



The Making of Star Wars

J.W. Rinzler, Peter Jackson (Foreword)

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After the 1973 success of *American Graffiti*, filmmaker George Lucas made the fateful decision to pursue a longtime dream project: a space fantasy movie unlike any ever produced. Lucas envisioned a swashbuckling SF saga inspired by the *Flash Gordon* serials classic American westerns, the epic cinema of Japanese auteur Akira Kurosawa, and mythological heroes. Its original title: *The Star Wars*. The rest is history, and how it was made is a story as entertaining and exciting as the movie that has enthralled millions for thirty years—a story that has never been told as it was meant to be. Until now.

Using his unprecedented access to the Lucasfilm Archives and its trove of never-before-published “lost” interviews, photos, production notes, factoids, and anecdotes, *Star Wars* scholar J. W. Rinzler hurtles readers back in time for a one-of-a-kind behind-the-scenes look at the nearly decade-long quest of George Lucas and his key collaborators to make the “little” movie that became a phenomenon. For the first time, it’s all here:

- the evolution of the now-classic story and characters—including “Anakin Starkiller” and “a huge green-skinned monster with no nose and large gills” named Han Solo
- excerpts from George Lucas’s numerous, ever-morphing script drafts
- the birth of Industrial Light & Magic, the special-effects company that revolutionized Hollywood filmmaking
- the studio-hopping and budget battles that nearly scuttled the entire project
- the director’s early casting saga, which might have led to a film spoken mostly in Japanese—including the intensive auditions that won the cast members their roles and made them legends
- the grueling, nearly catastrophic location shoot in Tunisia and the subsequent breakneck dash at Elstree Studios in London
- the who’s who of young film rebels who pitched in to help—including Francis Ford Coppola, Steven Spielberg, and Brian DePalma

But perhaps most exciting, and rarest of all, are the interviews conducted before and during production and immediately after the release of *Star Wars*—in which George Lucas, Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Sir Alec Guinness, Anthony Daniels, composer John Williams, effects masters Dennis Muren, Richard Edlund, and John Dykstra, Phil Tippett, Rick Baker, legendary production designer John Barry, and a host of others share their fascinating tales from the trenches and candid opinions of the film that would ultimately change their lives.

No matter how you view the spectrum of this thirty-year phenomenon, *The Making of Star Wars* stands as a crucial document—rich in fascination and revelation—of a genuine cinematic and cultural touchstone.

The Making of Star Wars Details

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From Reader Review The Making of Star Wars for online ebook

Jeff Lanter says

This is a very impressive book in many respects. The physical copy is very hefty and retails for \$80. That is probably more than a casual fan would spend on a Star Wars book, but if you can get your hands on this one, it is well worth it. I've read all of the prequel making of books and I find that this one is much stronger than any of those and not just because the original movies are a lot better than the prequels either.

What is impressive is how detailed and well-researched the Making of Star Wars is. At times there is too much detail or the author focuses on technical aspects like script changes that aren't all that interesting, but most of the time this book is really engrossing. There was a lot of drama with making A New Hope and there is also plenty of insight into how things were done. What makes this book such a great read is that information is all from around the time the movie was made. There is no romanticizing the movie making process or actors who are overly thankful for a movie that made their careers. There are a lot of behind the scenes images in the book, mostly of people involved in making the movie, including George Lucas, and some of the actors. There are other Star Wars books that cover set design for example. Despite plenty of images, this book is meaty and takes a substantial amount of time to read because the text is very small. This may seem nitpicky, but I would have rather paid more money for a book with more pages and larger text. I have excellent eyesight and had no trouble reading this book and I still think the text is smaller than most books which doesn't seem quite right in a premium book like this.

I'm really glad I got to read this book and my appreciation of Star Wars has only grown by reading it. If things went differently, one of the greatest movies of all time would have never been made. This book will proudly sit on my bookshelf for a really long time.

Jesse says

Wonderful book. Everything you would want from a "Making of" book. Lucas's accomplishment feels thrilling once more after hearing the first hand accounts collected during the actual filming of the movie or shortly thereafter. Highly recommended.

Tim Milligan says

This is a very well-written, very detailed look at the making of Star Wars, from George Lucas saying "I want to make a Flash Gordon movie" to "I am retiring from directing and setting up a company to make the sequels." You should only read this book if you want to learn everything about how that movie was developed, written, rewritten, designed, filmed, edited, assembled, etc. But if that does interest you, definitely read this book.

Dave Donahoe says

So much behind-the-scenes info. It's a fanboy's paradise. Loved it!

Warren says

delivers - by conveying the reality behind the film. A strong sense of being there while it was made.

tons of tiny details that help bring all the creative peeps involved from (from lucas to mirch to coppola, and on and on) down to earth, while pulling back the curtain a wee bit on lucas's little talked about saavy business decisions.

Was blown away to read about the ways in which ILM was sort of a union breaking art-engineering collective/experiment. Very interested in the perspectives of all the doubters before the film's success.

Especially enjoyed the repeated examples of ways in which people simple couldn't process the script. The way they could picture han as james dean, but not with a space ship (instead of an old beat up car). They could picture a princess in flowing robes, but not with a gun. they could picture a farm boy, but not on the moon.

These were the examples that really drove it home for me - how the script was turning all known sci fi cliches on their head, but still keeping them in the mix.

Was also charming to learn more about the context of the timing, how early 70s cinema was overlooking the youth market - leaving a huge gap for American Graffiti and then Star Wars to walk in and fill. Never knew that.

In a way, I'm left thinking star wars was kind of like the ultimate Grindhouse movie (or maybe, i should say, Jaws and Star Wars both seemed to come from the Grindhouse school of sensationalism - but delivered on their mind blowing promises, and genre mixups). I always thought Grindhouse cinema was about pushing the limits, and finding creative new ways to shake up what audiences could expect from a movie - and now I think many of these popular 70s icon-movies were like Grindhouse pictures that actually delivered what they teased. ?

(maybe I shouldn't be saying Grindhouse at all. does that imply it needs to have sleaze? or that it can't have any studio involvement? or that it could only play at cheap sleazy theatres due to it's content? hmm.)

Kelly Lynn Thomas says

J.W. Rinzler is an excellent, meticulous researcher who is able to present his information in a clear, interesting manner. He has the talent to do this for both books like this one, that are "out of universe" and for "in universe" books like the Star Wars blue prints series. For die hard fans, he's a real treasure. This is a fantastic book, filled with wonderful details about the making of my favorite movie, ever. It's fun to read, and has great photographs, but it also makes a great reference book. (I actually read it for an essay I wrote on George Lucas's creative process--there's so much good stuff in here about that, man, you'll never look at Star Wars the same way after you read this book.) If you like Star Wars, this is definitely a book you should, at least, check out from your local library. But I highly recommend owning it.

Wesley Pesley says

Really exceptional piece of work. Contains all the information a geek could want, as well as wonderful photos and interesting audio/video clips. I'm a massive fan of Star Wars, and now a fan of Rinzler as well.

Tess says

Star Wars fans, just....read this book. Certainly there are some parts where the level of detail creates a Dagobah-esque thick fog to wade through, but the wading is worth it: there are facts and tidbits that give more context and richness to the film you love so well and blow your mind a little bit in the process. Some of my favorite parts were just hearing what certain recognizable props were made out of, or imagining the madcap environment at ILM during its heyday. For best results, read it while sitting up in bed next to another Star Wars fan, blurting out interesting passages to share probably just as he was about to fall asleep, but that he's obliged to wake up and laugh about.

Phil 2Toul says

un livre magnifique!
le lecteur est guidé au travers de l histoire autour du film et des affres (nombreux) de sa creation.
long, écrit petit, le livre ne se lit pas en un apres midi, mais au long cours!
iconographie magnifique, interview inédites.
un must pour les vrais fans!

Mike Smith says

For long-time fans of Star Wars, this enhanced e-book will contain much that is familiar. It discusses the evolution of the movie's plot, George Lucas's innovative approach to movie-making, the reluctance of 20th Century Fox to back the film's production (which led to many compromises), the stress of the production process, and nearly everyone's inability to understand what this ground-breaking move was all about. But where this book shines above others I've read, such as Garry Jenkins's *Empire Building: The Remarkable Real Life Story of Star Wars*, is in the day-to-day detail it has about the actual filming and post-production. With access to the extensive Lucasfilm archives, J.W. Rinzler tells about the contract negotiations with Fox, the shooting experience, the changes made along the way, and the agonizing process of putting the film together from hours and hours of film footage.

What really shines through is the fact that Lucas knew what he wanted, but almost no one else really grasped his concept or his vision. Lucas had some iconic scenes in his head from the very earliest story idea, but the plot that held them together changed radically over the two or three years it was in development. For Lucas, it's all about the images, the action. Only when it was complete did the cast, crew, and studio executives get what it was they had been part of.

I also like that this book is based at least partly on interviews conducted with the cast and crew during production. Lucas has a tendency to mis-remember what happened when he gives current-day interviews. So

Rinzler's book feels more authentic than some of Lucas's own statements about how he came up with the ideas.

I wish that the book had explained the historical context of Lucas's innovations in greater detail. We get a sense of how his use of lighting, motion, editing, camera movement, and story-telling radically changed the movie industry, but I'd have liked more technical explanation of the contrast to other films of the era.

I also would have liked discussion about how Lucas tinkered with and changed the movie over the years, from new sound mixes in the '80s to new special effects and restored scenes in the '90s and '00s. It's clear that Lucas was never satisfied with the 1977 original. It was only the best he could do with the money, time, and technology available, but not what he envisioned.

In addition to copious photos, this enhanced e-book contains video and audio clips of some 1970s interviews and production takes that were printed to film. You need an internet connection to access the clips. I did find that the e-book format was awkwardly structured. Photo captions sometimes spilled over into the next screen and photos sometimes seemed inserted in odd places, in the middle of the text (but always at the end of a paragraph; they never cut sentences in half). I suspect that these photos were in sidebars in the hardcover version of the book, so they interrupted the narrative flow less.

Andrew says

This is the book that would have changed my life had I read it as a 14-20 year old, causing me to pursue a career in film.

Having just completed it as a 37-year-old, I'm still highly inspired by the persistence, creativity, leadership, teamwork, and raw determination displayed by so many who collaborated on this film. Simply the making of this movie is as dramatic as the story itself, and highly worth the reading.

This is for fans of Star Wars, movie buffs, film historians, and - for the right person - perhaps one of those life-changing books you'll get to read. I really don't think it's too much to say that. And if you think you know everything there is to know about Star Wars and its making, you especially will enjoy learning a great deal of new information here.

Geoff Gresh says

One of the few Star Wars books that avoids staring through the rose-colored glasses and shows Lucas & Co as what they were: a bunch of 20-something prodigies who could have just as well made a huge sci-fi flop as they could a media empire. Most of the interviews were culled from the time of actual production, so there's not much revisionist history. An excellent read with lots of awesome photos of people in 70s dress.

Jack Herbert Christal Gattanella says

"This film has been murder." - George Lucas

"I told George, 'You can't say that stuff, you can only type it.' But I was wrong. It worked." - Harrison Ford (in a quote that's been sort of taken out of context for years)

If you're a major Star Wars fan (more than I am, and I like the films quite a bit on the whole, yes even the prequels to greater or certainly lesser degrees), you've likely already read this, and probably own it as well since it's been out for over ten years. The people I'd like to recommend this book to are those who like movie books and have at least some likability for the series (certainly for the original, non-Episode-titled entry), but aren't sure about digging in to a fully comprehensive breakdown. But for me, this is simply one of the masterful breakdowns of how a movie gets made, certainly on such a scale as this, and what it means to be in the PROCESS of directing, writing, producing and just crafting a motion picture.

Though the technology by now has advanced of course, there's still much that one can get excited for here - indeed after reading this I'm all the more impressed that JJ Abrams had at least SOME practical effects and creatures in his 2015 episode 7 - and it's interesting as it's a story about the making of a film that simultaneously supports and refutes the 'auteur' theory. On the one hand, from reading this book, no one else could have spear-headed and lead the production of Star Wars than George Lucas; it was his creative obsession for years, he went for it following the uncertainty of directing, no kidding, *Apocalypse Now* (which, by the time Coppola decided to go forward with it, Lucas had to turn him down), and he went to the extremes of cutting together hours and hours of WW2 plane-fighting footage and compressed it down to show everyone in his immediate team how he wanted the final dog-fight on the Death Star to go. For 4 years this man ate, slept and breathed his creation to the point of STILL doing a final mono mix for major theaters on the day that the film was already opened in 70mm on 5/25/77.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the film would have not come off the ground, at all, without it being a collaborative effort and that "A NEW HOPE" has several auteurs, all crucial (though some may argue that John Williams is the sort of emotional glue who's score holds the film together); Richard Edlund and John Dykstra's groundbreaking special effects; Ben Burtt's original and off-kilter sound design and choices that made characters who seemed so 'huh' completely adorable and funny like the Jawas and R2DR; Ralph McQuarrie, who's designs really helped to capture what was probably much loosely formed in Lucas' head; even some of the cast were kind of 'authors' of the movie (Harrison Ford being someone who, having worked with Lucas before and just knowing this guy Han Solo, pulling off the dialog in ways that improved it many times over). There are more that can be counted, but what the book posits is that the creation of this not-low-but-not-high budgeted movie (probably low for what was really required) was basically the equivalent of creating a spectacular new car: you need a vision to pull it off, but also people to build it and give it all the new bells and whistles, and, at the end of the day, needs to *work* like car.

It's totally engrossing to see how Lucas - who, as we're told and see, wasn't even that passionate about writing and it wasn't his forte - goes through several drafts of the script and how it could have possibly been even wilder than it turned out to be. As someone who loves to see in a making-of book with cinema the steps of process and how a creator comes to this decision or that or what limitations come up, how *The Adventures of Anakin Starkiller becomes Star Wars* (drop the 'The' ala Facebook) makes it a must-read book all on its own. What makes it something that I know I'll buy and keep on my shelf are a) all of the other stories told from cast and crew, brought together by author JW Rinzler in a way that is easy to understand even as it goes through some descriptions that may be confusing to non-cinephile-like people used to technical hargon, and b) all of the great color photos, designs and behind the scenes pictures, down to even full crew shots of people working (and having fun) at ILM.

It's hard to imagine what this book left out, though I should note that if you go into the book expecting for some revelations of, say, Lucas as being some hack who lucked in to the success of the movie via his editors

and ILM crew, you may be mistaken/disappointed. But I have no reason to doubt the research here, and if anything my respect for Lucas (certainly from this time period) shot up exponentially while reading this. He comes off as someone who isn't necessarily the greatest "actors" director (not to say that he doesn't give enough for them as to what they need, or as Carrie Fisher says the John Huston approach of 'not saying anything means you're doing a good job' pretty much), but as someone leading the charge of such a **HUGE** vision as this, in every department, it's a trip and a half. From every little cut, from every moment that a tie fighter has to fire a weapon or do this or that, one can see that this was a guy really into this film, and yet was more than able to let his team do their work and get their best done (albeit the struggles with Fox, who sort of became oddly enough the background villains of this story as they don't give much of a shit for the production, made the filmmaking rushed in some cases due to a shortened and underfunded pre-production).

I'd recommend this certainly to students seriously looking into becoming filmmakers - it's certainly a title that even young people who don't watch many old movies will be familiar with and may make those curious about how these "old" processes like matte paintings and model building and creature effects worked - but also to someone looking for a great story with some unexpected turns. Probably the most interesting if sort of enigmatic figure though is the one at its core: George Lucas. A man who (spoilers, sort of) didn't like how the film came out (and no wonder he went back and made it a Special Edition, but less about that right now the better), but it was in the way that is sort of common for innovators who can't really see how well they did something. His vision seemed to be probably **TOO** big, or what he saw in his head so massive, that he could only accomplish so much while still making special effects a complete game-changer with the creation of ILM (the latter seems to be a key point of the book and rightfully so). If there's a song that Lucas sings and plays more than once it's the blues song "I Can't be Satisfied", but boy can that bearded little nerd play it!

PS: Carrie Fisher wins the world.

Andrés says

It is a credit to the book's author that upon reading *The Making of Star Wars* I felt exhausted, yet exhilarated, as if I had participated in the entire process myself, from pre-production to editing.

Another thing that surprised me about this making-of book is that it's incredibly honest and doesn't seem to hold back anything about the ordeal that was making *Star Wars* come to life. You'll learn about Lucas' tough negotiations with Fox, who were anxious and dubious about the project (even Alan Ladd seemed to lose confidence at several points); the many struggles of the fledgling ILM, not just in terms of developing new technology or working round the clock but also concerning the many disagreements between staff members; the problems that arose shooting on location in Tunisia and back at Elstree and Shepperton (particularly concerning the short work schedule); and so on and so forth.

The more I read the more astounded I was by the magnitude and complexity of what Lucas was trying to accomplish for the time, and I have come to better understand why he made several alterations to the movie afterwards, such as with the 1997 Special Editions. Lucas himself admits that he was disappointed in how *Star Wars* turned out because he hadn't been able to (due to budget and time constraints) completely realize the vision he had had at the beginning. Towards the end of the book, Ben Burtt (*Star Wars*'s sound guru) recognizes they were only able to achieve about 30% of what they had originally intended to sound-wise and it's evident Lucas wasn't satisfied with the visual effects, among other things. I wonder if he'll ever be satisfied with how any of his movies turned out, though having read this book I'd say no. It's such a shame he didn't win the Academy Award for Best Director at the time because I think he probably deserved it the most

out of all the nominees (then again, Lucas has never been a Hollywood darling, more of a pariah).

If you're a *Star Wars* fan or if you're remotely interested in filmmaking, I would heartily recommend giving Rinzler's *The Making of Star Wars* a thorough read. It covers everything you might be interested in, from the many drafts Lucas had to write before getting the story right, to how Ralph McQuarrie's art and Joe Johnston's models worked off each other to build the look and feel of the first *Star Wars* movie, or how Lucas and John Williams figured out the right music for the film. And I'm only mentioning a handful of people here but there were many, many, more talented people involved in this process that made important contributions to *Star Wars* who, fortunately, *were* recognized during the 50th Academy Awards, people like John Mollo in the costumes department; Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, and Richard Chew, for the editing; or John Stears, John Dykstra, Richard Edlund, Grant McCune and Robert Blalack, for the visual effects.

J.W. Rinzler has accomplished something truly marvelous in writing this book and I am eagerly looking forward to *The Making of The Empire Strikes Back*. Until then!

PS: Be warned, the font is somewhat small.

Jon says

I first saw *Star Wars* at the age of 3, and from my early childhood until today, I have spent countless hours reading about that movie. From the first comic book adaptations, to magazine article and books, I have always wanted to know more about how the movie was made.

I've seen at least a dozen "making of" documentaries and shows, and even attended a 30th anniversary screening of the film after which George Lucas, Carrie Fischer, Mark Hammill, and the special effects, sound and editorial crews reminisced about the film for over an hour. And of course I've owned the film on VHS, Laserdisc, and DVD (several versions of each). I thought I knew a lot about "Star Wars". And I pulled the kids out of school for a day last year to go to a *Star Wars* convention.

Then I got this book, and my life was complete (at least as far as "Star Wars" is concerned). "*The Making of Star Wars*" takes the reader on an exhaustively detailed, step-by-step journey through the writing, production, post-production and distribution of *Star Wars*. It feels like you are sitting at George Lucas's side as he writes and makes the film.

Everything is described in detail: the script writing process, the special effects, the props, the costumes, the sound design, the financing, the lighting and cinematography, labor relations with the English crew (not good), filming in Africa, England, California, and Central America, scenes that were changed or deleted, early reviews and public reaction, advertising, and on and on.

Let me be clear, no amount of detail is spared. For example, you may know that there are a few shots towards the end of the movie that show the rebel base in the jungle. And you may know that these few shots were done in Central America, at the Mayan ruins. But this book tells you about the trip the special effects guys took to get there. You hear about the muddy roads, and the hotels and bad food. You get to hear about them climbing the Mayan ruins, and what kind of camera equipment they took with them. And there are pictures of their trip. And you get to hear about the car trouble they had on the way back from the Los Angeles airport on the 405 freeway.

But best of all is the process through which the book was written. Instead of interviewing the participants 30+ years after the fact, the book is entirely based on interviews that were done from 1975-1978. So you get to hear peoples' opinion of the project before they knew it was going to be one of the most popular films of all time. This is a very candid book, and nothing is glossed over. Let there be no doubt, Star Wars was a very, very difficult movie to make (even putting George Lucas in the hospital with chest pains), and this book will help you appreciate how hard it can be to make a movie when you don't have enough money or technology.

In addition to the solid detail, there are endless amounts of little pieces of trivia and factoids that have never been revealed. And pictures: tons of pictures of the film making process and storyboards. Memos and notes, rough drafts and sketches. Kate, our 4-year-old Star Wars fan, loves to look at the pictures, just to see Stormtroopers with their helmets off, or R2-D2 getting worked on.

Upon finishing this book, I can honestly say I now feel like I know everything I wish I could know about Star Wars, which I never thought I would say. For a Star Wars fan who wants to know how the film was actually made, this book is a certified miracle.
