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Written by: James Crane Editor:

**Brian Crane** 

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to our mailing list. Click here to visit our archives. First off, this goes out to the people that are saying "Eh, I don't get STAR WARS" or "I've never seen it" or etc, etc. You are not alone. Do not be scared. This was my girlfriend three years ago. It DID scare me to death. I wasn't sure I was willing to commit myself to a human being who hadn't lost themselves in a galaxy far, far away. Somehow acquire the 5 movies available at the moment (I recommend buying, stealing is bad) and do yourself a favor and watch them. For those who do get it, but only kinda, relax. We all dislike Jar Jar. Midichloridians suck too. It's time to move on,

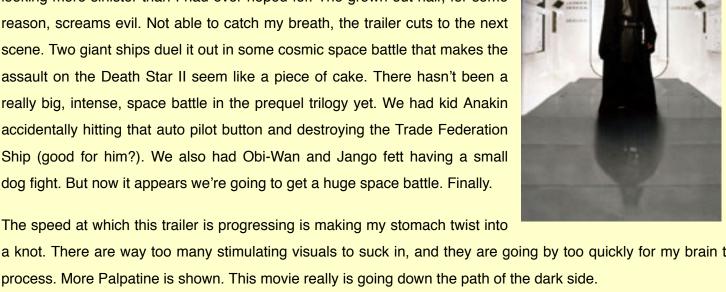
cause there is something so cool to talk about. The trailer for

## STAR WARS Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith Can we get nerdy now? You know that tingly feeling that creeps up your spine when your body basically gets an

overload of pleasure? My body succumbed to that feeling as soon as I heard the opening notes of the musical score kick in and the rumbling of some other worldly ship screeching across space. The trailer kicks on, and the 20th Century Fox logo blazes up on the screen and then boom, I'm seeing my first new glimpse of Star Wars in three years. An Imperial Shuttle look-alike is flying through the darkness of space

with the planet Couruscant lurking in the background. Remember that tingly feeling I was explaining. It's already gone up the spine, and, nowhere else to go, it's heading back down. The trailer cuts and I'm looking into the eyes of Palpatine. The first words uttered are the words DARK SIDE. I'm completely sold. I HAVE TO SEE THIS MOVIE. I've been waiting through two prequel movies just to hear the master of the dark side even mention his own allegiance out loud. It doesn't stop there, and I surely didn't stop watching. Anakin is already looking more sinister than I had ever hoped for. The grown out hair, for some

reason, screams evil. Not able to catch my breath, the trailer cuts to the next scene. Two giant ships duel it out in some cosmic space battle that makes the assault on the Death Star II seem like a piece of cake. There hasn't been a really big, intense, space battle in the prequel trilogy yet. We had kid Anakin accidentally hitting that auto pilot button and destroying the Trade Federation Ship (good for him?). We also had Obi-Wan and Jango fett having a small dog fight. But now it appears we're going to get a huge space battle. Finally. The speed at which this trailer is progressing is making my stomach twist into a knot. There are way too many stimulating visuals to suck in, and they are going by too quickly for my brain to



by James Crane

Then the scene that steals the whole trailer happens: Two doors slide open, and Mace Windu enters the chambers of Chancellor Palpatine. Mace has come to arrest Palpatine, and Palpatine obviously has a problem with this. The image cuts to Palpatine's hand. A light saber

drops from his cloak to the open palm. The screech of a blood thirsty animal erupts from Palpatine, and the Dark

master leaps at the startled and on the defensive Jedi. Cut to the next sequence, and I've forgotten to breathe. I see Chewbacca, I see Yoda giving his serious look, I see C-3PO gold plated for the first time in the prequel trilogy and looking damn sexy. Pounding, tribal drums fill the soundtrack. The rhythmic beat reminds me to breathe. Padme's pregnant and crying, but I can deal with that

as long as she's not rolling around in the grass giggling. Dear sweet luscious looking LAVA PLANET!

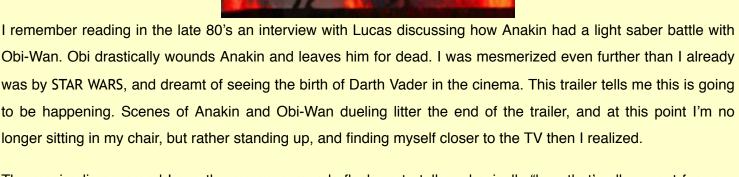
possibly be moving to seat number two.

Emperor (no Palpatine doesn?t count), these movies suck.

By Brian Crane on 2005 05 12

I share a birthday.]

By Gareth Hedges on 2005 05 13



longer sitting in my chair, but rather standing up, and finding myself closer to the TV then I realized. The music climaxes and I see the roman numerals flash up to tell me basically "hey, that's all you get for now. See ya May 19th." But then Darth Vader appears on the screen, staring off to the left of the frame. It is totally unexpected, and totally needed. The trailer is over, and it has proven to me, a STAR WARS fan, that I haven't seen anything yet.

This trailer shows me the possibility that my favorite STAR WARS movie, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, could

James Crane is a first-time contributor to Synoptique.

**COMMENTS:** 

## And now I want a jedi slaughter. That?s it. Nothing more. I just want them all killed while I watch. I want Samuel Jackson to be cut into little pieces because I can?t help thinking that, somehow, perhaps with his silly

significant glares cast out over significantly steepled fingers, he?s to blame. And I want Yoda to be chased off to Degobah so he?ll stop doing kung-fu and become cool and crippled and kickass again. And I want Obi-won to get shipped off to the desert and to turn back into Alec Guiness. And if there?s a pause in the jedicide?and

please let there be no pause? I hope and cross my fingers and say pretty please while knocking on wood and even pray that, please god please, no narrative line will depend upon a contract negotiation or a vote in the Senate. Did I mention killing the jedi? Oh. And the Dark Side. I want it to threaten the very extinction of all that is good or dresses in natural fibres. Because without Darth Vader (no Annie doesn?t count) or the Death Star or the

Sitting through the two prequels, I?ve watched the mysterious followers of ?an ancient religion? that were so cool

in the original movie turn into self-righteous bores who can hold their breath for a long time and jump really high.

I have to concur: the trailer for the third and last Stars Wars excites me to no end. But then so did the trailers for Episodes One and Two. Let's face it: for the past several years we've all been giddy suckers to our nostalgic yearnings. So notice where I place the blame here. It isn't in the lap of one George Lucas, for he's making film with the gifts (or lack thereof) he was given. How silly of us to expect any filmmaker to return after such a lengthy hiatus only to make the exact same thing he made before he left (and this ignores the fact that he did not direct the last two pictures of the first series). Has there been decline in his talents, or in those of his personel? Perhaps; but perhaps history will show that he and his crew (actors included, poor souls) simply ventured to take on too large a task, not really knowing what to expect from the new technology and the challenges it posed. Liam Neeson and Christopher Lee are both able-bodied performers (I refuse to praise them as highly as others), but crikey, they didn't have a clue where they were out there and obviously don't have the imagination necessary to fill in the gaps left by the blue screens that surrounded them on set. Someone does know what he's/she's doing, however, as evidenced by the progress from Episode One to Two. Though I am one of few who believes "Phantom Menace" to be superior to "Attack of the Clones" (or should I say, more bearable), simply because the former has that gripping pod race and the latter has that drippy video-game/ treadmill segment (near the climax, no less!), the second tendered visual effects far more mature than the first. Look no further than how dynamic "the camera" is in the second. In the first, we have stale static shots (like the one of Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon leaping from the ventilation shaft-- why in the world would they chose to use a shot like this when they are, according to Lucas, "creatively liberated"?) and, at best, some twirling moves in the final space "battle." In the second, during the climactic battle sequence in which Yoda gets a lift from a clone ship, the camera executes some astonishing zooms that search for their targets through the foreground layers of destuction and mayhem. It also racks focus, adjusting itself so that the action remains clear, just as a focus puller would have to do in a real staged battle sequence. These tend to be dismissed as minor "technical" accomplishments, but they are sure signs of artistic progress, from where I sit. In the end-- setting aside the aesthetics for a moment-- I am a Star

Wars fan, but right now I am not proud of it, partly because I feel as if the audience, the fans, are ahead of the game, with Lucas straggling far behind. Star Wars: Revelations (though the title is far too "Matrix") might be a sign of this. I personally would have preferred seeing a prequel trilogy that began with Anakin's teen years, giving the audience his dark turn in Episode Two, and then leaving Three for Vader, Vader, Vader. Or how about this scenario? What if Anakin post-turn was to have set out to destroy Count Dooku (a HORRIBLE moniker for a baddie) to take his place at the Emperor's side? After all, evil just craves more and more power. Now that would have been a way to investigate evil, not this romp through the tantrums of a teenage heart throb. By Colin Burnett on 2005 05 13 I'll limit my comments to the lava planet. The lava planet is something an eight year-old dreams up and gets plenty excited about when s/he decides that the living room floor is made of lava and only jumping from sofa to easy chair can save them. Aside from being the first sign of the practical and figurative application of elementary science fair curricula into increasingly sophisticated child's play, having a lava planet and planets of its kind in one's childhood is a rite of passage. Even nostalgia for it--the kitchiness and kookiness of a person of 27 jumping

on the furniture with or without liquid or pharmaceutic aid--can be fun (although nostalgia for that rite depends

equally on its passage and one's presumably moving past it, as on having done the thing in the first place). As such, getting excited about a trailer for a Star Wars prequel is fine, just like getting excited about your lava planet.

I couldn't be happier for you. Just when I am not as quick to jump up on the furniture to avoid shag carpet lava, please don't poke me with your plastic light sabre. I don't care. [Although, is Christopher Lee in this one? He and

Electricity. That's what I call the nervous charge that moves up my spine and dissipates somewhere in the back

of my head. Granted, my tastes have shifted dramatically over time, but some things have cemented themselves. Case in point: electricity is the feeling I still get when watching the STAR WARS movies, even while suffering through the bad taste on the palate left by the very sub-par PHANTOM MENACE and ATTACK OF THE CLONES. The lingering ghosts of these two films threaten to derail something so pure and innocent in my mind (or the mind of grade school Owen circa 1983) that cannot be mended by the mantra, "It's a movie for kids. It's a movie for kids..." Let's reflect: Midichloridians? Pop goes the myth. Did the filmmaker feel it right to reduce this intangible, magical idea of 'the force' to something as banal as an SAT score? Can a Jedi cheat by injecting themselves with those things? Is the Jedi Council going to have to resort to conducting mandatory testing? So many questions... Character. Dialogue. These are important things. Couldn't the rather paltry love connection in

ATTACK OF THE CLONES have been outsourced? In terms of dialogue, talk is cheap, and less is so much

more. Memo to Darth Maul: why utter a few throwaway lines when you have a freakin' two-sided lightsaber! For those choice bits of verbal exchange, I wish that Lucas remembered those Kurosawa movies that allegedly influenced him. I was shocked beyond comprehension when Liam Neeson's character did not disappear when he was killed. I still await an explanation. CGI Yoda? Does consistency mean nothing? Besides, characters are

much cooler in Muppet form. ...and so on (by this I mostly mean Jar Jar-esque lapses). Make no mistake, there is a lot at stake here with the debut of REVENGE OF THE SITH namely the collective dreams of all those STAR

WARS fans who crave an experience as intangible as The Force itself. Those dreams will have to remain,

chrysalis-form, in my head. Upon reflection, this is not such a bad thing. Of course, what is not at stake is any sort of benchmark in CGI, which Lucas seems determined to achieve. Does anyone even care about this any more? Through it all, I am often shocked at how I am willing to deny my own critical devices and give the benefit of the doubt to Mr. Lucas and the early raves for REVENGE. The fans are correct--we can get nerdy now. The time is right. The time is also right for a good ol' fashioned Jedi ass whuppin'. They really have it coming: at the very least, the events of REVENGE will have them venturing outside of their stuffy, pretentions council rooms. I would come down harder on the prequels (and I would be justified in doing so), but I suspect that another extended dearth of STAR WARS related material would cause me to reconsider my harsh stance. For now, we are stuck with what we have on our plate, and we have to finish our meal, but we may reflect upon this experience in time as character building. In REVENGE OF THE SITH The bad guys will win, Jedis will be slaughtered, Darth Vader will be born, and it will be electric: of this I have little doubt. I am resigned, with a little sadness, to say "Bring it on!!!" By Owen Livermore on 2005 05 15 In one scene midway through the trailer for REVENGE OF THE SITH, Mace Windu, flanked by three fellow Jedi. flatly comments to Chancellor Palpatine whilst igniting his purple light-sabre, "You're under arrest Chancellor." The Chancellor, wrapped in a black cloak, sneers, "Are you threatening me, Master Jedi?" and launches himself with an electrifying howl from his chair, brandishing his own light-sabre before his unlucky accusers. This one scene is proof-positive that George Lucas has finally got it right. Because of this one bit, I finally understand, as a STAR WARS fan since 1977's first film, why I've remained a STAR WARS fan in spite of the prequels' numerous flaws: Jake Lloyd's abysmal acting (even for a child actor), Lucas's cringingly racist portrayals--exemplified by Jar Jar Binks--all that and more that ruined THE PHANTOM MEANCE, and that continue to taint the otherwise relatively superior ATTACK OF THE CLONES. The trailer for EPISODE III pledges no more "Roger, Roger!" droids and midichlorians, no more giant ticks grazing like cattle in fields of astro-wheat while Hayden Christensen and Natalie Portman re-enact The Sound of Music on Naboo. STAR WARS: EPISODE III is THE EMPIRE

STRIKES BACK of the new prequel trilogy and it will not suck. It can't: all the gravitas, pathos and horror that has been lacking from the preguels permeate every sound and image of that brief scene between Windu and

Palpatine, and it's still there in the montage of shots that follow. Lucas has finally cut the crap and moved away from the kiddie audience. Following Mace Windu and Darth Sidious's confrontation, the screen cuts to black, and

the throb of kettle-drums reverberate, presaging a dire turn of events: vivid images of ships streaking away at emergency speed from planets we've never seen before; armies of hostile droids closing in on Ewan McGregor's Obi-Wan, sans lightsabre; thick smoke pouring from a leviathan space-cruiser in the upper-stratosphere of

Coruscant as it nose-dives towards the city-scape, leagues below. The trailer signals a luscious tragedy that every STAR WARS fan has hoped for since THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. This will be the STAR WARS

narrative that finally chronicles the closing of an epic age of Old World Galactic Republicanism and spacechivalry gone twisted. Throughout the trailer, Hayden Christensen's persistent scowl, his hollow eyes and unkempt hair, hint at how much The Dark Side of the Force has finally infected both him and the galaxy far, far away that Star Wars fans, through thick and thin (and man, has it been thin), have come to call home away from home. And the film's depiction of the end of the Jedi Order will make REVENGE OF THE SITH the acid test of just how well Lucas can purposely and effectively wrap up a series that started so well back in 1977 and appeared destined to end so spectacularly badly. I ready myself to witness, in all their CGI verisimilitude, the poignant events that leave Ben Kenobi and Yoda the only Jedi left in the galaxy, Anakin a disfigured and willing Sith Lord of the newly christened Emperor of the Galactic Empire, and Luke and Leia newborns in ominous times indeed. If just a trailer has the power to make one want to forgive the errors of THE PHANTOM MENACE and ATTACK OF THE CLOWNS (oops!), I can't wait to see the final product. By Friedrich Mayr on 2005 05 17 The Morning After? (Don?t worry, there are no spoilers here). I arise this morning (well, afternoon really), a bit hazy from the events of last night. Was it all a dream? Did I want it all to have been but a dream? The doorbell rings and I slip on some clothes and head downstairs. A package from mom. My birthday isn?t until next week, and we?re usually late with such things in my family. So I decide to open it in case it?s something that demands immediate attention. I pull out my new kitchen shears to cut the edge off the bulging envelope, and I can just make out the top of what looks distinctly like the packaging for a Star Wars action figure. So it is a birthday present after all, but my heart sinks as I prepare myself for a badly reproduced Senator Amidala or, perhaps worse, a Mace Windu. I pull it out and discover that, as far as these things go, she actually managed to hit the nail on the head. It?s Yoda. One of my favourite figures as a youngster was a Yoda with a real fabric robe and little brown cane. And so my mind casts back not only to last night?s midnight screening of Revenge of the Sith, but 28 years prior to my earliest movie memory: I could see 3P0 (ha!) on the screen and hear some British guy?s voice on the soundtrack, but I couldn?t understand who was talking. Nobody?s mouth was moving in conjunction with the words being spoken. I stuck my five year old elbow into my brother?s side. ?Who?s talking?? I just couldn?t understand. Where did I learn to depend so heavily on the illusion of synchresis upon which so much of the cinema is founded? I?m not sure, but regardless of my confusion I embarked upon a love affair of many

years, seeing the films over and over and over while buying up as much merchandise as possible. I remember

once seeing my mom?s purse on the dining room table, and nervous as one could ever be I stuck my adolescent hand inside and pulled out a few bills. I had heard that the little store on the corner would soon be stocking Star Wars figures, and I just had to get some more. MORE! I got there and they hadn?t yet been received. I was so disappointed, but the good little consumer in me couldn?t stand in that store without spending the money I had just liberated. So I bought some toy soldiers instead. They sucked. Man did I ever want some Star Wars figures, and these stupid little green things really didn?t measure up, like a CGI Yoda to Frank Oz?s clothed hand. Some years later, our family plagued by money problems (and not because I stole all of it? I hadn?t gone that far over to the Dark Side), we prepared to move from the house of my childhood to a small condo. We had a garage sale and sold off every single one of my many figures and accessories. We had big-ass Millenium Falcon for crying out loud! Probably got a buck for it. But I was 14 by then and told myself that it didn?t really matter. I was moving beyond, trying to follow the example of the Buddha? sorry, Yoda - letting go of my attachment to material things. But now I wish I had them back, partly because I?m a collector at heart (or perhaps just a pack-rat as more than one significant other has suggested) and partly because I have such joyous memories of playing in my room as a child: epic landscapes sculpted out of blankets and cardboard boxes, pitting these figures one against the other in horrid displays of violence the likes of which have never been represented in any of the Star Wars films, golden sunshine gleaming in through the orange curtains onto my yellow walls all the while. For better or for worse, Star Wars defined my childhood in many ways. And so my mom?s package carries a weight that is not accounted for on the postage stamps. It is the weight of an era that has come and gone, an era which so many of us had hoped to re-discover in these new prequels. Not only is this Yoda figure a symbol of many happy childhood days, it is a chance for me to grow up and do the adult thing: leave it in its original packaging and never EVER sell it no matter how high its market value rises. But wait, what?s this? Damn! In the haste of my package shearing I snipped the top off of the box. Just a centimeter or so, but certainly enough to make Comic Book Guy complain about having had to rise off of his stool to come and examine it. And so, like poor Annie, I?m caught between two worlds. Surely it would still be of value despite the clipped box, but wouldn?t I get more enjoyment out of it if it were open? Do I grow up? Or do I try to recapture days gone by? It seems to me that this has been the fundamental dilemma of the prequels since frame one. Lucas is trapped in an impossible world, a world that can never deliver on either the glory of days gone by or the passion of a fully realized present. He?s lost somewhere between childhood and the adult world, and doesn?t quite know what to do about it. This state of limbo is exemplified in the ?From Puppets to Pixels? documentary on the ?Attack of the Clones? DVD: the computer guys come to show George their new CGI Yoda, and he insists they use Empire Strikes Back as the reference point and try not to create too much of a distinction between the original puppet and its new digital incarnation. But then he says something strange, explaining to them that the original Yoda is stiff because he?s a puppet, and that perhaps this could be freed up a bit in the digital domain. So which is it George? Do you want fidelity to the puppetry of Frank Oz, or do you want to ?improve? on this by turning Yoda into something that he never was? He?d probably answer that he wants the best of both worlds, and this is the very substance of Anakin?s own downfall. It really doesn?t matter what I thought of Episode III: the raging fire of expectation was put out in my soul long before seeing any of the latest trailers. I?ve simply been dead inside, my dreams of a bright Star Wars future squashed by the detestable Jabba the Hut himself as he slithered unconvincingly across a hanger floor in a scene that was retrieved from a floor of a different kind in time for the original film?s 1997? special edition? re-release. And yet, like some automated clone droid, I got my ticket for the ?Revenge of the Sith? midnight show a week in advance and showed up three hours before the film to ensure a decent seat. It felt like an obligation, a loose end in my life that needed to be tied up. However good or bad the movie was I am happy that it?s over, for now I can get on with my life and turn towards the true promise offered in the very first text crawl of the original film: a new hope. And I have much new hope, not for whatever Lucas might do next but for the power of cinema itself to deliver all the magic that so many of us associated with the Star Wars legacy. In

new films, I guarantee that expectations have had to be adjusted to accommodate whatever feelings they have

By Randolph Jordan on 2005 05 19

inspired.

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**Splinters** 

many ways Star Wars taught me how to experience film. My early lesson from C-3P0 was that what I see on screen need not necessarily match what I hear, and that some of the greatest joys in the cinema come from a

deliberate confounding of expectation. Like the Star Wars prequels, cinema is always composed of things that

seem familiar but are strange at the same time, and we can rarely ever be really sure what to expect when the lights go down. And in this respect Lucas has succeeded mightily, for whether or not anybody really loves the

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