

Star Wars on National Public Radio: A myth to withstand the Reagan era

From "A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away..." *Star Wars* became the biggest box office hit in movie history, making the evil ambitions of Darth Vader, the courage of Princess Leia, and the dreams of Luke Skywalker the common experience of millions of us on Spaceship Earth. Now the saga of how the Rebel Alliance fought back against the awesome technology of the Empire is reaching a new audience as National Public Radio broadcasts the 13-part serial *Star Wars* over its network stations.

In Eugene NPR-affiliates KWAX and KLCC are presenting the serial at prime listening times, and response has been enthusiastic, say staff members at both stations. Don Hein, news director at KLCC and host of the "Sunday Morning" show during the which the *Star Wars* episodes play, says that "for the first couple of weeks the phones were ringing off the hook with many listeners wanting to know how they could get copies of the broadcast." Denny Guehler, promotions director at KWAX, adds, "*Star Wars* has brought a lot of younger people into radio — and radio drama specifically. The show makes magic with sound that we're used to experiencing visually."

The reliance of the drama on sound rather than sight is, of course, one key way the radio *Star Wars* is different from the movie. What's interesting, though, is that as the radio drama unfolds, the peculiar strengths and limitations of the radio medium are making for an experience more compelling than the movie's.

Granted for anyone who was jazzed by the Academy Award-winning special effects of Luke's light saber or of the Millennium Falcon starcruiser accelerating into hyperdrive, their mere audio counterparts will probably be disappointing, (the light saber's sound is made, NPR's promotional material confesses, from a mix of an

old movie projector's whir and a picture tube's hum). But the movie's dazzling special effects and rapid pace kept attention on things happening, on the plot. The radio version, coming as it does in 13 installments a week apart, puts the emphasis on the relationships between the characters, and gives us a whole richer story in the process.

While the movie focuses on the swashbuckling adventures of its young hero, Luke, the radio series, at least through episode 9 to date, has been much more interested in the role of Princess Leia Organa. From the film's damsel in distress saved in the nick of time, Leia emerges on radio as the moral heart of the story. It is Leia, as ambassador from her home planet of Alderaan, who attempts to keep alive the Rebel climax in the most stirring moment in the series so far.

Captured and condemned to death by the Empire's Governor Tarkin, Leia is first made to witness the Death Star's destruction of Alderaan. "Oh, Tarkin," she cries, "If ever there were a shred of humanity in you or these twisted creatures of yours, it's dead now. You're at war with life itself. You are enemies of the Universe. Your Empire is doomed." Nothing distracts us, on radio, from the full conviction of these words.

"You're at war with Life itself," Leia reproaches Tarkin, and powerful reverberations are set up in us. One of the reasons the *Star Wars* story is so popular is that it concerns itself with primal forces embodied in mythic figures. There's Luke, the unsung youth who dreams of a woman and a challenge worth of his hopes; Leia, the virtuous young woman, activist for justice and liberty; Darth Vader, the fallen hero, corrupted by desire for unbridled power. What makes this primal *Star Wars* a myth for us is the peculiarly modern terms of the opposition between good

and evil forces.

The Empire's power is in the external control symbolized by the Death Star, "the mightiest war machine that human kind has ever produced," Tarkin tells Leia. "It's obscene," she replies. The strength of the Rebel Alliance is in The Force, a power inherent in the Universe which the individual can learn to channel only after much discipline. *Star Wars* is about the revolution that arises when a government places such an emphasis on maintaining control that it becomes capable of developing a technology that can, as Tarkin exults, "destroy entire planets."

Now does this remind you of anything? What technology do we have today that could destroy an entire planet?

The radio *Star Wars* would appear to be extremely timely in the face of the Reagan administration which, in the guise of "getting government off our backs," would increase spending for warfare and nuclear power. If you suspect *Star Wars* might be more than science fiction, consider what the former director of the United States Defense Intelligence Agency said about the aftermath of the Columbia space shuttle. "Eventually we will have a very significant part of our military capability in space," Lt. General Daniel O. Graham told Newsweek recently. "The shuttle helps bring that day closer."

Next year alone, the Pentagon will expand its space warfare budget by \$5.8 billion.

National Public Radio, along with its innovative programming like the *Star Wars* series, may lose all its funding under the Administration's current plan.

"A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, there came a time of Revolution..." *Star Wars* airs at 7:30 p.m. Saturdays on KWAX (99.1FM) and 11:30 a.m. Sundays on KLCC (89.7 FM).

— Joe Cone

Orders
To Go



Phone
343-6234

PEKING MANDARIN RESTAURANT

Introducing Our Special
Quick Northern Chinese Lunch
Mon.-Fri. 11:30 AM-2:00 PM

MONDAY— Kung-Poa Chicken
(With Red Pepper and Peanuts)
TUESDAY— Beef Broccoli With Oyster Sauce
WEDNESDAY— Bean Curds Peking Style
THURSDAY— Szechuan Double Cooked Sliced Pork
FRIDAY— Shrimp with Lobster Sauce

All Served with Steamed or Fried Rice, Tea and Fortune Cookie

All For Just
\$2.75

Orders To Go
\$2.50

Phone 343-6234

1280 Hilyard Street

Aunt Lucy's
Wine Loft

1340 Alder

IN
CO-OPERATION
WITH



881 E. 13th

present...

A TASTING OF OREGON REISLINGS

Here's a unique opportunity to enjoy six of
Oregon's White Rieslings

HINMAN	1980	TUALATIN	1979
CHATEAU BENOIT	1980	ALPINE	1980
EYRIE	1979	HILLCREST	1979

Saturday, May 9th at 7:00 pm
Upstairs at Aunt Lucy's Wine Loft

1340 Alder

Reservations made at either Aunt Lucy's Wine Loft
or Valentine's Wine & Cheese.
\$8.50 payable in advance.

dis'ser ta'tions

Quick and inexpensive:

We are graduate school approved and guarantee our copies to pass graduate school requirements and most orders can be completed within 24 hours.

We can make copies
on any subject!

Call for details.

EUGENE PRINT
Two locations:
2387 West 11th, 686-9799
20 East 13th, 484-2601

PIANO RECITAL

Nathan
Buckner



Works by Scarlatti, Haydn, Chopin,
Brahms, Liszt, Prokofiev

GERLINGER LOUNGE

MAY 12 • 8:00 P.M.

ADMISSION FREE

RECEPTION FOLLOWING

The
EMU Cultural Forum
Presents

1981 Undergraduate Art Show

Featuring selected art work in a variety
of media by University students.

Opening reception Sunday, May 10, 2-4 p.m.
Exhibit runs through Saturday, May 16

Gallery hours: 11:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

Room 167 Erb Memorial Union

Recycle this paper