he shouted. "Stop the ship! The enemy is in the hangar!" he added, dropping the corpse.

And then Kix was gone, blasters hot, racing down the corridor.

H8 spun his wheels. Clearly, the clone was under the influence of something—a psychotropic loop? An induced delusion? Whatever it was, H8 approved. Everything was going absolutely terribly. The droid felt a wave of joy. He'd love nothing more than to watch the crew die slow, agonizing deaths. Unfortunately, his programming required him to help.

Unless… he had a direct order.

He rolled to the hyperdrive controls, whistling cheerfully. The engines, still partially engaged, were the only thing keeping the ship stable.

Kix had shouted it clearly. 'Stop the ship!' he had said. That sounded like an order to the droid. H8 beeped with joy as a thin mechanical arm extended from his chassis. He grabbed the half-engaged warp throttle and pushed it to the off position.

The ship lurched. H8 felt the deck drop beneath him. The organic fools were almost certainly doomed now.

"This is the best day ever," H8 mused, wheeling after the clone in the hopes of witnessing even more misery before the fiery end.

Quiggold tried not to think about Alderaan.

But there he was, rocketing away from his cozy rooms at Cloudshape Falls. He had lived well there. Scamming the gullible stashing credits.

Then the Empire caught up with him.

He was on an Imperial prisoner shuttle, leaving cushy Alderaan for some lunar work camp in a remote system, guilty of "financial creativity." A lot of it. The ISB had frozen his accounts. He had backups, but first he had to escape prison.

Then a moon-sized space station called the Death Star jumped into the system, causing a sudden gravity well that sent the shuttle spinning, out of control. Sirens wailed. Red light flooded everything, and Quiggold felt himself slip away. Back to a very bad place.

Reveth didn't know how the Scarcovians had found her. But she was back on Naos III.

She was ten years old. She was running from the Imperial shipyards, cursing at the heavy collar they kept locked around her neck. The Y-wings roared overhead, dropping bright white bombs that struck the half assembled Imperial MTV-7s, obliterating the two wheeled land-rovers. Reveth felt her small body fly through the air – she had been too slow…

Na'Vrokk pulled his father's axe from the ashes of the pyre, holding it high above his head. Though he was only a child, he bore its weight well. His uncle placed a kind hand on his shoulder, and the younger Gamorrean knew it was time to flee. The Groogun soldiers would march upon them soon, and the Bolgoink clan lacked the warriors to defend against this dishonorable insurrection. If the young heir remained on the estates every Bolgoink would die in his defense, and that was not a price Na'Vrokk was willing to pay.

So, though his cheeks burned with shame, he ran.

The Corsair flinched as the creature lashed out psychically. It was a Starweird—a thing said to haunt the hyperspace lanes, these semi-corporeal spirits fed on fear, marked by waves of psychic disturbance: terror, rage, and sometimes unnatural pleasure.

Most importantly, the Starweird was distracted, feeding on the crew of the *Meson Martinet*, which meant that it wasn't ready for the Corsair, whose ionnite-lined helmet had masked his arrival.

Just as the Corsair had planned.

Kix ran down the corridor. The droids were everywhere.

He tore a grenade from his bandolier and hurled it into the enemy line. The explosion tore open a breach.

"For the Republic!" Jesse shouted, surging forward in his ARC armor.

"Suppressing fire - now!" Rex commanded.

Then everything turned to white. Kix felt the floor vanish beneath him. Rex and Jesse faded - burning silhouettes swallowed by shadow.

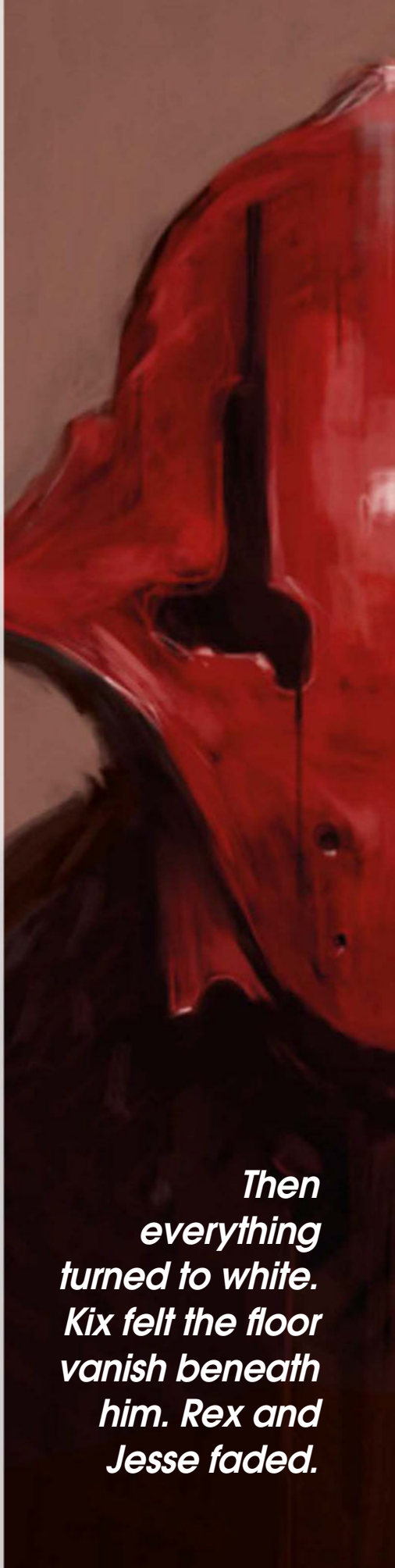
He staggered. A figure moved up behind him.

Tup? It was Tup. The chip in his head... The chip they all had in their heads…

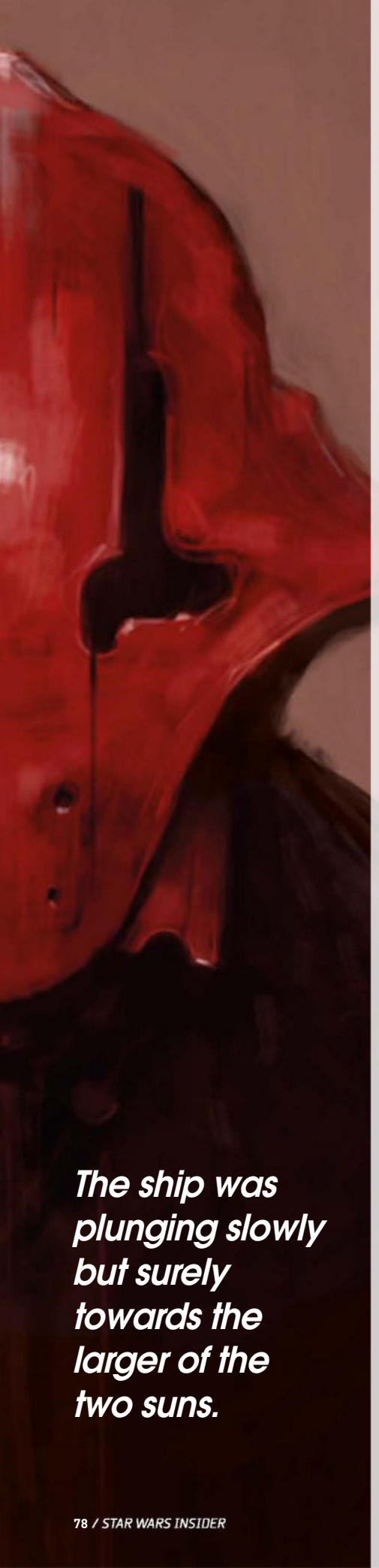
"Good soldiers follow orders," Tup said softly, placing a blaster in Kix's hand.

Quiggold had limped down the corridor, He knew if there were any survivors they would be in the hangar of the Imperial prison transport, though the ship seemed wrong. Too big. Too… something. Something was… wrong.

The pirate shook off the thought, reaching his destination. The hangar. He pushed his way inside and blinked. For a moment it looked like there were two others there—a Gamorrean and a Twi'lek—but then it was as he remembered, littered with dead and wounded Imperial guards. The Gabdorin grabbed one of the fallen, dragging the man out from under some wreckage. Had he time to reflect



Then everything turned to white. Kix felt the floor vanish beneath him. Rex and Jesse faded.



The ship was plunging slowly but surely towards the larger of the two suns.

on the irony—that he was saving the man meant to deliver him to a lunar prison—he might have laughed. But there was no time. And he didn't feel like laughing.

Alderaan was gone. The whole planet was gone. There were no more guards. No more prisoners.

Only survivors.

H8 spun in a happy little circle. The crew had all hallucinated their way into the ship's main hangar bay. Kix was firing at shadows, screaming *"Good soldier!"* with every shot. Reveth's own cybernetic arm was trying to strangle her. She was sobbing, speaking in the voice of a terrified child. Squeaky had climbed atop a cargo pod and was galloping in place, like he was astride some oversized mount. And Quiggold had dragged a heap of broken droids into a circle and was conducting a group therapy session.

Stupid, silly organics.

The droid raised his sensor antenna and pinged the nav systems. The ship was plunging slowly but surely toward the larger of the two suns. Perfect.

The little droid didn't care if he burned too. So long as he got to watch the Corsair and his cursed crew die first…

He paused.

Where was the Crimson Corsair?

The Corsair studied the Starweird as its mass of shady tendrils twisted in the light. It was an infant of the species. He recalled the warru'zan, the bloodhalls of Kalee, where the Kaleesh elders had indoctrinated him. He'd first read the legends of such creatures there, back when he was simply known as Sidon…

An involuntary flash of memory came in a burst: *the sacred rituals, the stormtroopers' arrival, the moment he donned the crimson mask of the trickster god Ithano…*

The Corsair shook off the effect of the Starweird. There wasn't time.

Reaching into the volatile fuel cells, he grabbed the writhing shadow and tore it from its solar nursery. The thing screamed with a raw, psychological force, but his helmet dulled the effect. He unslung the ionnite-lined canister he'd brought with him, forced the creature inside, and slammed the carbon lock.

The Starweird's insidious presence instantly vanished.

Kix marched alongside his brothers, but they had all grown mute.

He turned to Jesse and saw that beneath the clone armor there was nothing. The man he had known was gone, leaving only the ARC trooper armor, bone white, stripped of all 501st markings, hollow-eyed like a skeleton. It was the same for all of them. Dogma, Echo, Redeye, Thorn, Arik, Rex… every clone ever born. Empty suits of armor with blasters in their hands, their personalities erased.

Kix reached for his own helmet and pulled it off.

There was nothing underneath.

He was gone too. All that remained was a number.

And suddenly he was back on the Imperial ship, his breath coming in ragged gasps. Somehow he was in the hangar bay, standing in the shadow of a TIE fighter. The rest of the crew were there too—Squeaky slumped over a cargo pod, Reveth and Quiggold looking barely conscious…

"What happened?" Kix said as he checked the Gamorrean's vitals. Reveth was still fogged but Quiggold seemed more alert.

"I was on a prison shuttle," Quiggold muttered. "Don't send me back there…"

"My arm…?" Reveth said, rubbing her prosthesis.

"Listen," Kix snapped. "Something happened to us. We need to stay calm."

"The ship is crashing into the sun!" chirped H8-U411.

A golden light flooded the hangar as the larger of the Oreenda suns drifted into view through the bay doors.

Quiggold squinted at it and nodded solemnly. "Ah. Well then." He turned to the others. "I've changed my mind

about the moon. Send me back."

"You're all going to burn!" H8 added gleefully.

Kix's mind raced. The ship's escape pods had all been jettisoned. There was no obvious way out... unless...

"Into the TIE fighter!" Kix barked, grabbing one of Squeaky's arms and trying to drag him along. The semi-conscious Gamorrean whimpered a soft cry in response.

"We'll never all fit. And it doesn't have any wings!" Reveth objected.

"It doesn't have to fly!" Kix grunted, nodding toward the hangar exit. "If the thrusters work, we can launch out of the sun's pull!"

"And then what?" Reveth shouted, pulling Squeaky's other arm with Quiggold's help.

"I don't know!" Kix shouted.

The sun grew brighter. H8 laughed darkly. They weren't going to make it.

Then Squeaky came round. "SQUEEEAAAAAK!" he bellowed, taking in the situation. He grabbed his three crewmates and with a mighty heave hurled them all into the TIE fighter. Disappointed, H8 zoomed in just before Kix slammed the hatch shut.

"Squeeze in and hang on to something. This bird's gonna rattle."

Kix fired the engines and the wingless pod careened out of the hangar and into space, tumbling in a sickening spiral as it hurtled away from the burning suns. For a moment—just a moment—Kix thought he saw the *Meson Martinet*, with the Crimson Corsair standing on its hull, harpoon launcher in hand.

And then his world faded to black.

EPILOGUE

Sidon Ithano watched the Starweird as it pulsed and mutated within the containment field, its form convulsing as it impotently reached out for a mind to attack. After a moment, Ithano disengaged the field that nullified the creature's influence, allowing a sliver of telepathic energy to strike out—rage, sharp and ancient, clawing at his thoughts.

The Crimson Corsair stood firm. Ten seconds... twenty... thirty. He gasped and reengaged the device. Acceptable. Next time, he'd last longer. Fear was not an option.

Quiggold drained his cup of Tarisian ale, the warmth spreading to his toes as he leaned back in the galley chair. Across from him, Reveth worked on her cybernetic arm, fine-tuning the servos with a small tool.

"He harpooned us." The Twi'lek said, her voice cold.

Quiggold winced at Reveth's anger. He was still nursing a headache from the nightmares he had experienced, and at this point he really didn't want to think about any of it.

"Technically, he harpooned the TIE fighter we were in." Quiggold replied. But he knew he wasn't making a convincing argument—not to the Twi'lek and not to himself. He shrugged, changing course. "It was a bad mission. I know." He poured another cup and took a gulp, warmth spreading to his toes. "You know how the Captain is—always has to put on a show. Always has a plan."

Reveth flexed her mechanical hand. "At what cost? That wasn't a treasure hunt or a heist. That was a nightmare. He used us, like we mean nothing."

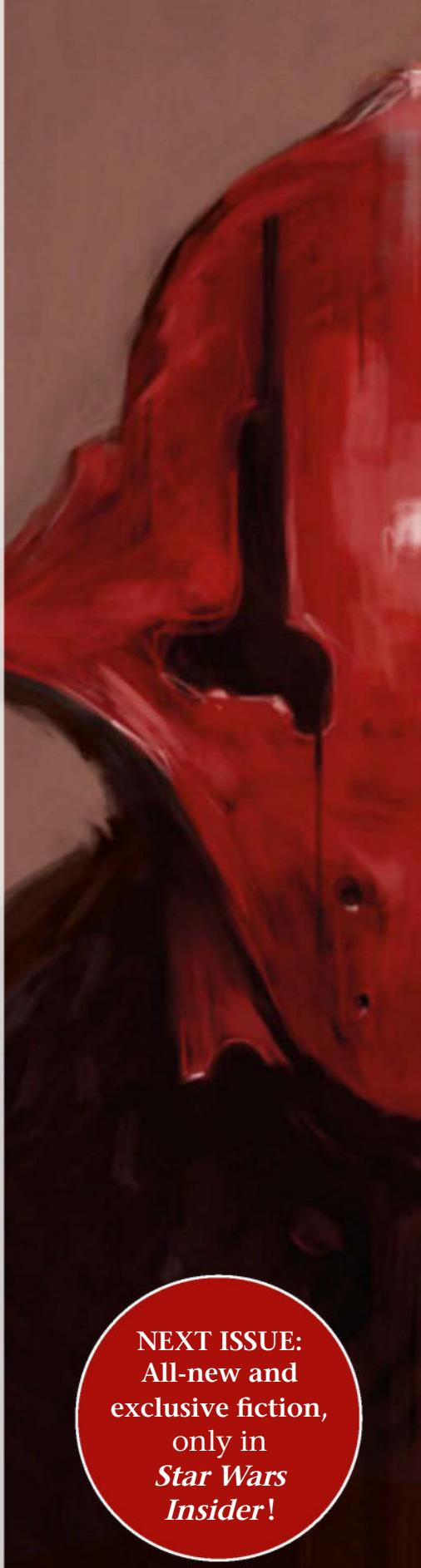
"We caught one of the rarest... *whatever* that monster is." Quiggold poured himself another cup. "That's valuable at least. We're in it for the money, remember?"

Reveth shook her head. "We've got battle droids. Ships. A stronghold, after we took down Woodring Meerou." She sighed, "We're a small crew. Used to be we'd just plunder a little. Have some fun. But now? It's like the Captain is getting ready for a war."

A shadow in the corner shifted. Kix looked up and took his helmet off. His eyes looked haunted, even more than usual.

"Maybe he is." He murmured. "Wars... they never really end."

The clone nodded at the ruins of the ship that floated in the cold space beyond the safety of the *Meson Martinet*. "Maybe we should all be ready."



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JEDI MASTER'S QUIZ

The gripping second season of *Andor* chronicled Cassian Andor's evolving journey as he grew to become a pivotal figure in the Rebel Alliance. Unravel the Empire's secrets in our *Andor* Season Two quiz.

Compiled by Jay Stobie

"YOU WANNA FIGHT? OR YOU WANNA WIN?"

Evade the Empire and answer these questions related to *Andor*'s second season.

CASSIAN ANDOR'S CREW

1: From which planet did Cassian steal an experimental Imperial starfighter?



A/ Ord Mantell
B/ Sienar
C/ Corellia
D/ Scarif

2: Where were Brasso and his friends hiding?



A/ Bursant
B/ Mimban
C/ Mina-Rau
D/ Tatooine

3: A vision of which Imperial torturer haunted Bix Caleen's nightmares?



A/ Doctor Gorst
B/ Emperor Palpatine
C/ Supervisor Blevin
D/ Darth Vader

4: What type of ship did Cassian use to transport K-2SO's salvaged body to Yavin 4?

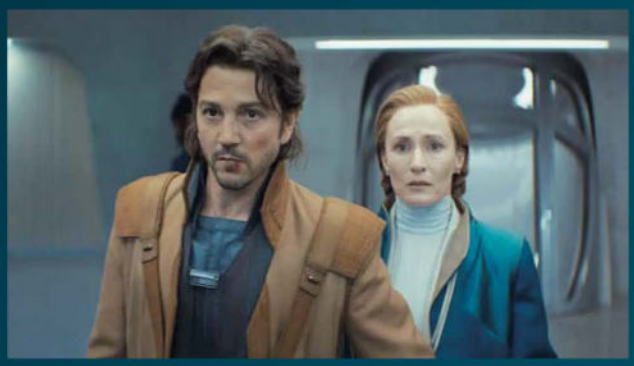
A/ *Lambda*-class shuttle
B/ Nebulon-B frigate
C/ TIE Avenger
D/ U-wing



5: After departing Yavin 4, where did Bix Caleen choose to live?

A/ Mina-Rau
B/ Ferrix
C/ Morlana One
D/ Kenari

LUTHEN RAEL'S LEGIONS



6: Why did Luthen Rael go to Leida Mothma's wedding?

A/ To enjoy Chandrilan hospitality
B/ To deliver a valuable gift
C/ For a secret rendezvous
D/ To meet new customers



7: What did Luthen attach to an antique in Davo Sculdun's collection?

A/ A listening device
B/ A manifesto
C/ An explosive
D/ A treasure map

8: Who did Luthen send to assist Saw Gerrera on D'Qar?

A/ Maya Pei
B/ Wilmon Paak
C/ Leia Organa
D/ Anto Kreegyr





9: Which event prompted Vel Sartha to leave Luthen for Yavin 4?

A/ K-2SO's capture
B/ Brasso's arrest
C/ Lonni Jung's murder
D/ Cinta Kaz's death



10: Why did Kleya Marki visit Luthen in the hospital?

A/ To cure him
B/ To interrogate him
C/ To remove his life support
D/ To help him escape

THE IMPERIAL SECURITY BUREAU



11: Which of the Emperor's initiatives did Director Orson Krennic discuss at the Maltheen Divide?

A/ Agricultural initiative
B/ Inquisitorius initiative
C/ Order 66 initiative
D/ Energy initiative

12: Why did Syril Karn accept a transfer to Ghorman?



A/ To marry a local
B/ To go undercover
C/ To locate his father
D/ To attend a funeral

13: What item did Dedra Meero bring to Luthen Rael's gallery?

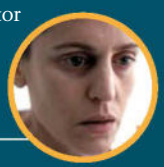
A/ A vial of coaxium
B/ An old lightsaber
C/ An N-S9 Starpath unit
D/ A wampa's tooth



14: Who accompanied the tactical team on its mission to capture Kleya?

A/ Supervisor Lagret
B/ Major Partagaz
C/ Supervisor Heert
D/ Colonel Yularen

15: What happened to Dedra Meero in the wake of Kleya's escape?



A/ Sentenced to prison
B/ Defected to the Rebellion
C/ Promoted to director
D/ Transferred to Dantooine

"REMEMBER THIS MOMENT!"

Uncover ten key terms from the second season of *Andor*.

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



ANSWERS QUIZ:

"YOU WANNA FIGHT? OR YOU WANNA WIN?"

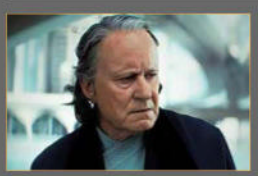
1. B, 2. C, 3. A, 4. D, 5. A, 6. B, 7. A, 8. B, 9. D, 10. C, 11. D, 12. B, 13. C, 14. C, 15. A.

"REMEMBER THIS MOMENT!"

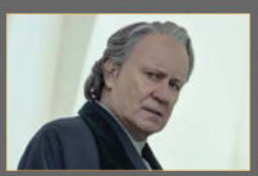
1. Dreena, 2. Coruscant, 3. Tay Kolma, 4. Rebellion, 5. Bail Organa, 6. Kafrene, 7. Senate, 8. Chandrila, 9. Rhydonium, 10. Eedy Karn.

HOW DID YOU DO?

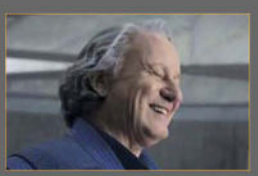
Were you able to spy the answers to our *Andor* season two questions?



0–9: This is a swell party, but you're not invited.



10–19: We're in a war. Train harder.



20–25: You're right here, and you're ready to fight!

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STAR WARS INSIDER



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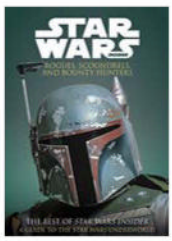
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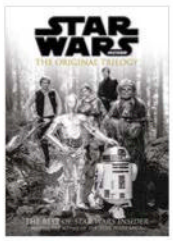
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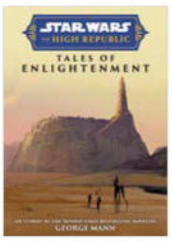
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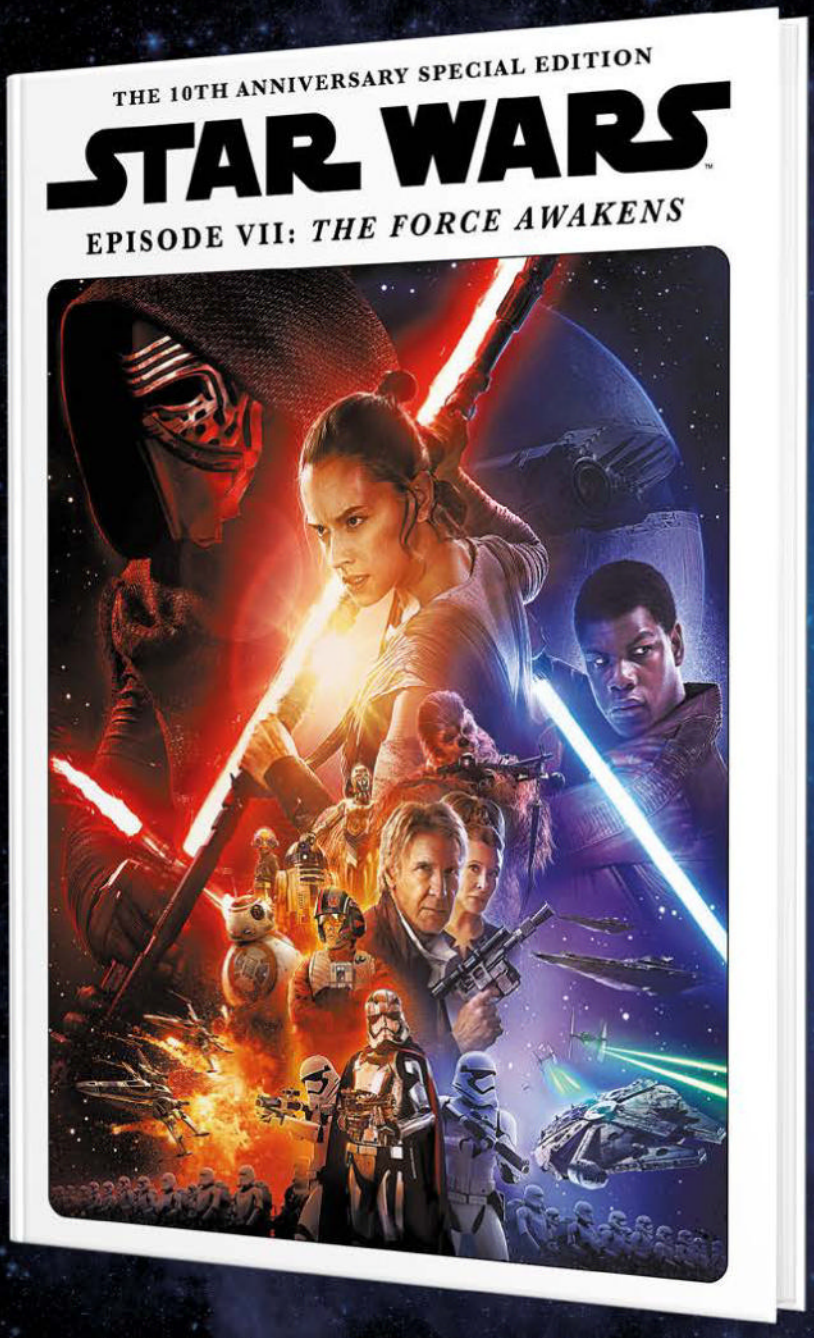
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