

# Reviews mixed on Lucas' \$55 million epic

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The world's most successful filmmaker and a legendary film company released a \$55 million cinematic gamble today with the opening of the medieval fantasy "Willow" amid less than fantastic reviews.

Sharing the bill at 1,000 theaters nationwide are George Lucas, whose "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones" films have grossed \$1 billion, and MGM, once Hollywood's greatest studio.

Both parties need a hit. Lucas-film has produced two expensive

flops, "Labyrinth" and "Howard the Duck." MGM is struggling to regain momentum after several reorganizations.

As a further complication, financier Kirk Kerkorian, who owns 82.4 per cent of the parent MGM/UA Communications, is seeking a buyer for the company. A "Willow" hit would enhance the price.

Early reviews have been mixed. Daily Variety termed the film "a

medieval mishmash" but predicted "kids will probably love it," and MGM should recover its investment. The Hollywood Reporter praised the production values but complained that the storyline "never really kicks into overdrive."

"For now, (Lucas) wonder wand is broken," reported Time Magazine, and Newsweek headlined its review with "The Raider of Lost Art." Meanwhile, People

Magazine called "Willow" an "over-produced jumble" and "a shrewd and shameless steal from the Bible, Walt Disney, his own 'Star Wars' and 'The Wizard of Oz.'"

Facing the blockbuster compe-

tion of "Rambo III" and "Crocodile Dundee II" on May 25, MGM prudently released "Willow" five days earlier.

"Willow" centers on the efforts of a brave dwarf to save a baby from the clutches of a sorceress queen who fears the child will destroy her power. The hero Willow finds allies in an over-the-hill knight and a pair of mischievous brownies.

There are no major stars in the film, which features Val Kilmer ("Top Gun"), Joanne Whalley, Jean Marsh and 19-year-old Warwick Davis as Willow.

Depending on "Willow's" box office success is a massive merchandising campaign. More than

30 companies have been licensed to manufacture such items as "Willow" underwear, bed sheets, lunch boxes, meal promotion at Wendy's, coloring sets, toy action figures, computer and board games, magic tricks, records, tapes and compact disks.

"Willow" resulted from a long-time friendship between George Lucas and actor-turned-director Ron Howard. They met 15 years ago when Lucas directed "American Graffiti," with Howard as one of the principal actors.

Lucas was just out of USC Film School, directing his first major film under the sponsorship of his friend, Francis Coppola. Howard had been an actor from the age of five, working mostly in television

series such as "The Courtship of Eddie's Father" and "The Andy Griffith Show."

A couple of years ago, the two young men had another meeting. Now Lucas had become one of the two (with Steven Spielberg) most successful filmmakers in history because of his "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones" films. And Howard was a topflight director of such films as "Splash" and "Cocoon."

Howard recalled their conversation in a recent interview:

Lucas: "I'd like to do a fantasy."

Howard: "That's something I'd like to do."

Lucas: "I've always wanted to

do a story that centered on a little person."

Howard: "It sounds like I'm trying to get a job here. That's something I've always wanted to do, too. I've always been intrigued by the idea of taking a little person or the relationship of two little people and developing it so that 15 or 20 minutes into the picture you'd forget completely that the person was small."

"Willow" was the result, with Lucas creating the story, Bob Dolman writing the script and Howard directing.

Among the director's many chores was preserving believability in the unworldly happenings: "Fantasy works best when everyone involved in a project —

writer, producer, director and certainly the actors — believe what they're doing and try to be as honest as possible," Howard said. "Unless you're doing a satire. And early on, George and I decided we didn't want this to be a satire.

"The actors really had to trust that it was okay to look at a talking animal and play a scene just as if that creature was an important character in your life. Gee, they all really committed to it. That's the only way you can make a movie like this one."

Shooting locations for "Willow" ranged from the glacial mountains of New Zealand to the craggy cliffs of Wales, with interiors in London.

# 'Willow' is getting a bum rap as a flop

## Is Lucas' 'Willow' really a turkey?

By Ben Yagoda  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Why were people so quick to label *Willow* a flop?

It may be because of George Lucas' envy — the film was conceived and produced by Lucas, whose take from the *Star Wars* trilogy ensures that he'll

### FILM

be rich a long, long time from now. Or it may just have been because of the headline possibilities: "*Willow* the Wisp," "*Willow* Weeps," etc., etc.

But the box-office returns from the movie's first four weekends are in, and *Willow* — a story of queens and witches, little people and warriors, is not a flop.

Although it slipped from first in gross to third, then fifth and now stands at eighth, it has taken in \$30.6 million — nearly recouping its \$35 million price tag, although by one estimate it must earn \$90 million to make a profit.

Exit polls taken by organizations unconnected with the film show that people who see *Willow* are satisfied with it; the film shows signs of stabilizing as a steady summer audience-draw.

Word of mouth may yet outweigh critics, like one who called *Willow* a reprise of *Star Wars* except for "a baby obsession suggesting an unholy alliance of *Lord of the Rings* and *thirtysomething*." Others said it is a movie stuffed with borrowings from the Old Tes-



Warwick Davis stars in George Lucas' current summer film *Willow*.

ament, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Peter Pan*, *Mad Max*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Snow White* and *the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Odyssey*, *The Wizard of Oz* and, most of all, *Star Wars*.

"I'm derivative, but I read where *Gambo III* is 're-working the genre,'" Lucas said wryly in an interview the other day. "When someone says you're 'The Great Regurgitator,' it's painful."

Lucas didn't say so, but it's especially off the mark to consider *Willow* a box-office bomb when you take a look at some of the turkeys that really deserve the designation.

Not long ago, the entertainment weekly *Variety* published a list of every big-budget film made in the last 30 years showing the price tag, the proceeds and hence the profit or loss.

The data need some explanation. The budget given is only the cost of completing the final cut of the film; it excludes money spent for additional prints, promotion and advertising. And the income is only from domestic box-office rentals; it excludes foreign box office, television and home video rights and licensing fees (an especially important

source of revenue for *Willow*, with its \$1.99 devil dogs, \$3.99 warriors on horseback, and its sticker books, jigsaw puzzles and lunch boxes.)

Still, these figures are probably the best available gauge of how well a film has done. Here's what they say are the biggest money-losers of all time, starting with the 10th-worst bomb:

10: A tie, with a net loss of \$25 million each: *Return to Oz*, the immediately forgotten 1985 sequel to the 1939 classic, and *Dune*, an ill-fated meeting of the minds among David Lynch, Dino De Laurentiis and Frank Herbert.

9. (\$27 million). *Superman IV*, the latest and — if there's a God — last attempt to squeeze water from Kryptonite.

8. (\$27.4 million). *Enemy Mine*, the odd science-fiction picture that starred Louis Gossett Jr. as a space lizard.

7. (\$27.5 million). *Once Upon a Time in America*, spaghetti Western auteur Sergio Leone's gangster epic. (This film, like some others on the list, recouped some of its losses in the foreign market.)

6. (\$29.2 million). *Raise the Titanic*. This 1980 turkey sank faster than the ship.

5. (\$30 million). *Pirates*. It was Roman Polanski's idea to cast Walter Matthau as a swashbuckling buccaneer. Bad move.

4. (\$35 million). Who could forget *Heaven's Gate*, Michael Cimino's unintelligible Western? Probably the most critically dumped-on movie of all time.

3. (\$37.6 million). *Ishtar*, the most recent member of the list, shows what happens when you take a small comedy and make it a star-crossed extravaganza.

2. (\$38.1 million). *The Cotton Club*, Francis Coppola's foray into the history of Harlem and jazz brought in almost \$13 million at the box office. But it cost \$51 million to make — more than the annual budget of many medium-size countries.

1. And the biggest flop of all time is . . . *Inchon*. Ring a bell? This 1982 war film, featuring Laurence Olivier as Douglas MacArthur in a spectacular piece of miscasting, cost \$46 million to make and raked in \$1.9 million at the box office. The film was financed by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon; you have to sell a lot of roses to make up \$44.1 million.

Net loss isn't the only way to judge "flopitude." Maybe a purer measure is what might be called the Embarrassment Factor, or EF: the percentage of a movie's cost that it earns back at the box office. By this gauge, the 10th-biggest flop of all time is *Lookin' to Get Out*, a woeful Las Vegas comedy starring Jon Voight and Ann-Margret, which earned a million dollars on a budget of \$17 million, for an EF of 5.8 percent.

It's followed by the 1969 *Waterloo*, a De Laurentiis fiasco featuring Rod Steiger as Napoleon (5.6 percent); and a tie between the alarm-

ingly bad Michael Keaton vehicle *The Squeeze* and Luciano Pavarotti's dismal movie debut *Yes, Giorgio*, (both 5.5 percent).

Tied for fourth are *Honky Tonk Freeway*, a John Schlesinger road picture that went nowhere; *Heaven's Gate*; and *Inchon*. In third place is *One from the Heart*, Francis Coppola's woeful Las Vegas comedy (3.8 percent); *Pirates* (3.2 percent)

is second.

The most embarrassingly unsuccessful movie of all time? It's *Eight Million Ways to Die*; which cost \$18 million and brought in only \$500,000 for an EF of 2.7 percent. I'm afraid I can't tell you what it's about. I didn't see it, either.

*Material from the New York Times News Service is included in this report.*



DEBBIE REYNOLDS & CARRIE FISHER

DEBBIE REYNOLDS AND  
CARRIE FISHER

Debbie Reynolds is *both* star and star mom, since her daughter, Carrie Fisher, is now a star in her own right. Both women are strong, feisty—and survivors. To understand how they got that way you have only to meet Debbie's own mother, Maxene Reynolds.

Maxene, with her outspoken, non-nonsense views of life, was always the backbone of her family. The Reynoldses were very poor, yet Maxene managed to eke out a living on her husband, Ray's, small earnings as a carpenter on the railroads.

When Debbie went into show business, Maxene toured with her daughter and is proud of Debbie's honesty and professionalism, but complains she is too trusting. Of show business she says bluntly: I couldn't give you two cents for any of the industry. They do make big money, but there's no privacy. You

couldn't pay me to put up with the trash they put up with!"

Not that Debbie Reynolds is a push-over. She is a trooper and has inherited Maxene's formidable strength. She needed it to survive the breakup of her marriage to Eddie Fisher, which took place amidst a blaze of publicity when Carrie was just a year and a half.

Carrie's legacy from her is, Debbie says, first her life, second her humor ("Carrie is extraordinarily glib"), third her ear. "Naturally she and Todd have a father, although not a good one. He had no influence on the children, but they were born with his vocal prowess."

It is Debbie's view that Carrie grew up so overprivileged in the material sense that she ended up not privileged at all, but underprivileged instead. She is sure that being the daughter of "America's Sweetheart" gave Carrie an identity problem when she was growing up and is only thankful that with the success of the *Star Wars* films, the focus has shifted to Carrie.

Debbie's unsurpassed maternal moment came at a party when Carrie, 14 at the time, introduced her mother to her contemporaries in this way, "I'd like you to meet my parents."

"That was parents with an 's,'" Debbie reiterates, "and that was the ultimate compliment. I had to leave the party because I started to cry. Parents with an 's.' I thought that was quite adroitly stated." ★

## Cinefile

River Phoenix joins the cast of Steven Spielberg's "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" currently filming in Europe for Lucasfilm. . . .

Producer Gary Kurtz makes his directorial debut in Winmill Productions "Feathers," a Harvey-esque yarn of an illustrator whose bird creation comes to life to provide him with sage advice. Mark Hamill stars for producers Chip Miller and Dennis Winfrey.



Crowds line up at Mann's Chinese Theater to see "Willow."

## 'Willow' No 'Star Wars' but No 'Duck,' Either

By NINA J. EASTON,  
Times Staff Writer

Executive producer George Lucas was in Spain readying Indiana Jones' latest escapades when his big-buck, high-tech, fantasy epic "Willow" opened Friday.

Director Ron Howard spent the evening viewing his creation—along with hundreds of surprised moviegoers at Loew's Tower Theater on New York's Upper East Side.

And MGM/UA Chief Executive Officer Lee Rich sat in his ninth-floor Beverly Hills office counting dollars. "It's like waiting for election results," he said.

Rich wouldn't admit to any anxiety, even as the first reports from

the East Coast trickled in on Friday. By early Saturday, he was claiming victory.

"Ah, it's fantastic," Rich said in a telephone interview from his home. "I'm just delighted."

Despite a lukewarm—and in some cases openly hostile—critical reception, the first screenings of Lucas' \$35-million "Willow" attracted respectable crowds nationwide and around-the-block lines at some Los Angeles theaters. Moviegoers at more than 1,000 theaters across the country paid about \$2.5 million to see the film Friday and \$3.4 million on Saturday, according to sources. Total weekend receipts were expected to reach between \$8 million and \$9 million.

"Those numbers are good," said  
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one industry observer. "It's not a blockbuster, but it's not a 'Howard the Duck' either." Lucas' \$35-million "Howard the Duck" was a box-office disaster.

"Willow" is the opening shot in a fierce competition for the summer movie-going dollar, and both MGM/UA and "Star Wars" creator Lucas have a lot riding on it. After his earlier involvement with two expensive flops—"Labyrinth" as well as "Howard the Duck"—Lucas could use a hit. MGM/UA put up about \$20 million of the film's \$35 million in production costs. That price was steep by industry standards. Special effects like translucent fairies, two-headed dragons and 9-inch human creatures don't come cheap.

Rich said the company already has locked up \$15 million in various advances and guarantees. But the company is pouring many more millions—at least \$6.6 million in the first 10 days alone—into marketing the film, according to company officials.

If Lucas was expecting a replay of the response to his acclaimed "Star Wars" series, when teen-age fans lined up with their sleeping bags days in advance of the sequels, he would have been disappointed with this weekend's opening.

About 50 parents and their children were already in line two hours before the 11 a.m. show at Hollywood's Mann's Chinese Theater on Friday. There were still about 200 tickets left for the 1,400-seat theater's first Friday-night show. The 8:30 p.m. show at Loew's Tower East theater in New York on Friday night was just about sold out when Ron Howard arrived. But the 6 p.m. show was less than half full.

"The attendance is very poor, to tell you the truth," complained theater manager Charles Imam. "Maybe the critics are affecting the turnout, and word of mouth will improve things."

Negative reviews clearly took their toll on the early shows. In New York, where the Post called the film "standard stuff" and the New York Times described the movie's "understandable weariness," a man in a cab pulled up to the curb and motioned a theater manager over to the car, wanting to know if the movie was as bad as the reviews suggested. Finally bucked up by the manager's assurances, he popped right into line.

But a spot check of Los Angeles-area theaters found that audience reaction to the film was

# 'WILLOW': Lucas-Howard Film Opens Well in L.A.-N.Y.

ASSOCIATED PRESS



*"Willow" director Ron Howard signs autographs outside a theater in New York City.*

overwhelmingly positive. At Westwood's Mann's Village Theater on Friday night, a sold-out crowd booted the evil Queen Bavmorda, laughed at the bantering of the 9-inch "Brownies" and applauded the dwarf Willow's final success at sorcery.

When it was all over, 7-year-old Josephine Shabtai, her brown eyes wide and glowing, looked as if she had fallen under the Lucas spell. "Fantastic," was all the little girl could utter as her mother guided her past the popcorn stand and out of the theater.

MGM/UA is marketing "Willow" as a family film, and it was clearly a big hit among the PG crowd. "I liked the fantasy and all the unreal stuff," said Brendan Klinger, 13, who saw "Willow" in Sherman Oaks on Friday night.

Added his friend, Blue Lieberman, 12: "It was like a game of dungeons and dragons. My friends would definitely like it. Even my girlfriend."

In Lakewood, 10-year-old Kelly Harrison called it the "cutest movie I've seen in a long time." Twelve-year-old Anne Marie Mays was so impressed with the special effects that she'll urge her friends to see it. And 9-year-old Kary Watson decided that the film was "really cool. I liked it because it was frightening."

With so few family films coming to theaters this summer, the film's popularity among children is a bonus for its makers. But because children typically buy less-expensive tickets, it also means that MGM/UA will have to collect many more ticket receipts to cover the film's steep production and marketing costs.

Moreover, some theater owners worry that both adults and those blockbuster-producing teen-agers will be turned off by a fantasy story about a dwarf's struggle against an evil queen.

Glen Dunks, 30, was growing reluctant to buy a ticket as he watched children pour into a Saturday matinee in New York. "I didn't think it was a children's movie. But seeing all the children go in, I don't know . . ." he trailed off. Finally deciding that he liked George Lucas enough to chance it, Dunks said he'd try to sit in the balcony smoking section, far away from any restless kids.

In Hollywood, Dennis Adler, the father of an 8-year-old, liked the film but added that "it's geared more to kids. The special effects are designed to enthrall a young mind."

That kind of reaction is disconcerting to some theater owners. "The film is being accepted with families—grandmas, grandpas and children," said Angelo Porchetta,

vice president of Capitol Service Inc., which owns 25 screens in Milwaukee and Madison, Wis. "But so far it doesn't seem to have much of a teen, dating interest. Regrettably, I think it is going to lack enough interest among older kids to be a big success."

But many teens did like it. In Los Angeles, Lucas fan Scott Austin, 17, bought the book "Willow" several months ago and then persuaded

a group of his friends to join him at the film's opening Friday night in Westwood. Both he and his friends loved the film. "It was way better than 'Star Wars,'" said Valerie Kurete, 17. "This seemed more realistic."

Likewise, Tom Rose, 16, said he didn't think reviewers gave the film a fair shake by saying it concentrated too much on special effects and not enough on the characters.

And "Willow" has something else going for it among the teen crowd—the scruffy but heroic Val Kilmer as Madmartigan, who gave what The Times' Sheila Benson called a "fine, lusty performance." Sixteen-year-old Sara Prator of Lakewood put it another way: "Val Kilmer was gorgeous."

The real question now is whether "Willow" can maintain any of the

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momentum that it built by opening five days before two potential blockbusters: "Rambo III" and "Crocodile Dundee II."

"That's when we'll see if 'Willow' has legs," said one industry source.

*Contributing to this story were Dennis McDougal and Sue Martin in Los Angeles and Bill Diamond in New York.*

Crystal gazing: Billy Crystal plays half of the title roles in Castle Rock's "Boy Meets Girl," to film in August. Director Rob Reiner describes the story as "what men and women go through to fall in love." Nora Ephron wrote the script (formerly titled "Isn't It Romantic") and we can hardly wait to see who plays "girl." . . . Bruce Dern is an ex-Marine who takes a decidedly military approach to ridding his neighborhood of an unbelievably boorish new resident in Universal's dark comedy "The 'burbs." Dern joins equally harried neighbors Tom Hanks and Carrie Fisher. Starts next month.

"At that point my peers were all gay male dancers. I wanted to be accepted. I wanted to be a gay male dancer."

**Carrie Fisher,**  
recalling the period of her  
adolescence that she spent in  
Las Vegas

George Lucas' "Willow," opening May 20, may be wending its way onto the list. *Business Week* puts its budget at \$40 million; *Wall Street Journal* says it's \$35 million.

□



Ufgood the dwarf: our hero (Davis), his patient wife (Peters) and their children

## The Empire Strikes Out

WILLOW Directed by Ron Howard; Screenplay by Bob Dolman

"It was a time of dread," reads a legend at the start of George Lucas' new epic. Surely it was. We speak not only of the dour Middle Ages in which this sword-and-sorcery film is set but of the late 1980s, when Lucasfilm hit its dark age, after nearly a decade as the most profitable dream-mongering empire in movie history. By 1984 Lucas had produced five of the eight all-time top grossers. But that was a long time ago, in a land far, far away. Lucas' fantasies went murky (*Labyrinth*) or smirky (*Howard the Duck*), and his empire suddenly looked as frail as King Lear's. So Hollywood is closely watching Lucas' \$35 million gamble on *Willow*. But will moviegoers watch? To a genre weakened by formula and familiarity, Lucas has brought little new, just a reprise of his *Star Wars* plot and characters in sylvan gear. His Luke Skywalker is Willow Ufgood (Warwick Davis), a dwarf in a community of dwarfs, a young farmer put in charge of the infant who is destined to deliver his land from the terrible rule of Queen Bavmorda (Jean Marsh). On his journey to Castle Nockmaar, he acquires a few worthy friends and foes: an outlaw warrior in the Han Solo mold (Val Kilmer), a dashing knight with Lando Calrissian's righteous swagger (Gavan O'Herlihy), a willful princess with martial guile (Joanne Whalley), a Yoda-like wizard (Billy Barty), an ancient sorceress—Obi-Wan Kenobi's kid sister, perhaps—struggling under a curse (Patricia Hayes) and a couple of impish brownies reminiscent of Artoo Detoo and See Threepio.

These characters were not new with Lucas, of course; they spanned epic literature from Ulysses and King Arthur to the *Lord of the Rings* and *Gormenghast* tri-

gies. But *Star Wars* gave a high-tech polish to the rustic hardware, a kick to the old eldritch machinery. Alas, a decade later, everything new in Lucas' films seems old again. There is a shroud of inevitability, of why-bother, about *Willow's* chase through the forest (done better in *Return of the Jedi*), the impromptu ride down a mountain on a warrior's shield (done better in *The Living Daylights*), on the whole tussle of light and dark. The only twist here is that the crucial tug of wills is between two women, the good witch and the bad, over a female messiah. One matriarch fights another in an apocalyptic biddy war.

Any Lucas film will have vagrant charms. Davis is ingratiating. So is Julie Peters playing his wife, as patient as Penelope. Director Ron Howard (*Splash*, *Cocoon*) gets the social politics of the dwarfs' village right, but he is not adept at action scenes: some are too busy; others are botched. Kilmer tries hard in a role that might have fit Mel Gibson like an iron glove, and Whalley, teen angel of the serious British mini-series (*The Edge of Darkness*, *The Singing Detective*) is wasted as the heroine. Both Kilmer and Whalley, in fact, are curiously irrelevant to the climactic battle. But then, *Willow* is a *Star Wars* without star quality, an *Indiana Jones* adventure with the heart ripped out.

"Magic is the bloodstream of the universe," goes the refrain in *Willow*, but the blood is tired this time. The old legerdemain may save a kingdom, but it can't save this movie and, maybe, the fantasy genre. The man who soared on the zeitgeist can sink when it changes. George Lucas has worked his magic before and surely will again. But for now, the wonder wand is broken.

—By Richard Corliss

# 'Star Wars' creator resting but not exactly taking it easy

By JAY BOYAR  
Orlando Sentinel

"Star Wars" update: George Lucas seems to get more work done when he's on vacation than a lot of people do when they're working full time.

Lucas is best known as the director of the first "Star Wars" movie (1977) and the executive producer of the second two films in the trilogy, "The Empire Strikes Back" (1980) and "Return of the Jedi" (1983). After the release of "Return of the Jedi," Lucas was said to be exhausted and looking forward to a long rest.

But the film maker seems to have his own definition of resting. Since "Return of the Jedi" was released, Lucas has served as an executive producer of "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" and has been designing several rides for Walt Disney World and Disneyland. He is also the executive producer of "Captain Eo," a 12-minute, 3-D movie to be shown at the Disney parks next year.

"I'm not as intense as I was when I was doing 'Star Wars,' but at the same time I'm not retired or anything," Lucas said in a recent telephone conversation. "I'm doing a lot of projects, but they're more controllable."

Another project on Lucas' agenda is the continuation of his "Star Wars" series. He said plans currently call for creating two additional trilogies. When these films are added to the "Star Wars" features he has already made, the grand total will be nine "Star Wars" movies.

The second trilogy, which



Director George Lucas, right, has been getting a lot of work done while on vacation, including a project with Francis Ford Coppola.

AP

will be Lucas' next "Star Wars" project, will be a prequel to the existing trilogy. (The third trilogy will be set after the trilogy already released.) At the time "Return of the Jedi" opened, the next "Star Wars" installment was expected to be ready five years later, in 1988. Lucas now believes that it will take longer to get the first film of the prequel, trilogy produced, though just how long he could not say.

Lucas said the prequel will feature many of the same characters from the existing trilogy, but

that they will be approximately 40 years younger. In this second trilogy, we will see Darth Vader and Ben Kenobi as young Jedi knights. The characters will be played by different actors than they were in the existing "Star Wars" trilogy, said Lucas.

And what about R2D2 and C-3PO, the lovable droids who virtually stole the show in the "Star Wars" series? Surely we haven't seen the last of them.

"I really haven't decided yet," said Lucas.

KNT News Wire

# The Airy Atmosphere of 'Willow' Land

By SHELLA BENSON,  
*Times Film Critic*

**W**illow" (citywide) is a perfectly agreeable tale of magic, little people, heroic warriors, babies among the bulrushes and a wicked queen who must be overthrown lest the world be engulfed in evil. If it evaporates from memory with the airiness of a bubble bath, at least it leaves a friendly glow and a sense of a magical world lovingly evoked.

"Willow" suffers by being known as the long-planned project of George Lucas, its executive producer, who chose Ron Howard to direct and newcomer Bob Dolman to write from Lucas' own story. Any movie in the fantasy vein with the Lucas stamp on it comes with a heavy load of expectation.

If you're taking a little hand-holder to this concoction, you may be relieved to find that it's not a ponderous dead weight, like "Krull," of thudding memory. But for all its charm and considerable invention, "Willow" is never going to insinuate itself into the world's unconscious like "Star Wars."

The Lucas fervor is here, that amazing ability to create worlds of imagina-



*Val Kilmer, left, and Warwick Davis star in George Lucas' "Willow."*

tion and sustain them with a combination of guile and glee. But the unique "Star Wars" edge—sophistication enough for adults, wonder enough for kids, effects enough for both—is softened and sweetened here, whether by the presence of another director or not is hard to say.

The adventures befall Willow Ufgood, a staunch little Nelwyn, one of a miniature race of farmers and miners. He's played by a dauntless 3-foot-4 1/2-year-old, Warwick Davis, who a few years ago was busy acting inside a furry Ewok suit in "Return of the Jedi."

Despite his years, Davis somehow

manages to be convincing as a husband and father and, best of all, as a living example to young children that not all derring-do has to wait until you're big. (Davis may also have the most beautiful hands of any screen actor since John Barrymore.)

Feelings vary, but over in this corner, when the final battle is in full swing and the treacherous Queen Bavmorda (Jean Marsh) is zapping lightning bolts around like some accident in Thomas Edison's lab, the tendency to yawn becomes almost overwhelming. On the other hand, every minute spent in the world of the Nelwyns, who have the charm of all Seven Dwarfs at once and the Munchkins, too, seems to rush by. Adventure-hungry kids may find it just the other way around.

It's Willow's tiny children who start things. They bring home a basket they've rescued from the river, containing Elera Danan, which is not some new variety of yogurt, but a red-haired baby girl who, by prophecy, will bring down the empire of Queen Bavmorda. Although he'd much rather stay safely at home, Willow dutifully sets out to take this baby back to the land of the Daikini, the big people.

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# 'WILLOW': Airy Climate in Latest Lucas Fantasy

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And so the adventure is off and loping. Next on the scene is a sort of low-rent warrior, Madmartigan (Val Kilmer), who fits right into the Han Solo/Harrison Ford tradition of scruffy heroes-in-spite-of-themselves. Kilmer's physicality and his humor are nicely balanced, making Madmartigan a fine, lusty performance. He's joined by a pair of 9-inch special-effects Brownies, Rool and Franjean (Kevin Pollak, Rick Overton), who seem to speak pure Billy Crystal.

The Darth Vader this time is General Kael (Pat Roach) in a toothy skull mask, while the Queen's daughter is herself a warrior, the red-haired Sorsha (Joanne Whalley), whose feats soon catch Madmartigan's eye.

If adventure movies have progressed at all since the days when men and boys did it all, it's in characters like Sorsha and the benevolent magician Raziel (Patricia Hayes). This sorceress has to change into a half-dozen animal forms before she can shake a particularly nasty spell of Baymorda's, but her final, proper incarnation is as a woman in her 70s, old

enough to know *everything*. It's a refreshing switch on that relentless ingenue, Glinda the Good.

As always, the look of the picture is impeccable--the Nelwyns' houses, igloo-shaped huts with a faintly Mediterranean look to their plaster walls, are set in a wonderfully inventive Renaissance Pleasure Faire village (Marin County ways die hard). There are a few fearsome inventions, like those hounds from hell, the Devil Dogs, and the costumes, the makeup and the hairdressings seem especially fine. (This is probably the first time Billy Barty went entirely unrecognized, and Val Kilmer's wild, braid-

ed hair may start yet another trend.)

But we're grasping at straws here. By the end, "Willow" (MPAA-rated PG) is all roaring monsters being flung about castle walls and duels to the death in Baymorda's chambers... time for the adults to grab their hats and beat a quiet retreat.

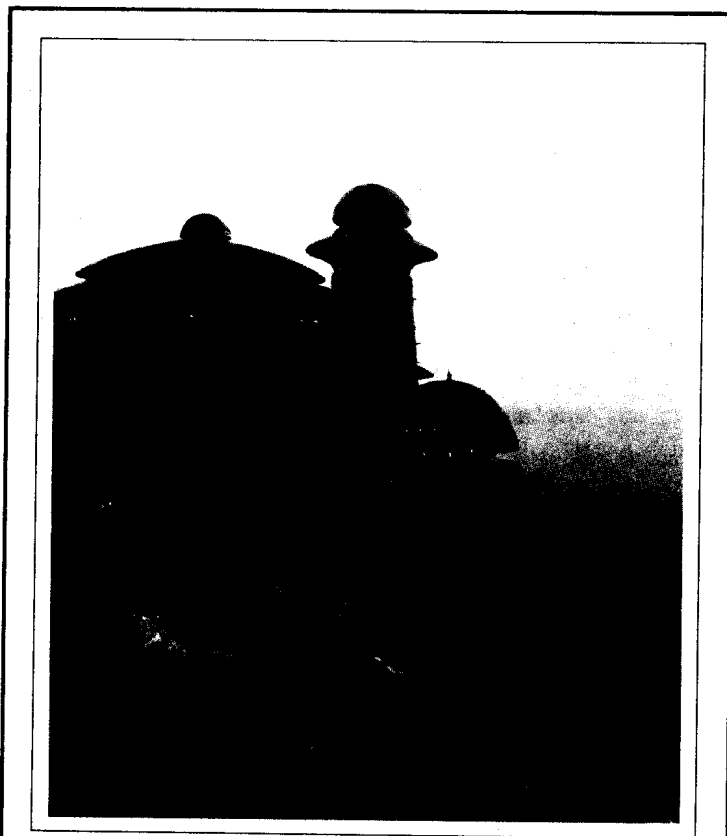
It's too bad, since Lucas so clearly wants his films to do good and to carry positive messages. Willow and Madmartigan very nearly bring it off, but in the end they're engulfed as effects overwhelm character and this slim story.

## 'WILLOW'

A Lucasfilm Ltd. film presented by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Executive producer George Lucas. Producer Nigel Wool. Director Ron Howard. Story, Lucas. Screenplay Bob Dolman. Music James Horner. Camera Adrian Biddle. Production design Allan Cameron. Associate producer Joe Johnston. Visual effects Industrial Light & Magic, Dennis Muren, Michael McAlister, Phil Tippett. Special effects supervisor John Richardson. Costumes Barbara Lane. Editors Daniel Hanley, Michael Hill. Chief makeup artist Alan Boyle. Second-unit director Micky Moore. With Val Kilmer, Joanne Whalley, Warwick Davis, Jean Marsh, Patricia Hayes, Billy Barty, Pat Roach, Kevin Pollak, Rick Overton, David Steinberg, Gavan O'Herrily.

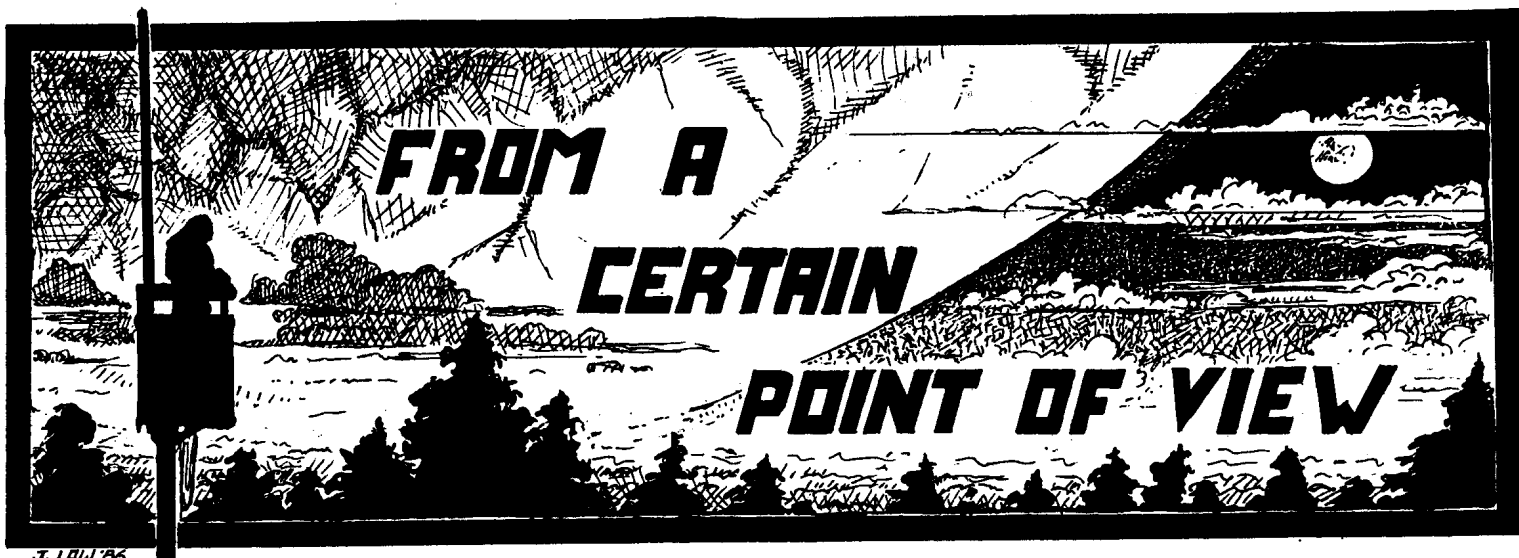
Running time: 2 hours, 5 minutes.

MPAA rating: PG (parental guidance suggested)



# Tatooine





J. LOW '86

Ming Wathne  
437 Via Roma  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110

March 7, 1988

Well, the faster I go, the behinder I get, but at last I have the use of the typer, so here is a letter.

Lin Ward: The temptation to use or misuse power—Luke was tempted to use his power, but he questioned his right to do so. Vader obviously did not.

As far as Yoda taking everything in stride, after 900 years, I doubt he would be surprised at anything.

Debbie Kittle: Well, there were no little labels stating open or close. Unless you have a schematic, hot wiring on anything that is not as simple as a car can be chancy—trial and error sort of thing.

Melanie Gutierrez: Hopelessly in love with SW, join the club! I guess I can't say I am exactly a new fan any longer. My first LoC is dated '86. But I am not really an old fan either—some of my zines are dated in '79. I know exactly how you felt about the bottom dropping out of the SW

world. The greatest thing to remember is WE ARE SW! If we keep it going, it won't die, in spite of Lucas, STARLOG, or anyone else!

Maggie Nowakowska: Agree with you about the war chief parallel. The peculiarity of a military organization is the necessary need of having both the extremely regimented (in the Air Force, the Blue Angels—exact discipline is critical here) and also the more or less "seat of the pants" originals (Pappy Bowington's Black Sheep of WW2). I would gladly leave the coordination of managing both to someone else.

Dr. Mary Urhausen: Well! A bunch of nuts! Come on, Mary! SF fans have just as tight a grip on reality as the Sports Nut, the Stamp Nut, the Boating Nut, or the Golf Nut. In my estimation, chasing balls around, or getting soaked to the skin in an icy wind, or paying huge amounts for little pieces of paper could really qualify as Nuts—if I cared to qualify. If you enjoy a hobby and hurt no one in the process, who can or has the right to criticize anyway?

Melanie Rawn: In our part of the country, we don't have mirrors or heavy pictures over our beds or seating places. Living in Earthquake Country gives one a very different view about interior decorating. My method to soothe nerves is to listen

to John Williams.

Matthew Whitney: Agree with you about the female competition in "N" stories. Replace the female with a male and do away with the competition.

Catherine Churko--and Ye Editor: Aw, come on now, how come one of the best plastic surgeons was a woman, one of the best astrophysicists? There were women doctors, dentists, mechanics, nurses, druggists, cooks and dress designers. And the foremost expert on Technicolor was a woman. They were homemakers and mothers also, but let's not go overboard on stereotyping. Some things were off limits, but not as bad as is sometimes depicted.

Now, as for the Force talent, I think it was something like singing. Some people could be prima donnas, some could hardly whistle.

Jim Blaes: The Zine Library set its own rules--and while I might have wished it otherwise, I was happy enough to get what I did. It was a terrific help for my zine collection (I am pushing 300 at this time). I am very grateful to the people who took their time and spent their energy to do this.

Carolyn Golledge: Hi, mate! Re the forest fires--well, not all forests burn at the drop of a torch. Many types of vegetation are really somewhat fire resistant. It has been well documented that in pre-white man days, the Indians cleared the underbrush in the redwoods by setting the brush afire. These fires burned the underbrush but seemed to do little damage to the trees. And the rather peculiar Bristle Cone Pine must actually be exposed to fire in order to seed.

Sigh--enough for now. Have to give the typer back to the secretary before she kills me.

Peace in the Force.

April 22, 1988

See--said I'd get another letter to you. Whether on time, well that's another matter. Now...

Carolyn Golledge: Come on', mate, Han's got to have the Force. Not the same way Luke has. It's different, like the differences between singing and humming.

Catherine Churko: My rescue missions are for Millennium Falcons and others. I now have a Vader without cape and saber, a nude Luke, a Boba Fett who can't stand up, and two Imperial fighters and three Millennium Falcons--all very sad refugees from a swap meet or trash bin; and some day, ah,

some day, we get repaired...

With you, I too thank all the authors--editors, and artists who have continued to make SW live. I love to read SW (either that or I am a masochist, since I now have over 325 zines. And I scream very loudly when I miss progression and will even resort to a mild form of Black-ma--(better skip that). So thank you, all authors, editors, artists and poets and puzzle makers for the many hours of enjoyment you have given me.

Barbara Gardner: The quakes! It's all the Dark Lord's fault, but I'll get my revenge. I'll put itch powder in his armor.

Jim Blaes: Well, the great creator of all initiated life. I believe in a soul, even if I've never seen one; whether a clone has a soul is something I would not reasonably care to determine. You could really get involved in whether a soul starts at conception, and what happens to the soul when the body dies? The fact that conception as such was artificial would not necessarily rule out a soul, but even the Emperor and Vader probably had souls, if perhaps not very pleasant ones.

Chris Callahan: The so-called "feminine" idea that grew out of the '60's was about as valid as saying all women have black hair. Biology and economics mandated much of the so-called sexual behavior on both sides. Many of the so-called freedoms of today are simply because of the fact that progress is being made in controlling child bearing and child care. In reverting to a national type of modified tribal existence for child care, women are free to do other things, as they no longer have the responsibility of caring for the offspring, while the male provides the wherewithal to keep the family going. The reaction to Leia under the foregoing society would be expected. It is society that often dictates sexual roles and technology that often changes the society. Control child bearing, and you change society. Personally, I think Leia is one heck of a woman.

Sarah Cohen: Hello and welcome. A new fandom fan and only six hours away. I like that.

Melanie Rawn: What's in a name--well, if you have a regular name, you generally want something more exotic. If unusual, something more common. It often depends on how much static you had in school. As for a person's private universe, yeah, I like mine, too. Yet I get such a charge out of all the others. One of my greatest fantasies is what would happen if Carolyn Golledge and Pat

D'Orazio wrote a story together.

Melanie Guttierrez: I am not the mystical, mythical type. An adventure--certainly. A human adventure with good and bad, kind and mean, self-ish and caring. The Force is just another source which is stronger in some than others. I agree with you about Lucas whole-heartedly--them's my feelings exactly.

Cindy Rodriguez: Well, I don't believe in a grand chess master, so my comments really would not have any validity.

Barbara Brayton: Han was not stupid for chasing down the Death Star corridor. Han had not lived as a smuggler for 10 years (this seems to be the general estimate) by being stupid. He did the unexpected and it worked--the troopers did retreat. In a tight situation, one can't always work out a game plan before acting.

Lin Ward: No, Lin, I don't think Vader became unbrainwashed. Palpatine and Vader were much alike--power hungry. The difference: Palpatine was a sadist; Vader was not. Vader wanted Luke because Luke was "his," not just another Jedi.

Maggie Nowakowska: Maybe some don't talk about the Fan dirty linen, but, Maggie, I do loud and long. A thief is a thief, and a dead beat, a dead beat. If they have a reason for their actions, let us know. Otherwise, be prepared to take the flack of those actions publicly.

Dr. Mary Urhausen: You have seen "slash" fiction. Where? Where!? I have seen only one story, and, for that general type, it was generally well done. Some rather obvious holes in the story, but not as ridiculous as most of the type. Being a Fan Zine Fan who practically absorbs stories through my skin, I would like to see some of this material others have "seen" or "heard" about.

Bev Clark: I like your hypothetical situation. The only difficulty I see is how does that jibe with the scene in the Ewok village where Luke and Leia talk about Leia's "real" mother? The part about Obi-Wan not knowing about Leia's ability! I think certain Force talents were sex-related and Yoda's reference to another did not necessarily refer to Leia. His statement about another Skywalker was only to tell Luke he was not alone. In the Force, the talents of the male and female were quite different.

Deborah Kittle: Yeah, the Star Tours, it is great. I too hope for a repeat trip and I want those posters also. And why do I get this vague

impression that you also are a Han Fan addict? As for the snow, I love to see a picture, but you can have the actuality. I definitely will take Tatooine instead of Hoth.

Well, Cheree, hope this gets to you in time. Til next time, peace in the Force.

## Must Read

Roseann Magda  
PO Box 11328  
Chicago, IL 60611

March 22, 1988

I missed the deadline again for a letter to SE, but I've decided that, rather than winning the "under the wire" award for 18, I'll be early for 19.

SE has been on my must-read list for several years. It's the best way to find out what's happening with both the professional and fannish SW worlds. It's held to SW and not been swayed to other momentary fads. Unfortunately, that's happened to many people in SW fandom.

Thanks for printing the articles about the reunion in L.A. and Richard Marquand. It shows what happens when you miss a couple issues of the newspaper--I didn't even know Marquand had died.

I enjoyed reading about the L.A. SW get-together. It sounded like a terrific weekend. One of life's remaining innocent pleasures is a good wallow in SW, and I'm sorry to have missed the chance to do it.

It was interesting to see, in the latest two issues, how many people talked about the "death" of SW fandom. It seems like there has been a shake-out of sorts in SW fandom. Several of the early hard-core fans have burned out. Long-running, well-known zines have folded. A great deal of the early drive and excitement has faded. As a long-time fan, I've seen it and wondered at the causes.

I believe there are several reasons why SW fandom may have bottomed out recently. The first, and most obvious, is the lack of fresh material

from Lucasfilm. Fen are still hoping that the series will be continued on film, but George Lucas has not shown any great desire to resume work on the saga. The most realistic hope fans have is that Lucas will overspend on Skywalker Ranch and be forced to return to the Saga for infusions of major cash.

Lucasfilm demonstrated its lack of interest in SW by disbanding the Star Wars Fan Club after several years of profitable organization. This excellent method of maintaining and/or re-igniting interest in the movies has been completely abandoned.

Nor have publications been forthcoming from Lucasfilm. No more Han Solo or Lando Calrissian books, nor anything else about main characters. Some fans have expressed a desire to see Lucas' legendary nine notebooks of background material published. If this appeared, it would certainly stimulate greater interest and excitement. However, I don't think we'll ever see them--first, because I doubt they exist, and second, because (assuming they do exist), Lucas is not interested.

What does this all mean to fandom? It means easy access to material has been closed off. It means there is no definitive word being handed down from atop Skywalker Ranch. It means that fans will have to reach within themselves to perpetuate the Saga.

Some fans have been perpetuating the Saga since 1977. For 10 years, they've reached within themselves to present their dreams, ideas, and products of their imaginations in print to us. In 1988, many of them are burned out. Some have acquired families, homes, new or better jobs, and have had to decide what was really important in their lives. No person can be faulted for that. The result, though, is a lull in major fannish activity.

All this has led me to wonder, reluctantly, if SW fandom is dying a natural death. A few recent issues of SE made me wonder if I was a prophet before my time, since every other letter seemed to be asking the same question. Then I read that a STARLOG article had prompted the debate. Well, hearing that STARLOG started it all was reassuring. I dropped my subscription a few years ago when the editor made some comments I thought were sexist and demeaning, and lost all respect for the publication then. So, if STARLOG said it, it was probably wrong.

Secondly, seeing all the letters in the last

issue of SE was very reassuring. Several people wrote to say that they were new fans and had just discovered SW. Hurray! New blood!

So, thank you, neofen, and all you long-time fans, for helping to keep SW alive. And, especially, thanks to you, Cheree, for keeping up with SE. You've managed to keep it lively, informative and mind-boggling. I especially love it when people write in with all their scenarios and/or explanations. I'm continually amazed at their imagination and thoughtfulness. Every back issue is covered with penciled-in comments along the margins. Even re-reading years-old issues, I still get blown away. Thanks to all of you, SW isn't just alive, it's growing and expanded.

((Ed: Thanks for a king-sized egoboo, Roseann! But I can't claim any credit except to putting SE into the form you get it! There wouldn't be a letterzine like SE if it weren't for all the people who read and contribute to it! You guys are the real stars!))

## L&L's Mother

Marti Schuller  
415 S.E. Annette  
Lee's Summit, MO 64063

March 30, 1988

Hello, everyone. I really enjoyed this issue of SE and can't tell you how much I've come to look forward to each new issue already. Cheree, you are a very admirable lady to accomplish so much--wife, mother, zines and work pressure, too. How do you do it? Katy is certainly growing up fast and cute as a baby Ewok. I have a mental image of her years from now, travelling the country and running into people who've watched her grow through the pages of SE. Famous before age one.

I was alarmed to read of your medical malady last Thanksgiving. I'm vastly relieved your illness was no more serious (it sounded too much like a mild stroke to me) and I hope in future you're

able to avoid such stressful situations as led to it. Much as we all love SE and TREMOR, you mean more. Slow down and gaze at the stars now and then, okay?

I'm also sorry that my first year at MediaWest, you may not be attending. I honestly look forward to meeting you someday, but I definitely appreciate parental complications and financial straits. Best of luck on starting your own freelance business and hearty congrats on leaving your last job. It wasn't worth the physical toll it was obviously taking. Remember, the Force is with you.

I loved the Richard Dreyfuss letter and concur with his sentiments. I was also glad to see where Mr. Spielberg and Mr. Lucas were getting out to D.C. to speak against colorization, etc. (That's my fav. pet peeve at the moment.)

Now, on to some of the others.

Deborah Kittle: Thanks for the compliment on my first letter. Let me know when you find time to read those DRAGONLANCE books. They're fun escape reading.

Bev Clark: I enjoyed reading your version of Leia's title and how she came by it. I personally feel that L&L's mother was taken in by the Organas after Anakin's fall and that she died soon after the twins were born, grief-stricken over the presumed death of her dear mate. I portray Bail's wife as unable to bear children and a second mother to Leia, anyway. When her real mother dies, Bail and his wife take Leia as their own. I feel only a few court attendants and servants would know Leia was not royal-born, but, even if it was widely known, I see Bail more as a royal figurehead than sole ruling monarch. Hence his ability to serve as Senator. Leia would retain vague memories of her mother, but she'd thrive under the Organas' love and care. At some point in her life (probably as a teen), I'm sure she would reveal interest in her real mother. The Organas could explain that she had been a good friend to them, who'd died in grief over the death of her husband, and Leia would more than likely accept it. Perhaps the tragic story of her real mother actually affected Leia's reaction later to Han. She might fear such strong emotion and attachment, recalling the tragedy.

I also feel quite strongly that Vader never knew his wife was pregnant. Otherwise doubts of paternity would certainly arise in his mind, given your scenario. I don't feel Obi-Wan was ignorant of Leia as the "other" in TESB. Perhaps he was

surprised at Yoda's suggestion, not thinking of it himself, or maybe he sensed more behind Yoda's words. I love your idea of Vader as the "other" and haven't heard this theory before. Anyway, it's fun to trade ideas.

Maggie Nowakowska: I truly enjoyed your remarks on the film article. I too feel that others may envy fans their escapes and ability to savor the "unusual." Perhaps there'd be more of us if others could learn as we have that it's all right not to follow the norm or bend to the accepted behavior set by nameless, faceless masses. I used to view fans of ST in skeptic wonder myself, but once fired by SW and bolstered by the knowledge that intelligent, mature individuals made up 90% of fandom, I found a world of joy that had been closed to me before. Not to mention finding an outlet for my long frustrated, pent-up writing hunger. Fans should remember to extend a sympathetic hand to the "mundanes." You never know when one might turn out to be a closet fan.

Also, I second your recommendation of the TV series BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. At long last, real fantasy and romance.

If you learn where to get that fabulous bumper sticker, please share it! I want at least two!

Lin Ward: I have news you may appreciate, as well as others interested in securing the SW plates. I receive a mail order catalog called **Downs' Collectors Showcase**, 2200 South 114th St., Dept. 188, Milwaukee, WI 53227-0904. The last few issues have featured all seven plates in color for \$29.50 ea. plus p & h. I've not purchased any, saving for MediaWest as I am, but the catalog is fun and filled with fantasy, ST, SW and other nice pieces for any interested. Hope it helps.

Cindy Rodriguez: Thank you from all we Luke lovers!

Melanie Guttierrez: Maybe I'm a minority, but I enjoy the SW saga as an epic space fantasy, filled with interesting characters and human conflicts eventually overcome. Sort of a fairytale for all ages in space. All the deep philosophical delving into Mr. Lucas' reasoning only lessen the enjoyment for me. Of course, we all have individual perceptions of the Force and the heroes' future, etc. and that's fine. Sharing our ideas can be fun and enlightening, but trying to find absolutes behind the creation of the saga without knowing Mr. Lucas' thoughts is a bit like trying to describe God. No two will ever fully agree.

Also, as a writer, I find even with my humble efforts, readers sometimes see things that even I wasn't consciously aware of. I'm sure we fans see much more than Mr. Lucas may have intended. It's a saga of films, not religion, folks.

As for boycotting all LFL offerings, sorry but I whole-heartedly disagree. I, for one, am grateful to Father George for sharing his galaxy with us and I could never stoop to such petty attempted blackmail as you suggest. Besides, I could miss some good movies, too. After all, we do not own SW or Mr. Lucas. He really owes us nothing. We should celebrate the films we have and wish their creator well. Of course, I'd love to know his ideas and plans for the beginning and ending of SW just like everyone else, but perhaps, like real life, there can be no true start or finish. Meanwhile, there is fandom to satisfy my needs. For your sake, I hope you forego your obstinancy in this area. Come on, aren't you just a wee bit curious about WILLOW?

Melanie Rawn: Your comments on writing are wonderful! You so nicely expressed the ego's point of view clash with reality. Sometimes it is hard to admit our ideas are not everyone's and accept other opinions. I catch myself saying things like, "It's a good story, but it wasn't my Luke." Guess we're all guilty to some degree or other?

I'm also glad to learn that other writers can confess to writing for themselves first and their readers second. Is that why criticism of a piece we especially love cuts deep enough to cause blood loss?

Sarah Cohen: Welcome! It's so good not to feel alone anymore in my new status. Yes, The Belgariad did remind me some of SW, but many things do. After all, there are just so many basic characters for fantasy, in space or not, and just so many basic situations and emotions. The talent to bring them to life and to make them seem new and fresh is what counts.

Tim Blaes: Thanks for the welcome. But shy? Me? I'm just new to this. Wait. You'll see.

Barbara Gardner: Yes, Veronica Wilson's told me about you, but only that you're a true Vader fan as she is. I, too, wish we could get her involved with SE. Let me know when you've gotten and read those Dragonlance books. I know you'll love Raistlin. He's so fascinatingly evil.

Thanks too for your kind comments on my work. If Veronica doesn't loan you my stories, just drop

me a line. I'm always looking for fresh victims.

Catherine Churko: I can't tell you how much your remarks on my story "Secret of the Sith" from FR9 mean to me, but as an artist of worth yourself, you must know. I really appreciate the input. A writer of fanfic only knows if they've succeeded with a piece through reader feedback. I confess that I've been guilty in the past with slighting artists in my LoCs, but hopefully I have rectified that now.

And, are you kidding?! It took SE before you realized there were others of us who salivate over that luscious Jedi? You are far from alone, and as you mentioned, WC's inside cover is guaranteed to drive the pulse rate of any Luke fan to post-aerobic measures! Be still my heart!

Carolyn Colledge: I want to resoundingly second Cheree's notes to you this last issue (18). All of your friends and fans are positively vibrating good Force pulses your way and praying that you feel better soon. You are a special friend and wonderful person whose talents include more than incredible writing. I'm proud to know you.

When you do feel stronger, though, we must discuss your Han/Yoda comparisons in more detail. Intiguing idea.

Now, Munchkin, follow the yellow brick road to health. (Sorry, Carolyn, I couldn't resist.)

Well, must end this novella before I earn Cheree's wrath for overtyping the page limit. One note to "Tidbits"; I live only a few miles from the town of Harrisonville. And me a Luke fan, too. See you all at MediaWest or next issue of SE.

Happy summer.



Debbie Kittle  
11521 Idlewood Rd.  
Silver Spring, MD 20906

April 12, 1988

Happy spring (yuck) to you all. Can't wait for winter again.

Anyone like FRANTIC? I loved it. From the people I've talked to (mostly from work after my recommendation) didn't like it. They thought it too slow paced. I never felt it was slow paced at all. I enjoyed Harrison's performance very much as well as his stuffed animal.

Bev: On your thoughts re Ben not knowing about Leia being the Other. Perhaps he just didn't think of Leia having Force potential. Luke may have shown it early or Ben was able to detect it yet not so with Leia. I don't think he would've been ignorant of Leia's birth. I feel he had a very important role throughout Mrs. S's life.

Marti: Excellent question you posed re blood in ANH but not in TESB. I had always assumed (never assume--it can get you into trouble) that a lightsaber is a cauterizing weapon as we see in TESB when Vader cut off Luke's hand, therefore sealing the blood vessels. I went back to see ANH since it had been a long while since my last viewing. What I saw was a pool of fresh blood but nothing spurting out.

There are several large veins and arteries in the forearm and elbow yet smaller ones in the wrist and hand. Perhaps some of the blood escaped before Ben was able to sever it completely or, as some fanzine writers have done, is give the lightsaber a series of settings. If Ben had it on a lower setting, it would cause it not to seal quickly. With no blood spurting or seeping out of the severed arm, that does mean that the vessels have been sealed.

Never gave much thought to Jedi eating habits. I assumed (there's that nasty word again) that they were omnivorous. I remember an episode of SPACE 1999 called "The Rules of Luton" where Maya and Koenig landed on a vegetation covered planet. Maya picked some flowers and the trees accused them of murder and put them on trial.

How could the Jedi eat something that had the Force? Did they survive on rations all the time? From Yoda's point of view, they must not have ("How you get so big eating food of this kind?").

Yoda fed Luke a stew. Perhaps it was all right to eat plants, insects and reptiles. Though they may be part of the Force as a whole, they may not be perceived as intelligent feeling creatures. ((Ed: On the other hand, we don't know what was in that stew! It might have been made from scavenged parts of already dead plants and animals, hence Luke's expression when he tasted it.))

Maggie: For the bumpersticker problem, you might try: T & K Graphics, PO Box 1951, Baltimore, MD 21203. They have an excellent and wide variety of stickers, posters, notepads, stationery and bumperstickers on fantasy/SF. Their merchandise is of a very good quality and reasonably priced. If they don't have the exact ones you're looking for, they do take suggestions.

Melanie G.: Wow, what a tirade but I can't blame you for the way you feel. I sometimes feel like that but I can only hope that George gets to work on it after WILLOW and INDY III.

I went back to ROTJ to hear the Emperor laugh but all I heard was the laugh of an Ewok.

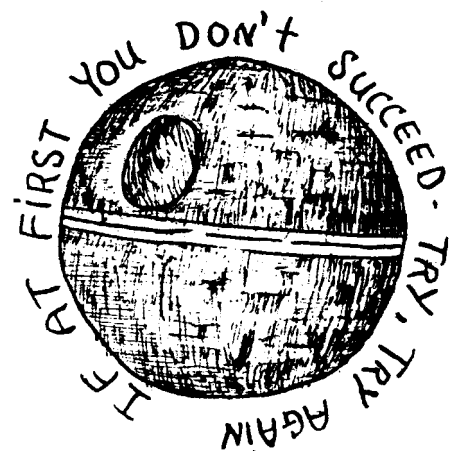
Sarah: Welcome to another neophyte.

Catherine: A few of my friends and I have lusted after Han for years also, but after coming to SE and reading all the past issues, I feel the scale is definitely on Luke's side. And now to find out that the evil dastardly Darth is in the running for our lust votes (only if he looked like Duncan), sends shivers of the Darkside up and down my spine.

Tim: I don't write comments on the pages of SE but on notebook paper. Then polish it up into letter form.

"DV:junk food"? Maybe the Ewoks would've considered DV junk food had they roasted him instead of Luke?? Oh, well.

Until next ish, make your day better. Sn(m)uggle a Corellian.



Matthew Whitney  
1003 Allen Street  
Springfield, MA 01118

April 9, 1988

Sorry I missed everyone last time. This LoC will have to begin with a bit of catch-up reactions from SE17:

Great issue, as always, that I was able to read at my leisure (so much so that I missed the deadline). It distressed me, though, that I too casually phrased a comment in issue 16 and was misinterpreted by Catherine Churko. I could really soap-box on my "two-bit third world country" statement, but this is neither the time nor the place. What I did mean, Catherine, had nothing to do with the people of these countries, the degree of how technically advanced they are/are not, or whether their simple lifestyle was good or bad. Unfortunately, I didn't make that clear, and you understandably took it in a way I'd not meant. (And I thank you for catching me on it.) My back-handed comment was a slap at petty dictatorships, often financed by drug profits or at the expense of hard working, suppressed populations, or even when there is an honest government, many are held hostage by crime lords. This is all off the track of what SE is about and I raise it only because of the misunderstanding was brought out in these pages.

Jim, your comments on Creation Cons were heard and appreciated. I went to both SW/STARLOG/Creation Cons in my area (Boston & NYC), and a few others Creation have hosted, and must say they have deteriorated in the last year. Peter Mayhew was the guest at both SW cons. A VERY nice man, though he seems terribly shy. He tells some fun stories and really seems to appreciate the fans coming out to see him to tell him we appreciate what he has contributed to the Saga (a LOT!). As much as we love Peter, though, don't we deserve a bit more for a 10th anniversary celebration, especially considering the lengths they went to in L.A.? I didn't expect Lucas or any of the main three, but I'm sure if they'd offered the \$ they could have gotten someone else. At the other cons, my complaint is that we have been subject to second-rate accommodations (i.e., the small facilities on the top floor, rather than the BARN on the mezzanine). This, despite ever-growing crowds. Reason: penny pinching. I'm almost tempted to boycott, but I want to

see the guests (especially ST:NGers--I love the show). Creation could learn from some fan run events, though all fan cons aren't perfect either.

Onto SE 18:

Linda Deneroff: You've triggered a batch of thoughts, centering on "Was Vader mistaking Leia's Force aura for Luke's in TESB?" Given that everyone in the SW universe (and ours?) has Force patterns, whether they are Force-users or not, that may be read by those who are Force-sensitive, perhaps active Force-users change their aura as they employ their talents. This means they'd send out some sort of signal when they used the Force and might be how Darth first got an impression of Luke (when he used the Force in the trench run in ANH). Leia, however, is a non-Force-user, so why should Darth key onto following the Falcon from the Hoth ice-hanger? He'd sense natural Force patterns from those aboard, but no Force-users (Han-the-Jedi subscribers, please skip to next letter). I reason Darth arrived at the hanger, first figuring all remaining rebels would be attempting escapes from there, so it was a good starting place. Noting the Falcon being the last to depart and knowing the owner to be an associate of Skywalker, following and capturing the occupants is the most obvious course of action to take.

There is logic in assuming that the Force patterns of Luke and Leia were similar due to their brother/sister relationship. Also, these patterns would be similar to Darth's, so perhaps this is how he deduced Luke was his son. When he sensed the Force in Luke in the trench, it must have struck him as being very similar to his own. Back to Hoth, why did Darth not sense Luke still on the planet, and not leaving on the Falcon? Perhaps at this still early stage on his way to Jedi status, Luke used the Force for only certain, important skills, not all the time, switching it on and off, so to speak. If so, he may not have been reaching out to the Force to help him make his escape from Hoth. A lot of speculating here, I'm well aware, but this could fit into how Darth senses Luke's approach aboard the shuttle in ROTJ. There Luke seems to concentrate and reach out with the Force, perhaps gauging the situation to see if he can sense Darth around (perhaps too late realizing that it will also give himself away--he is a rookie Jedi, after all).

Deborah Kittle: I got the SW Role Playing Game book and Source Book. Both are quite nice,

especially the latter. If you want only one and especially if you're interested in background info, I suggest the SB. Lots of neat stuff, and I'm sure it will sit right next to the thesaurus on many a fan author's shelf.

Marti Schuller: I also write my fan lit long-hand, then have to type the final draft. A word processor is still years away at best, though I doubt I'll ever be able to justify the cost to myself for just fannish pursuits (I already spend WAY too much on stills).

Speaking of new toys, though, I did treat myself to a CD player--MAGNIFICENT. Sound quality is like going from mono to stereo. Worth every cent.

Marti, on why you see blood from the alien's chopped off arm in the cantina in ANH, while Luke's injury is perfectly cauterized in TESB? One simple explanation may be just a cleaner cut by Darth. Another reason brings to mind a favorite point of mine when I did a term paper in college on SW for my Art of Film class. I went into detail on why this scene was in the film, explaining that we needed to see what a lightsaber did, so Lucas had Ben hack up a pair of thugs, then showed a dramatically bloody limb on the floor of the bar. This established that a lightsaber was literally a laser sword. Without this, later if we'd seen Vader slash through Ben aboard the Death Star and him disappear, we might have thought him disintegrated by the strange weapon, like a ST phaser would have done. By establishing what the weapon did, then having the unexpected occur, we then knew to conclude that Ben's disappearance was some Force related hocus-pocus.

Maggie Nowakowska: Nice discussion about Leia. Definitely right about her weight in ANH--nothing wrong with it at all. According to SKYWALKING (or perhaps an interview with Carrie?), she was a bit over what they'd wanted her to be, but to me she looked great. Too thin women are a turn off.

Melanie Guttierrez: I think the Saga already is a combination of exhilarating, epic adventure, mysticism, and mythology, and when complete it will remain so. The largest portion is the adventure. Lucas is first an entertainer with the SW films, then story-teller, then myth-maker.

On GL himself, I must call you to task to defend the claim that SW is his "one and only brilliant idea." (your emphasis) What about THX-1138, American Graffiti, and Raiders? He is also partly

responsible for Twice Upon a Time (animated feature he exec-produced and I love) and Kurasowas's Kagemusha. In those last two, he's more just the money man behind them, but such was his role in Howard the Duck. I honestly enjoyed Howard for what it was, a dumb duck joke film with a goofy monster (pure comic book). My only beef is \$35 mill is outrageous to tell duck jokes, but it's not my money. About Lucas' successes, though, it must be acknowledged that Graffiti is the most successful film in history (counting % of gross over cost) and both Indy films were enormous box office successes. If you also take into consideration the work of ILM and Sprockett Systems, I don't think "SW is his one and only avenue of success" is a valid statement.

Personally, I look forward to each and every LFL project. Not all I've liked. The Ewok films are pure kid stuff, More American Graffiti stank, and Howard, though I chuckled, is his biggest stumble, but those stumbles are few compared to his successes. The future for Lucas? Willow looks to be terrific, and I am VERY anxious. I'm also looking forward to Tucker. I've seen previews for both and they appear to be quality efforts, and will be opening night events for my friends and I.

"Does the Emperor laugh at the end of ROTJ?" No way. I've been round and round with other LoCers on "hidden dialogue", which I contend does not exist, here and elsewhere, so I won't get started. My opinion is he is not heard in the film after he is blown up.

Tenth Anniversary stuff may still be available through Creation conventions (and by mail order). They advertise it in Starlog, I believe, or you could write them for details.

Tim Blaes and Catherine Churko: (Hello, again) You both made valid points on the "/" fiction topic, and they are well taken.

Harrison's new film, Frantic, was quite good. Good suspense and excellent acting. I loved Carrie's Amazon Women on the Moon; it spoofs B-grade, sci-fi flicks and nearly everything else. Mark Hamill's just begun a new film, in the SF vein, called Slipstream. It looks very promising.

Follow the Force...



Rachel Natasha Mohr  
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April 2, 1988

Hello, everybody. I just received my first issue of SE not too long ago (no. 17), and I've written very few LoCs in my young life (something I hope to change), so if I sound like a fool, it's because I am. But what the heck? Life is short.

I'm Tasha, by the way. Though I still use my whole name frequently and as a byline, no one has ever called me Rachel. For a while I went only by Rachel in correspondence, to avoid confusion, but I quickly realized I couldn't stand it. Oh, the complications of going by a middle name...

Let me add myself to the list of people expressing unbridled joy over finding SE! Tho I've been a SW fan since I saw ANH, at the ripe old age of (barely) eight, I've only been a particularly active fan for about a year now. Like Melanie Guttierrez, I would've continued in "resigned isolation" had the article proclaiming SW fandom dead not raised my hackles and bruised my ego into doing something. I set about with a kind of grim determination to discover if I was, indeed, one of the last fen on earth. Happily, my search proved I was far from it! (Now, if I can only somehow keep from going broke trying to catch up on all the great zines, etc., that I've missed!)

My sympathies to all those who have recently had bad experiences (and congratulations, Cheree, on your new child!). I can empathize. If anyone out there knows me (though that's not a likely prospect), they know that I recently had to quit school and come home due to my Mystery Illness of the Year. It came early this year. A lot of tests have since been run and we've determined that it's nothing serious or overly threatening like leukemia or MS. The good doctors now think it's probably TMJ, a painful jaw condition (which would make sense since I'm currently enduring orthodontics).

There is no way that this LoC will get to you, Cheree, before the February 1 deadline for no. 18 (mainly since it was after that date that I learned of SE and it is now April 2), but there's always 19...

Interesting article reprint in no. 17: "Those Were the Days in Tatooine and Moscow," by Marc

Mancini. Mr. Mancini definitely was not a SW fan, but he was at least honest about his perspective as a non-fan. He seemed somewhat bemused and puzzled by all the fuss over SW. I didn't particularly appreciate his opening line ("This was going to be a weird one") or his comment that there "seems to be a white bread nerdiness to SW devotees." It was good to hear that I'm not in the same league with Moonies or Hare Krishnas, but I've known that all along.

Why was this "SW gathering" so troubling to him? And how in the world could he muster the gall to call it "amusing, bizarre, and a bit sad"? He was wary, wondering how healthy a fixation-driven event could be, but consider this: a philatelic convention is a fixation-driven event. A football or hockey game can be a fixation-driven event. A dog or cat show is a fixation-driven event. ((Ed: Not to mention political rallies, church services, Little League games, charity cake sales, Cub Scout meetings, county fairs, the Boston Marathon, you name it, ad infinitum.)) And I would NOT commit suicide if George decided not to make anymore SW movies. What a preposterous notion! I'd like to have a little conversation with the vendor who said that.

I also think that if the average non-fan would sit down and read a copy of SE from cover to cover, his/her perspective on SW fandom would undergo a dramatic change for the better. I happen to think that for the most part, we are a bunch of intelligent, happy, well-adjusted people, if I do say so myself. Mary Urhausen mentioned in no. 17 the Sept./Oct. FILM COMMENT article, and I agree with her--it is really a shame that the media almost always seem to seek out the few SW/ST/SF fans who are utterly bizarre, at the expense of the rest of us. It creates a greatly exaggerated stereotype. I don't own a chain-mail bikini, and I never wore Vulcan ears in school (in church once, but never in school...).

Well, you can't let it get you down. The replies to Anonymous are right. We've all had to put up with ridicule of one kind or another. Everyone who is different pays a price, but I enjoy being unique. I'm not bitter or terribly defensive, but I also know the difference between mundane reality and my own fantasy. I've accepted the fact that I'm out of the mainstream. Life may not always be totally smooth for me, and I may not always be understood, but the benefits of being my own person

of being different. (And I loved SPACEBALLS. I loved knowing I was the one in the theater who caught all those jokes the non-fen missed. Thanks, Mel Brooks!)

I think that Anonymous is letting her "fixation" get out of hand. Mr. Mancini did make a valid point when he made the distinction between fans and fanatics. He said, "In a true cult, structures are so hidebound, authoritarian, and blind that even trivial variations are considered vulgar." I think this is, perhaps, what has happened to Anonymous. From what I gathered, she certainly does seem to feel that this trivial variation, a simple, good-natured parody of SF in general and SW in particular, is vulgar. How sad.

On other topics...

Melanie Guttierrez: Yes, I'm sure Luke is a perennially hot topic (nudge nudge, say no more!). WOOKIEE COMMOOE 5 arrived last week and, ohh, that inside front cover! My glasses are STILL foggy! If SW fandom is dead, than I must be in heaven. (By the way, I really liked "Exceptions" in HIBERNATION SICKNESS. Congrats to you and Lorrie Cherry on an excellent story!)

Several people have discussed the possible reasons behind why Vader and the Emperor were able to defeat the Jedi. I got the impression that the Old Republic had been slowly slipping into the depths of corruption for a long time, and that Palpatine was a disaster waiting to happen. The OR had become so weakened by its own corruption that, where during its heyday it might have been able to withstand a man like the Emperor, it was now too vulnerable to do so. The prologue to the book STAR WARS likened the OR at the time of Palpatine's seizure of power to a great tree rotting from within.

This would to some degree explain why the Jedi were as unprepared as they must have been. As well, Lin Ward mentioned that maybe people who fell to the Dark Side were unable to handle it and ultimately did themselves in. This seems to be a likely possibility, especially in light of the mythological background of the Saga. It seems to be a recurring theme in mythology, spiritualism, and religion that good will be its own reward, and that evil will, in the end, destroy itself. Didn't even the Emperor eventually precipitate his own destruction? Luke was right when he said, "Your overconfidence is your weakness." Palpatine was so arrogant in his perceptions of his own Dark Power that he was blind to any possibility of failure.

that he was blind to any possibility of failure.

And I think Palpatine was an unusually strong Darksider. In the ROTJ novel, for instance, it mentions that when the Emperor finally attacks Luke directly, Luke, who we know has had many brushes with the Dark Side, has never felt such a total corruption of the Force. He was caught completely unprepared. This leads me to speculate that no one, not even Obi-Wan or Yoda, was aware of the true extent of Palpatine's power. Otherwise, Luke would have been better warned.

I agree with Maggie Nowakowska in that Palpatine must have come along at a weak time. He, and his success in corrupting Anakin, had to have been unusual and unexpected. Maggie's comment that perhaps Palpatine and Vader took a scientific rather than spiritual approach to the Force was interesting.

On another subject entirely, as I write this, I have just learned that Tasha Yar will be killed in the May 7/8 episode of ST:TNG. I am miffed that they gave her so little to do that Denise Crosby is leaving the show. She is one of my favorite characters (name coincidence aside). She's a woman in a position of authority, she's tough, and she can handle herself quite well, yet she isn't cold or "butch." I wish they had given her character more development, and I think the show is losing out by letting her go.

Well, I'll end this now. Hope I did a job that was at least something approaching adequate on my first LoC to SE.

Walk the sky!

