

## Chapter 9

# The Marketing of The Force: Fans, Media and the Economics of *Star Wars*

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→ 'I'm retiring,' Lucas said. 'I'm moving away from the business, from the company, from all this kind of stuff'. In an interview with Bryan Curtis, after thirty-five years with *Star Wars*, George Lucas stated he is walking away. Still, no one expected his retirement to be accompanied with the \$4 billion sale of the franchise to Disney. Was it that easy for Lucas to walk away from the *Star Wars* franchise, from the empire that he created that went on to become the phenomenon that it is today?

In an interview with *The New York Times*, conducted in conjunction of the US cinema release of *Red Tails* (Hemingway, 2012), a World War II drama, Lucas cites fans' negative reactions to his recent efforts in the release of *The Complete Saga* in Blu-ray on 16 September 2011. 'On the Internet, all those same guys that are complaining I made a change are *completely* changing the movie,' Lucas says, referring to fans who, like the dreaded studios, have done their own forcible re-edits. 'I'm saying: "Fine. But my movie, with my name on it, that says I did it, needs to be the way I want it".'

Lucas has always had issues with fans and keeping to his vision of *Star Wars*, and this might have been the last upshot in the 35-year saga between Lucas and 'fans'. Though Howard Roffman, president of Lucas Licensing, stated in 2007, 'George has been pretty clear that he will not make another *Star Wars* movie that's based on the saga of the Skywalker family [...] It's conceivable that some of the things that we will do on television could brave some expression in a movie theater, but if we did that it would be more as a way of promoting the television'. Now all this has obviously changed with the release of Episode 7 looming in the near future (planned for 2015).

*Star Wars* has become a global empire, and the consumption of its artefacts is but one aspect of the scope of the franchise. If the survival of the *Star Wars* universe depended solely upon the marketing of the films' merchandise, the *Star Wars* franchise would have collapsed long ago and faded into childhood memories. That did not happen. *Star Wars* became twentieth-century mythology. According to Andrew Gordon:

Lucas created a myth for our times, fashioned out of bits and pieces of twentieth-century American popular mythology – old movies, science fiction, television, and comic books – but held together at its most basic level by the standard pattern of the adventures of a mythic hero. *Star Wars* is a masterpiece of synthesis, a triumph of American ingenuity and resourcefulness, demonstrating how the old may be made new again: Lucas raided the junkyards of our popular culture and rigged a working myth out of scrap [...] He lifted parts, openly and lovingly, from various popular culture genres, but the engine that runs it is the 'monomyth'.

*Star Wars*' survival and ongoing success depends upon the deep, mythological connections that fans have constructed. One can easily see these connections when compared to Joseph Campbell's *Four Functions of Myth*:

1. *The Mystical Function* – that which evokes a sense of awe in the individual.
2. *The Cosmological Function* – to present an image of the cosmos, an image of the universe round about, that will maintain and elicit this experience of awe and explain everything that one comes into contact with in the universe.
3. *The Sociological Function* – to validate and maintain a certain sociological system; a shared set of rights and wrongs, proprieties or improprieties, on which one's particular



**READY ARE YOU?  
WHAT KNOW YOU  
OF READY?  
FOR EIGHT HUNDRED  
YEARS HAVE I  
TRAINED JEDI.  
MY OWN COUNSEL  
WILL I KEEP ON  
WHO IS TO BE TRAINED.**

YODA  
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

