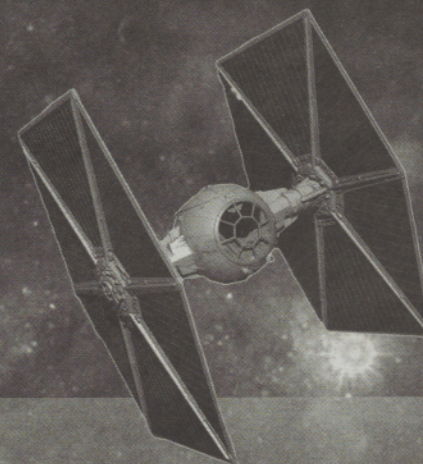




STAR WARS

A GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE



NEW COMICS EXPAND THE EXPANDED UNIVERSE

By Isaac Soper
Arts & Culture Editor

When most people think of comic books, two publishers come to mind: DC and Marvel. Dark Horse Comics, located in Milwaukee, is the largest independent comic book publisher in the world and the producer of all Star Wars comics has just released a new comic book series that they claim is "The perfect entry point into the Star Wars galaxy!"

Dark Horse has been publishing Star Wars comics since 1990, crafting stories that give deeper insight and interest into our favorite galaxy far, far away.

In 2006, Dark Horse began the publication of the "Knights of the Old Republic" ("KotOR") monthly comic book series, based on the ever-popular RPG video game of the same title, which is set eight years prior to the events in the first video game. The series was very unique and exciting, detailing a time that was otherwise unknown to many Star Wars fans and only described in the early '90s "Tales of the Jedi" comics.

In January, Dark Horse began the continuation of the "KotOR" comic books series; as of today, two issues of the new comic have been released.

The original comics focused around the adventures of an unlucky, young peace-loving Jedi Padawan named Zayne Carrick, set approximately 3,948 years "before the Battle of Yavin" (a common designation to label time in the Star Wars universe). Carrick finds himself betrayed by the Jedi Masters from his temple, who have slain all of the other Padawans in an attempt to stop the possible return of the Sith.

The murders are framed on Carrick; the storyline follows him as he learns to live as an outlaw with his companions, while hiding from, and finally confronting, his former Jedi Masters.

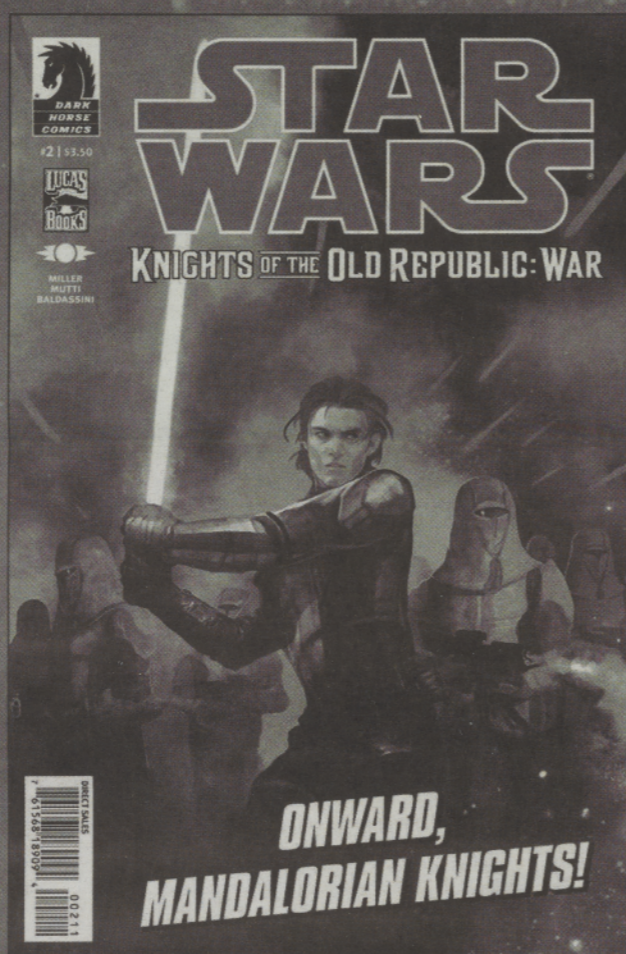
The original comic had a four-year run, with 50 comics in the series. The series heavily featured the Jedi and the Mandalorians, the direct descendants of fan-favorite bounty hunter Boba Fett.

The second series of "KotOR" is entitled "Knights of the Old Republic: War," and takes place shortly after the final events in the last series. "War" follows Carrick as the Jedi enter into the Mandalorian Wars, to the great pleasure of the Republic and the Jedi leader Revan.

The first issue of the new series presents a group of Jedi Knights entering the battlefield as they attempt to turn the tide of the battle against a group of ruthless Mandalorian invaders. The Jedi cannot fight off the Mandalorians alone; a drop ship carries a group of militia soldiers into the battle to assist the Jedi, also on board the ship is the now ex-Jedi Padawan, Zayne Carrick.

As the story progresses, Carrick finds himself getting into dangerous situations and double-crosses, with the Force leading him on a strange journey once again.

The comic is visually exceptional, with a varying artistic style, due to the fact that multiple artists penned the comic throughout its run. John Jackson Miller, who also wrote the previous "KotOR" series, is writing "War," along with a few other projects on the side.



Contributed by Dark Horse Comics Inc.

The previous comics in the franchise have been fantastic character-driven stories that hold interest and excitement throughout all 50 issues. When "KotOR" ended, it left fans wanting more and thankfully Miller and Dark Horse have obliged.

The third issue of "KotOR: War" is available for pre-order through the Dark Horse Comics website and will be released March 14.

The Jedi Code, as written by Luke Skywalker:

"Jedi are the guardians of peace in the galaxy.

Jedi use their powers to defend and to protect.

Jedi respect all life, in any form.

Jedi serve others rather than ruling over them, for the good of the galaxy.

Jedi seek to improve themselves through knowledge and training."

ADDING A THIRD DIMENSION ENHANCES VISUAL EXPERIENCE, NOT STORY

By Chris Taylor
The Clackamas Print

The lights dim as the opening sequence commences. The theme kicks up, the prologue rolls and the audience cheers with thunderous applause. "Star Wars: The Phantom Menace" has made a triumphant return to the big screen, now in 3D.

Most people probably know the story, but if you don't, I recommend you go see it for yourself. You can see it for the first time on the big screen in 3D or at Century Theaters XD, which is the latest in movie presentation. Now you may be wondering "Why go see it in theaters? I've already seen it." Well that may be true, but you haven't seen it like this.

I know more often than not, 3D is nothing but hype, with a few moments of "3D action popping out of the screen." What some people may not know is that 3D is more than just things coming out of the screen, it is adding a new layer and more depth to the film, on top of visual touch ups such as color, a few "deleted" scenes and a digitalized Yoda to round out this "childhood classic."

The moments when the 3D was the most present, was during the pod race on Tatooine and the final battle between Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon and Darth Maul. The 3D doesn't pop out as much as you'd expect, but it's still very noticeable to anyone who's paying attention, which I'm sure you would be if you were paying to see it in 3D. Also, whenever there were subtitles, they would stand out against the screen, almost seeming touchable with your hands. That's not all, throughout the movie, in

comparison to the original VHS version: the movie has more depth, with the city of Coruscant rising out above the skyline, the under-water city of Otoh Gunga being a marvel in the swamps of Naboo. Also, the canyon of the Tatooine pod race wasn't too shabby either.

There's, of course, the color enhancement. As you may know, back in the '90s technology wasn't what it is today. So when "Phantom Menace" was scheduled to be re-released for 3D, some changes were made to accommodate the occasion. The color was enhanced, giving the lightsabers and blaster bolts a more vibrant color, the costumes a bit more shine, the battle scenes more power and the scenery a more vivid appearance. Compared to the original version, the color was noticeably better.

The biggest surprise of the movie was the replacement of Yoda. In the original version, Yoda was a puppet, as he had been in episodes five and six, most commonly referred to as the "Original Trilogy". Back when "Phantom Menace" was released, the technology for CGI was still in the works and wasn't nearly as dominant as it is in modern movies. But with the re-release, George Lucas saw this as an opportunity to put today's technology to use and fully integrate a CGI Yoda, doing away with the old puppet and adding a bit more believability to the character himself.

All in all, the re-release of "Phantom Menace" was a pretty good success; it really opened the doors for a re-release of the rest of the beloved series that is Star Wars. I recommend whether you've seen it or not to go to the theaters and see the movie in 3D, if not for the entertainment value, then for the sake of seeing a classic film. It's well worth the price of admission.

THIS TIME, WE'RE FLYING SOLO

A long time ago, in a galaxy that I call home, I witnessed "Star Wars" for the first time. When I heard about the re-release of "Star Wars Episode I" in 3D, I was excited and disheartened; last week I was discussing it with someone and they asked me if I knew when "Star Wars" episodes VII, VIII and IX were coming out, with a tear in my eye, I said, "Never."

We do have "Episode I" and the other re-releases of the "Star Wars Saga" to look forward to though; if anyone can make a 3D reboot look good, it's Lucasfilm.

I am a Star Wars "Super Fan." I wouldn't consider myself by any means an "avid collector" or an "addict," but I do have a small collection of literature and memorabilia, some of my favorites being my Star Wars LEGOs, my "Essential Guide to Characters" and the Boba Fett bobble head that sits on my desk. I even have my original, heavily-customized dueling lightsaber at home from my glory days of bartending in Lightsaber Club at Oregon City High School. Yes, I may sound like a ten year old. No, I will not retate that.

I know many facts about the Star Wars Universe. I love how I use the word "facts," like it's actually a fact that the Millennium Falcon made the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs. I realize that the Star Wars Universe is science fiction, but at the same time, it is truly more.

It's funny that I think that some things about Star Wars are "common knowledge." — what a strange notion. You mean that you didn't know that Boba Fett escaped from the Sarlacc Pit after "Return of the Jedi"?

The first time I saw "A New Hope" was on a small television with my dad. I was instantly hooked. Watching the other films reeled me in. Novels came next, followed by video games and comics, hook, line and tractor beam.

The underlying themes presented in the series hold so much more than a mere sci-fi franchise. The path of the Jedi is a righteous one: Light overcoming darkness, redemption, meditation — all of these are things that I desire within myself.

"Do or do not, there is no try," although spoken by Yoda, is a proverb I want to live by.

I have spent way too much time with my closest friends watching and quoting the "Star Wars" saga, particularly the original trilogy. Not to say that I didn't enjoy Episode I when I first saw it, but alas, I was 10 when "The Phantom Menace" came out.

Star Wars is so much more than a film saga, it is a lifestyle. Even the 501st Garrison occupies Portland. The Jedi Code holds many ideals that ring true to cultures all over the world.

Though the "Sequel Trilogy" will never be released, and the supposedly planned "Live-Action Series" is on hold due to budget restraints, "The Clone Wars" gives decent insight into the Expanded Universe. The comics and novels fill in nearly every other gap, from (currently) thousands of years prior to the films, to one hundred years after.

Whether you are a fan of the films, the Expanded Universe or the values and ideology, Star Wars will continue in our hearts, our minds and our souls.

I've heard rumor that Lucasfilm will only be re-releasing the other five films in 3D if "The Phantom Menace" does well. Even if you didn't like the movie originally, for the sake of "Empire" and "Jedi," please see "Episode I." Do it for me, for all of us that never got to see the "Original Trilogy" on the silver screen.

And remember: the Force will be with you, always.

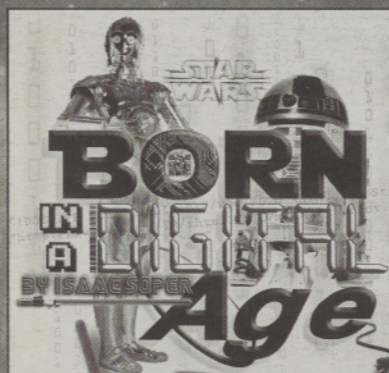


Illustration by Anna Markson



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