

Advertisement

washingtonpost.com > Arts & Living > Movies > DVD and Video Reviews

Print This Article
E-Mail This Article

Bonus Points: Weekly Guide to DVD Extras

Advertisement

The Force Is Finally With Us

By Jen Chaney
washingtonpost.com Staff Writer
Tuesday, September 21, 2004;

MOST VIEWED ARTICLES

Arts & Living On the Site

Updated 11:45 a.m. ET

- 'Amazing Race' Gets a Move On
- Native Americans Drawn to the Mall
- A Journey of Many Lifetimes
- The Force Is Finally With Us
- Zombies & Pub Life, on Tap in 'Shaun'

RSS NEWS FEEDS

Top News
DVD and Video
Reviews

What is RSS? | All RSS Feeds

'Star Wars' Trilogy (Rated PG; list price \$69.98) Release date: Sept. 21

Right now, in a galaxy not so far, far away, thousands of thirty-somethings are weeping with joy.

The "Star Wars" trilogy -- that's Episodes IV, V and VI to you stormtrooper sticklers -- finally debuts today on DVD in a four-disc set that is easily the most anticipated release of the year. The Gen Xers who feel pangs of elementary school-era nostalgia every time they hear the name Boba Fett aren't the only ones rejoicing. Movie fans of many ages will undoubtedly want to add "Star Wars" -- the most culturally pervasive movie series of all time -- to their DVD libraries.

The long-awaited set includes only George Lucas's 1997 special-edition versions of the films, each with a few recently added tweaks, a fact that has rankled "Star Wars" purists who covet the original editions from the 1970s and '80s. It's unclear why Lucas chose not to follow the path set by friend Steven Spielberg, who wisely released both the original and 20th-anniversary editions of "E.T." on DVD in 2002. But Lucas's recent interview with Entertainment Weekly offers a clue.

"When 'Star Wars' came out, I said it didn't turn out the way I wanted -- it's 25 percent of what I wanted it to be," Lucas told the magazine. "So the choice came down to, do I please myself and [finally] make the movie that I wanted, or do I allow the audience to see the half-finished version that they fell in love with?"



Chewie, C-3PO, Princess Leia and Han Solo are headed to your home in the "Star Wars" Trilogy DVD box set. (Reuters/HO/Lucasfilm Ltd)

Online Discussion

- Talk to 'Star Wars' DVD Producer Van Ling, Sept. 21 at Noon ET

From the Post Archives

- Desson Thomson on 'Star Wars' Reissue
- Rita Kempley on 'Star Wars' Reissue
- Thomson on 'Return of the Jedi' Reissue
- Kempley on 'Return of the Jedi' Reissue
- Feature: 'Space Invasion'
- Profile: Mark Hamill
- The Search for Princess Leia

More Bonus Points

- Bonus Points Archive
- What's On DVD
- Coming Soon to DVD

Personal Tech

- Home Entertainment Section: Reviews of TVs, DVD players and more

Free E-mail Newsletters

- Today's Headlines & Columnists See a Sample | Sign Up Now
- Breaking News Alerts See a Sample | Sign Up Now

FEATURED ADVERTISER LINKS

- "Perfect" Cure for Heart Disease
- Retire Overseas! Details & FREE Report
- Outlawed for 41 years--now legal again
- A Perfect Stock In An Imperfect World... FREE
- Refinance Now & Save \$1000s! Click Here

Apparently, George did it his way. Despite that, this DVD still ranks as the best of the year so far. I empathize with the purists who adamantly refuse to buy the "corrected" versions of the films, but let's face it: They're also the same people who will slyly try to borrow your copy of "Star Wars" because they want to watch all of the extra features.

And what features they are: commentary tracks on all of the films; three featurettes: "The Characters of Star Wars," "The Birth of the Lightsaber" and "The Force Is With Them: The Legacy of Star Wars"; a preview of Episode III, coming to theaters next year; delightfully retro trailers and teasers; a look at the making of the Episode III video game; and the piece de resistance, the 2.5-hour documentary "Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars Trilogy."

Sure, it would have been nice to see "The Star Wars Holiday Special," but fans honestly can't ask for much more than the multiple hours' worth of viewing material packed onto that fourth bonus disc. So let the Ewok celebration begin. Not only is the Force finally with us on DVD, but it's arrived in a comprehensive, smart and beautiful box set that every Wookiee in the family will watch again and again.

Most Impressive Bonus Point

While most DVD documentaries tend to get dull after the first half-hour, "Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars Trilogy" is informative and compelling for every one of its 150 minutes. In short, it's the best DVD documentary I've ever seen.

Featuring interviews with Lucas, numerous crew members, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford and even journalists Bill Moyer and Walter Cronkite, it's a thorough, entertaining look at the "Star Wars" phenomenon. The highlights are too numerous to mention, but here are a few:

- Footage of Kurt Russell, Perry King, Cindy Williams and Berlin lead vocalist Terri Nunn auditioning for lead roles in "Wars."
- The stars sharing that Lucas didn't give them much direction, other than saying, "Faster, more intensity."
- The revelation that Hamill found out Darth Vader is Luke's father a few minutes before filming the climactic scene in "Empire Strikes Back."
- A laugh-out-loud quote from Fisher about the proliferation of "Star Wars" merchandise: "We signed away our likenesses. When I look in the mirror, I have to pay George a couple of bucks."

Most Surprising Bonus Point

I've said many times that I don't like DVD photo galleries. I take that back: I don't like them unless they're on the "Star Wars" DVD. Numerous production stills from the trilogy are featured along with often amusing captions, including one that suggests C-3PO has spent "a long night ... getting lubed at the Droid Cantina."

Most Disturbing Bonus Point

The "Episode III: Making of the Game" featurette, which shows footage of Episode II and III star Hayden Christensen working with video game designers, may cause concern among fans who believe the recent "Star Wars" installments are more about selling products than satisfying fans. Honestly, does Darth Vader really need to be bothered by a bunch of gaming geeks?

Most Amusing Bonus Point

Watch every featurette to the end; several include additional footage. My personal favorite: The deleted scenes at the end of "The Characters of Star Wars," including footage of the Ewoks dominating a pack of stormtroopers while the director yells "Beat the [expletive] out of them!" For more outtakes, go to the Video Games and Still Galleries menu screen, hit 1138 on your remote (or +10, then 138 if you have an older remote) and select the box next to R2D2 to access an Easter egg. Then laugh it up, fuzzballs.

Coming in next week's "Bonus Points": Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet in the brain-teasing "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

"Bonus Points," which reviews the features on the latest DVD releases, is now a weekly column. If you have feedback about the column or want to suggest a DVD for review, e-mail Jen Chaney.

[Print This Article](#)

[E-Mail This Article](#)

[Permission to Republish](#)

© 2004 Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive

Advertising Links by Google

[What's this?](#)

Free Star Wars DVD Set

Get the Star Wars Trilogy for Free! We have 10,000 copies to give away.
www.starwarsdvd.net

Want Free Star Wars DVDs?

Star Wars DVD Box Set - Free. Only Requires Email. (aff)
GiftFox.com

Star Wars DVDs

Compare Prices on Videos & DVDs Read Reviews & Shop at Pricegrabber
www.pricegrabber.com

Advertisement

SEARCH:  



[Top 20 E-mailed Articles](#)

© Copyright 1996-2004 The Washington Post Company | [User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) | [Rights and Permissions](#) | [Home](#)

washingtonpost.com: [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Work at washingtonpost.com](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Media Center](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Archives](#)
[E-mail Newsletters](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Wireless Access](#) | [Our headlines on your site](#) | [Make Us Your Homepage](#) | [mywashingtonpost.com](#)
The Washington Post: [Subscribe](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Electronic Edition](#) | [Online Photo Store](#)
The Washington Post Company: [Information](#) | [Other Post Co. Websites](#)