



Lando Calrissian and the Starcave of ThonBoka

L. Neil Smith

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Still on their quest for easy credits and an occasional Sabacc game, Lando and Vuffi Ra come across a young Oswat, adrift and starving. After saving his life, they agree to meet him at the entrance of his home at the StarCave of ThonBoka. Needless to say, this gets them into more trouble when they discover Lando's old nemesis, Rokur Gepta, waiting for them.

Lando Calrissian and the Starcave of ThonBoka Details

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From Reader Review Lando Calrissian and the Starcave of ThonBoka for online ebook

Michael Reyes says

At last we come to the conclusion of the trilogy that is the Lando Calrissian Adventures!

I have to say that this is probably my favorite book in the trilogy. A new alien race is introduced, the Oswaft, and I'm happy to note that the author took the time to describe them in detail (if only this much effort was put into Lando himself). Issues building up from the past 2 books have been resolved, although Deus Ex Machina was again used to give it a "good" ending (not that I'm complaining).

My only gripe has to be Lando's constant use of Earth terms. He also never fails to reprimand Vuffi Raa whenever he's called "master". To be honest, if it were me, I'd have given up by that time and let him call me whatever he was comfortable with.

Although I was disappointed that not much of Lando's backstory was explored, I have to give the author props for at least finishing the trilogy on a high note.

Jonathan says

Finally done definitely not good but not horrendous either all in all at least much less of a slog than The Han Solo Adventures.

Noel Thingvall says

There's still a lot to enjoy with this final entry. The characters are great, the central concept fantastic, there's some great scenes and bit of humor throughout. But this one felt more rushed than the last two, with the plot more messily constructed with some sloppy use of non-linear twists. And the way they wrap everything up in the end is a bit underwhelming. That said, this is a series of books I wish could have just kept going on and on with its gonzo space adventures.

Kain says

Ca?a seria nie jest z?a, ale jest raczej naiwna. Dlatego chyba uplasowa? bym to na pó?ce dla dzieci. Bawi..ale trzeba mocno przymró?a? oko.

Mark Oppenlander says

L. Neil Smith wraps up his Lando Calrissian series with this uneventful entry. In this chapter of the continuing story, the titular character and his mechanical co-pilot, Vuffi Raa, encounter a species that can live in the pure vacuum of space, the oswaft. For reasons that were somewhat fuzzy to this reader at least, Lando and Vuffi decide to assist this species, which is dealing with starvation due to a siege from the Centrality Navy (why the Centrality cares about this species of manta-like deep space dwellers is another head-scratcher.)

Smith brings back the magician Rokur Gepta who is still apparently seeking to wreak revenge on Calrissian and has Gepta team up with Klyn Shanga and other remaining members of the Renatasian military who of course want Vuffi Raa dead. Gepta is in cahoots with the Centrality somehow, and all of these forces eventually converge on one location for a predictable "shoot out at the OK corral" type ending.

Although not as generally awful as the previous installment ("Flamewind of Oseon"), I still find this book disappointing. I've spent some time thinking about this (with the half of my brain that wasn't being used while reading this book) and my conclusions are that my frustration stems from (at least) three sources.

First, Smith seems to have created the Gepta character as a pale stand-in for Darth Vader. Gepta is described as a "mysterious sorcerer" who dresses in flowing robes from head to foot and wields otherworldly power. When you add this physical description to the fact that he is often seen standing on the bridge of ships owned by the Centrality Navy (although he himself does not have military rank) it becomes pretty easy to see where Smith got his inspiration.

Second, Lando never gets to do anything in these books. Rarely is it a clever idea or a heroic action from Lando that propels the plot along. More often than not, he is caught in circumstances beyond his control and must simply roll with the punches. It is hard to think of him as the hero of this series. Contrast that with how Han Solo behaves in the Brian Daley trilogy and, well, it's no contest. Solo is the master of his own destiny while Calrissian comes across as a bit of an unlucky schmuck.

All of which leads me to my third complaint: Why is Smith so fond of "Deus ex Machina" endings?!? In this case another more powerful force literally swoops down out of the sky to save the day during the final confrontation. Really? Boring!

I am glad to be done with this trilogy. It is really for Star Wars EU completists only.

Spencer says

The third and final entry in L. Neil Smith's take on the Star Wars universe suffers much the same as his previous two entries: too long in the tooth (roughly 140+ pages before we get to the "final" conflict and then it's wrapped up way too fast, and anti-climactically). The ending of the book is virtually the same as the ending in Brian Daley's (far superior) third Han Solo novel, too, which is just, well, lame.

Hector says

An entertaining read. It's pretty much a stand-alone story (along with the previous two titles in the series); "Lando Calrissian and the StarCave of ThonBoka" is not really connected to the overall "Star Wars" mythos,

other than the setting being during Lando Calrissian's ownership of the Millennium Falcon, as briefly touched upon in "Star Wars: Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back." ("What have you done to my ship?") I thoroughly enjoyed the interaction between Lando and his droid, Vuffi Raa. I've always been a fan of "sentient" droids, such as I5-YQ from the "Star Wars: Coruscant Nights" series. This is not a complicated read and flows nicely. My only gripe? Calrissian's dialogue does not fit the image of Lando that most of us have from the films. His nicknames for most characters we encounter, especially Vuffi Raa, become pretty annoying.

Thomas says

I wasn't holding out hope that the series would improve with its final book, and I wasn't disappointed. It's just as boring and inconsequential as the previous books, and about as much a part of the Star Wars universe as a Clint Eastwood movie.

The antagonist from the previous two books, Rokur Gepta (no, I didn't remember his name; I had to write it down so I'd remember to mention him by name) appears again, confirming that he was going to be the antagonist for the series. Lando defeats him in a battle that spans three pages. The next time someone asks me for an example of "anticlimactic", this will be the one I use.

Absent from this book: characterization; showing; anything else related to the Star Wars universe. He also makes another reference to "Another time and place", referring to Earth, thus breaking the illusion of the story (such as it is).

None of these books have been well written. I glossed over so much of the narrative, realizing that I had read a couple of pages without getting any of it. I didn't care enough to go back to re-read it. It wasn't worth it.

My favorite quote from the book was "CEASE FIRE OR BE DESTROYED! THERE WILL BE NO SECOND WARNING!" because it was, in fact, a second warning. The first one had come on the previous page.

Don't read these books. Before this trilogy, I was convinced that Aftermath was the worst of the books, but Smith raised the bar a bit further. Short they may be, but it will still take a few days to finish them, and you'll hate every minute of it.

Christopher Rush says

Despite L. Neil Smith's attempts to tank it, this ends up a fairly decent story and enjoyable read. It doesn't feel like Lando is in it much, since Smith spends some time wrapping up threads of supporting characters from the earlier installments (which is a nice touch) as well as introducing some new supporting characters while channeling his inner Diane Duane (with a sprinkling of Marshak and Culbreath) - this aspect does not always work as well, since it is intentionally obtuse for most of the book, too much so. As with the other installments, Smith spends very little energy trying to write a Star Wars book, giving us far too many contemporary linguistic colloquialisms and nothing of Jedi, the Force, or the Rebellion (this last is perhaps forgivable, if Smith is intending this to be before the Rebellion "begins"). At least, though, we have a smattering of cognizance of the Empire this time, with a tacit acknowledgment of the Imperial Navy - though this also is somewhat confusing, since we are not sure if the large navy gathered for the final confrontation is

of the Empire or local ships not directly part of the actual Empire. Smith's trilogy takes place in some part of the galaxy not really interesting to the Emperor, so while this did allow Smith some creative freedom, it didn't ground us too much in the Star Wars universe. Despite all this, and the continued awkwardness of Lando's "humor" in Smith's hands, Smith (as with Daley before him), has managed to create a decently-enjoyable "Star Wars" sort of experience. These two trilogies have far more humor and lightheartedness (even though this last book has a couple of scenes of genuine sorrow) than virtually all the Star Wars books that have since come out with Zahn's resurrection put together. I admit that sentence is not constructed all that well, but hopefully you get my point. Never again will we see Chewbacca riding a runaway coach-and-four wearing an 18th-century Admiral's hat. Never again will we see Lando engaging in a running gag of "don't call me 'master'" while he learns to pilot a starship. I say "never," though I haven't read all the Star Wars books written, but I suspect they are about to get a lot more serious than these. In a way, despite their goofiness and not "feeling like Star Wars," I will miss these early expanded universe books and their general lighthearted romp sort of feel. In a way, it's possible they were more akin to Lucas's early vision of what Star Wars was supposed to be after all. I'm not saying I'm going to return to them yearly, but I am glad to have finally read them. They are worth the time.

Alana says

This wraps up the early adventures of our favorite swashbuckler. Not the best-written of stories, but it pulls the trilogy together, introduces some space-faring creatures, and has some fun battles and explosions. The conclusion is kind of weird, but it's an ok adventure. Probably not one to re-read, but interesting learning how Lando came to be who he is later on.

One quote I did like: "Life was so simple, he thought bitterly, so thoroughly enjoyable. Why were there always people whose chosen profession was to louse it up for everybody else?" Isn't that the truth?

Delanie Washburn says

These three books about Lando were sweet and I liked them.

Adam says

L. Neil Smith isn't a bad writer, and these stories aren't bad, but seemingly every decision made in their creation is totally nonsensical. We are establishing Lando's background in these stories: broadening his character, exploring his milieu, and giving him some touchstone adventures. But while we nominally start off with Lando doing his actual thing (gambling) and he occasionally returns to the sabacc table throughout the adventures, the central narrative is totally foreign to Lando. He doesn't know how to fly his ship, but he has all sorts of dogfights and narrow escapes. He's not a cargo hauler, or a smuggler, but he spends a lot of the series trying to make money carrying fancy goods. He's not a fighter and carries only a small 5-shot blaster, but there are tons of gunfights throughout.

In the movies, Han has Chewie, and you get the impression they are sort of independent operators. So in Daley's Han Solo Adventures, they work alone with Chewie as Han's sidekick. Lando, however, doesn't have much of an implicit backstory in the films. He has no partner (Lobot seems to be tied more to Cloud City

than to Lando, which the EU bears out) and seems to have acquired Cloud City recently. So Smith has all the freedom in the world to develop a community, friends, a home, a mentor, a stomping grounds, habits, etc for Lando. Instead, we just get Vuffi Raa, who is basically just Lando's Chewie. He's a fine character, but he ends up standing in for far too many things. He teaches Lando to fly the ship and to appreciate the value of pacifism, he gives him an opportunity to expound his moral compass, he drives the plot along with his built-in set of enemies, and he's a deus ex machina for every skill Lando ever needs and any scrape he ever gets in. Not surprisingly, Vuffi Raa begins to feel like something of a Gary Stu. He's also an ancient alien artifact made of technologies no longer found in droid-making with correspondingly amazing abilities.

Speaking of ancient aliens with mysterious intentions, there are an awful lot of them in this series. The first of which are the Sharu. There is a very small bit of interesting Lovecraftian stuff going on with the Sharu. They have eldritch angles and incomprehensible geometries and space-time manipulating technologies beyond contemporary understanding. Their culture exists on another plane and they show no interest in interacting with lesser sentients. The central story device is neat enough, and leaves a nice opening to tie in to later ancient aliens like the Celestials and Rakatans, but Smith doesn't seem to know how to handle it. We're in the dark for 100 pages as Lando stumbles about trying to find a powerful artifact in mysterious ruins (which, again, is not really Lando's gig). Then, once the quest is duly completed, we are treated to a few pages of exposition, dense paragraphs of dialogue that explain everything that happened and why. At least it's short?

The overall arc of the series is driven by Lando's nemesis, Rokur Gepta. Smith wanted Lando's nemesis to be a Sith, but settled for ancient alien magician. There is also some serious ambiguity about the forces Gepta employs. I had the impression throughout that he was an Imperial, and that the Emperor was the one sponsoring his operations and for whose position Gepta was vying. But like Daley's Solo novels, these books actually take place in a pseudo-independent polity, this one called the Centrality. This is never really explained in the books – it's played as though the Centrality is simply the local extension of the Empire. But Wookieepedia clarifies that the Centrality is actually a libertarian wet-dream, a social experiment founded by anti-authoritarians who valued hard work and ambition. It's wonderful that later EU authors decided that the experiment failed and that the Centrality plunged into poverty soon after these books. :D

Anyway, Gepta is a cartoon villain of the worst sort, driven by lust for power, characterized only by his short temper and cruel taste for revenge. He sees himself on a path to galactic domination, but stops to crush Lando under his bootheel after he foils his plot in the first book. In *Flamewind of Oseon*, Gepta creates an elaborate web, Lando is lured in, nearly dies, and is whisked away by Vuffi Raa. None of this makes any sense. Gepta is a melodramatic shell of a character, a classic villain for a classic hero. But Lando isn't a classic hero!

Han is a smuggler, so the challenges he and Chewie face in the Daley adventures involve jobs gone bad, run-ins with the Authorities, boom and bust cycles, and get-rich quick schemes. He loves his freedom, and roaming the stars with his best friend makes him feel at home. Lando is a gambler, a conman, an entrepreneur. The challenges he faces should involve those pursuits, those skills, those settings. There are plenty of good tropes for gambling and con artist stories. And as shallow as Smith's plotting is, he seems to at least grasp the basics of a con story: Both Sharu and Oseon are straightforward con stories – it's just that Gepta's the con artist, and Lando seems to have no recourse other than Vuffi Raa to escape them.

Lando is impossibly good at sabacc, winning tons of money on every hand he sits down to play – he has to deliberately lose hands in order to maintain the illusion of fairness. The only reason he's not rich, relaxing by a pool somewhere, is his insistence on owning the Falcon and adventuring, something he seems to do in spite of himself. He never expresses any liking for the lifestyle or provides a reason for continuing; he just does it

because the plot requires it, because Smith couldn't come up with a conflict that would generate a plot in Lando's main lines of work. In fact, Lando frequently gripes about what Smith is making him do – “A plague on interstellar freight hauling! . . . He was a gambler!” But as though under some kind of enchantment, he continues hauling freight for three novels.

Smith should have established a baseline for Lando, a standard lifestyle that the moral exigencies of ESB would later jerk him out of. Instead, there is now a continuous thread of classic adventuring throughout his life. It basically erases everything that distinguished Lando from Han and Luke. After all, Lando stopped an evil sorcerer from taking over the galaxy too (Gepta even has a planet destroying super-weapon)!

The redundantly titled *Starcave of ThonBoka* represents an improvement in character creation and world-building, if not in Lando's portrayal. The Oswaft are insanely over-powered, but they are at least a culture with interesting individual variations and perspectives. Lehesu is finally a character worth standing alongside the protags. Klyn Shanga comes into his own here as well, though his own isn't much. He delivers some of the most blatantly ideological passages in the whole series, lecturing Gepta on how everyone in his fleet is inept because of their role in a heirarchical organization. And it's nice to see Lando making friends with the low-level crewmembers on the Centrality warships. There's also a wonderfully charming scene in which Vuffi Raa, Lando, and Lehesu play in the midst of the nebula, pretending to shoot each other with finger guns and generally having a relaxing good time. It's the sort of scene *Star Wars* could really use more of.

Annoying tics:

“Don't call me master!” - Lando says this at least once every page, lest we forget his staunch libertarian principles

“In another place and another time would have been called” to rationalize inclusion of Earth terms

“Core” as a curse-word. Huh? It's as if Lando doesn't want to swear, for some reason. Strange way to mince an oath, too.

Libertarianism, always

David Wardrop says

I think a lot of *Star Wars* fans wonder what Lando Calrissian did before Bespin and back when he (first?) had the *Millennium Falcon* and I would include this as part of the *Star Wars* Universe/timeline but maybe or maybe not an essential part. It is really repetitive with the "Don't call me master." thing but I liked the payoff at the end. The villain Rokur Gepta in the end is pretty disappointing.

Jaime K says

This was not a good way to wrap up the Lando Adventures. It was boring.

I also felt that the amount of smoking was greater than in the other 2 Lando books. We don't see much smoking outside of the cantina and Jabba in the movies, so I found it a bit ridiculous.

Lehesu is an Oswaft, a race of aliens who are persecuted and now endangered. They live in the ThonBoka, a cloud of dust and gas in space. Lehesu calls on Lando and Vuffi Raa (though really, the *Millennium Falcon*) for help. I like how the Oswaft are introduced [paraphrasing]: "Beings from another place and time would think them like manta rays."

However, the 'curiosity killed the cat' bit later was a bit too much.

There was too much around sabacc that, even through Shanga's forces being paired to equal the number 23, it was tiring. How many paragraphs or chapters can start with Lando (or someone else) calling out, "Sabacc!" Too many.

Gepta and Shanga team up to respectively work against Lando and Vuffi Raa. They also work with the Imperial Navy against the Oswaft, since they're all afraid the species is capable of faster-than-light travel. They hope to starve out the Oswaft-but Lando has become Lehesu's friend and is determined to help the species.

One of the best scenes was when Lando is floating around with Lehesu and Vuffi Raa. His absolute joy is childlike and brought a smile to my face. I also liked learning a bit more of Vuffi Raa's past.

Reread 1: July 2013

Reread 2: June 2016

Felecia says

My favorite of the Lando books!
