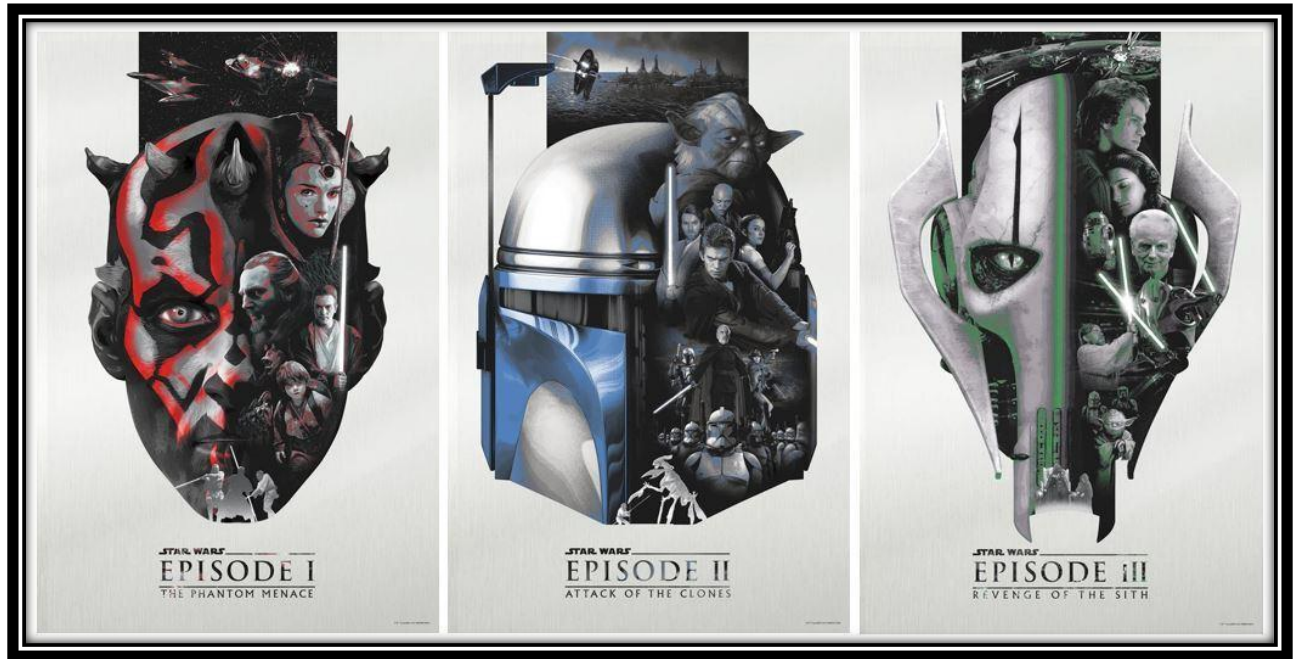# HOW I REWROTE THE *STAR WARS* PREQUEL TRILOGY

INTRO: Welcome to my rewrites for the *Star Wars* Prequel Trilogy – which is part of my larger series where I am rewriting the entire Skywalker Saga by focusing specifically on Episodes 1 – 3 and Episodes 7 – 9. For those of you who are new to my channel, my rewrites for the *Star Wars* Sequel Trilogy are already complete and you can watch those videos here along with the rewrite video I've already published for *Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* (which I renamed *The Guardians of Peace*).

In this doc, I'm going to go over the research I conducted to prepare for this rewrite series and what mentality and thought process I am choosing to approach this project with. When it comes to my rewrites, I like to treat them as patients and analyze them by diagnosing which areas could be improved and then prescribe a treatment as to how I plan to address said areas of improvement. That being said, these rewrites are just writing exercises written by *Star Wars* fans for other *Star Wars* fans. They are just subjective pieces of fan fiction and are not meant to be valid critiques or retcons of the *Star Wars* saga. They are also not meant to be hate letters to George Lucas and the rest of his team at Lucasfilm, but rather more of a love letter to the franchise and the wonderful world George created.

MY DIAGNOSIS: After doing some research on the making of the prequel trilogy and studying the work ethics of George Lucas and his creative team, I would have to say that George had an amazing vision for what he wanted his prequels to be, and the biggest reason why the execution of such a great concept fell flat was because George wrote, directed, and produced all three films. Compare that to how the original trilogy was produced, where George only wrote and directed Episode 4, and brought in people to help him write and direct Episodes 5 and 6, and the end result is a night-and-day difference when compared to that of the prequels. After watching interviews and behind-the-scenes documentaries, listening to testimonies, reading the art books of the films, and just doing as much research as I possibly can, I've come to the conclusion that George Lucas is the biggest reason why the prequels failed to reach their full potential as the cinematic achievements his previous *Star Wars* films were. I know that sounds harsh and I don't mean it to be, so allow me to explain. (Again, I just want to reiterate that this rewrite isn't meant to be a hate letter towards George so please remember that as you read the following.)
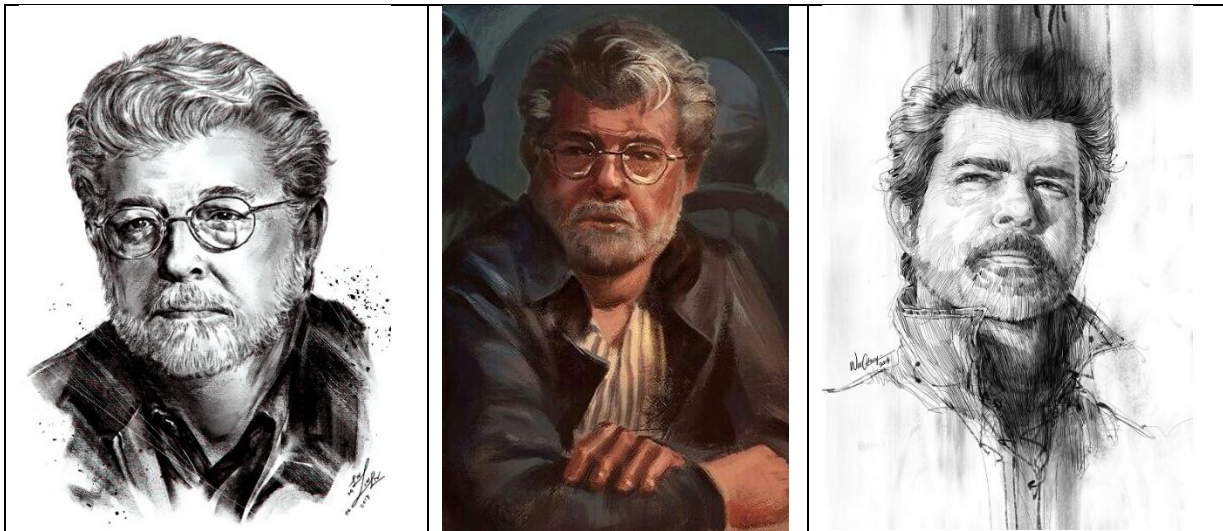

George Lucas, creator of Star Wars

As unforgiving as it sounds to say that George is the reason why the prequel trilogy failed, George – as CEO of Lucasfilm – had too much power over these films and his own stubbornness and close-mindedness got the better of him. Now I know that it's super easy to point fingers and blame that *one* person for why something went wrong, and it's a lot harder to be the bigger person, pull your sleeves

up and actually get your hands dirty doing the hard work to fix a bad situation and make it better. So that's not what I'm trying to do here. I'm not just sitting off to the sidelines booing George from my safe space behind a keyboard. I don't want to be a coward and just nail him to the cross with brutal criticisms and not try to take on the same challenges he did. I want to actually do the hard work and try to make these prequels good too. But even then, that doesn't give me a right to hate on Geroge either. Which I know is the default setting that a lot of *Star Wars* fans resort to in general when it comes to talking about why the prequels are not as good as the originals. "Oh no, a pre-Disney *Star Wars* film was bad. Blame George."

George Walton Lucas Jr.
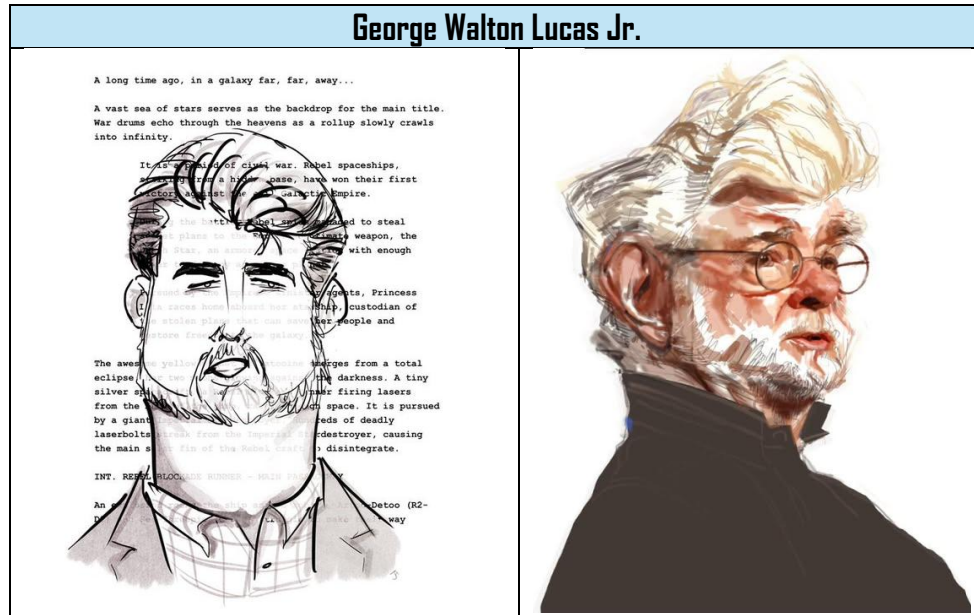
While there is some truth to that...it's not 100% true. I will admit that some of that criticism George received for the prequels was justified and valid, but the pure hatred and backlash he received from the fanbase was not. I'll say this as both an objective writer and a longtime fan of the franchise, George has a brilliant imagination, and he truly is a visionary. On a technical level, the man is a genius. Especially when it came to technological advancements of VFX. Nobody can deny the vast contributions he's made to the film industry by helping pioneer modern VFX and CGI to what it is today. But on a collaborative level as both a director and a writer, George's performance was not as groundbreaking. Visionary directors like Zack Snyder, Michael Bay and George Lucas are all double-edged swords when it comes to being an artist. Because they have just as many bad ideas as they have good ideas, and they want to be in control of *everything*, but the thing about visionaries is that they have a tendency to be persistent and stubborn with *all* of their ideas, convincing themselves and everyone else around them that *every* one of their ideas is a good idea. Which ultimately results in these visionaries shooting themselves in the foot with these bad ideas that they just *refused* to let go of or revise and edit.
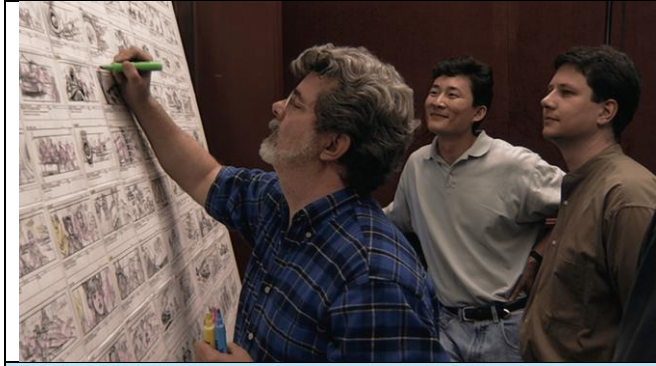
George approving storyboards for the prequels.

George analyzing the Death Star 2.0 miniature.

When it comes to VFX and visual storytelling, I 100% think that George Lucas is a genius. But the problem with geniuses is that their greatest strength – which is their intellect – is also their greatest weakness. If you take a look at history, you can see that just about every genius that has ever graced the human species has been described as getting stuck in their own head and as a result of that, geniuses are very difficult people to collaborate with. To the point where it makes it impossible to work with them. As a writer and a worldbuilder, George is bafflingly inconsistent and unorganized, making up stuff on the fly and constantly retconning existing lore and characters. George is notorious for making things up as he went along and letting his imagination run in all directions. The man could never just come up with one idea and just stick with it. On a regular basis, he would spontaneously change a major idea or concept like the location of the Act 3 climax or the name of a major character about 3 to 5 times after the entire crew was already wrapping up pre-production, throwing the rest of his collaborative team for a loop as they had to scramble to try to keep up with George's rapid and everchanging vision. All the while trying not to crack under the stress and pressure of meeting the deadline while *ALSO* dealing with a boss who keeps on throwing wrenches in your plans.

The transition from puppet Yoda to CGI Yoda is just one of the many pioneering milestones George achieved in the realm of digital effects by advancing computer graphic technology.

There's a reason why producer Rick McCallum was always stressed out while working on the prequels. George was not someone who planned for the future. He planned for the present and figured he could just wing it the rest of the way. So in that way, you could consider him unorganized. As a

screenwriter, he's definitely a pantser, and not a plotter. Which definitely works for some projects, but when you're creating a massive trilogy on this scale that is meant to be part of an epic six-film saga, you *need* to be organized in order for it to be good. You can't just improvise and hope for the best because you got lucky in the past. Which is exactly what George planned on doing and he be damned if anyone was going to convince him to change his ways. You have to realize that George is a Baby Boomer and for better or for worse, being hardheaded and inflexible is an integral part of that generation's identity. That's just the way that generation was raised, and those same old-school beliefs and ideas were what George used to pilot his creation of the *Star Wars* franchise.

George was notorious for only giving his actors the same line of instruction every single time they asked him for feedback. He'd just say, "do it faster, and with more intensity" *every time* regardless of the scenario or context.


He also wasn't really open to truly working with others. Yes, he would hire people to help him with his movies, but everything had to be done *his* way or the *high* way. He wasn't open to compromise, collaboration, or criticism. So in a way, you could say that he didn't play well with others. He didn't like to share. His need to micromanage everyone and everything is another reason why the *Star Wars* films suffered the way they did. It's why Irvin Kershner refused to return to direct Episode 6. Not to mention George's close-mindedness is one of the several reasons why he and Gary Kurtz, the producer of Episodes 4 and 5, split ways. Even though Kurtz was reportedly known for going overschedule and overbudget on Episodes 4 and 5, the man understood how to tell a good story extremely well, and his disagreements with George's ideas for Episode 6 (like introducing a second Death Star and not killing off Han Solo so they could sell more toys) are the exact same kind of bad ideas that George brought on board for the prequel trilogy. (On a quick side note, in defense of Gary Kurtz, even if he was known for going overschedule and overbudget, he couldn't have been *that* bad at his job otherwise I find it hard to believe that Jim Henson – another filmmaking genius - would've hired him to help produce *The Dark Crystal* after Kurtz left Lucasfilm.)

| Gary Kurtz	Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal*
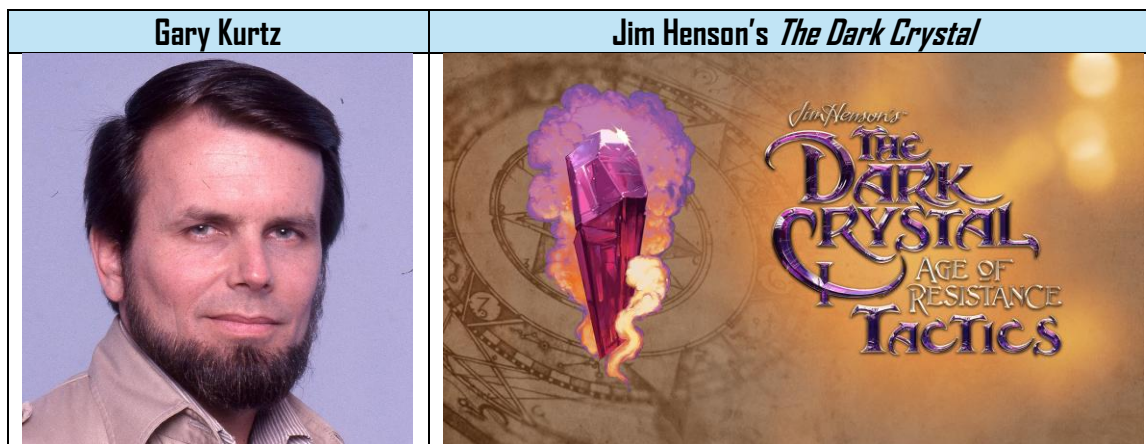
Except at this time in the 1990s, George was CEO of a much more successful Lucasfilm, and there really wasn't anybody around who could tell George "no" or "try this instead" or "you need to go back and make some changes". For better or for worse, George had free reign to do whatever he wanted with his own movies. Story be damned. Needless to say, a lack of preparation, consistency, and open-mindedness are the reasons why the prequels suffered so much.

MY TREATMENT: Now, as always, when it comes to my rewrites, I always try to make them as realistic as possible, keeping my version of the story within the same rules and guidelines that the original writers had to follow. But seeing how there really weren't any restrictions on this film since CEO George Lucas was allowed to do whatever the Hell he wanted, how I want to go about fixing this, is I want to adopt Peter Jackson's approach as a writer, director and producer while working on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and imagine a world where George was actually open to hiring writers and directors to help him and they applied PJ's pre-production process to our hypothetical version of the prequel trilogy.

George Lucas on set of *Star Wars*.	Peter Jackson on set of *Lord of the Rings*.
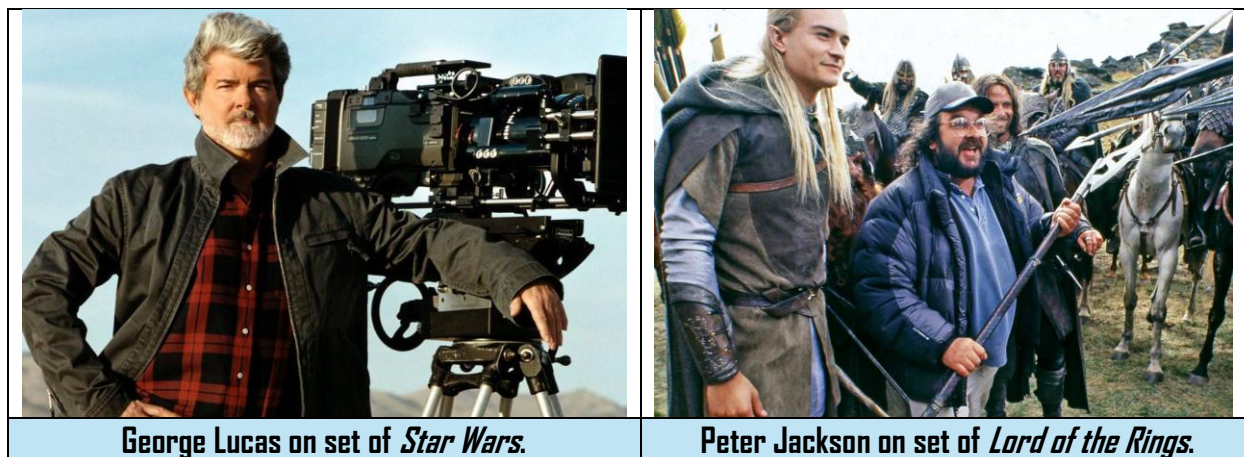
While working on *LOTR*, Jackson spent 3 ½ years working hand-in-hand with his team on designing the entire trilogy before they started shooting. Whereas George designed the film *as* he was writing it and filming it, going back to reshoot scenes that he had changed his mind on, scrapping them,

reediting them, then going back and rewriting them all over again. It's sloppy. What I think is really cool is that true to his nature as a writer who likes to improvise and pants rather than plot, George had his concept artists create a *bunch* of artwork based on a few rough ideas that he had for the story, and then decided to write scenes and story beats around the various pieces of artwork each of his designers had come up with. He would then try to stitch all of these set pieces that didn't really go together into a cohesive story like it was Frankenstein's monster or something. And he did this for each and every film in the prequel trilogy, which really didn't do him any favors because he was just writing himself more and more into a corner with each sequel, prompting George to just write himself out of those corners by retconning his own worldbuilding for the sake of telling the story he wanted to tell at the present moment with no regards for continuity.
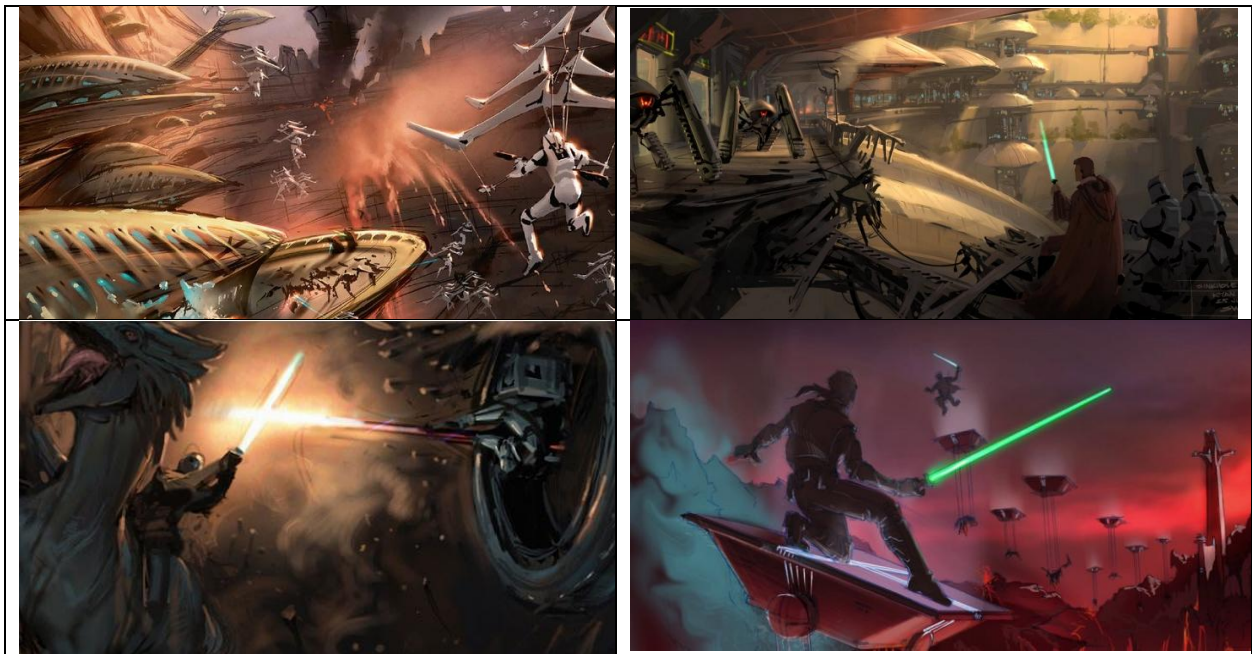
Concept art for Episode 3 that would later evolve into official scenes in the final draft of the script.

For these rewrites, I want to imagine a scenario where we approach the prequel trilogy with a structured and organized game plan like PJ did with his *LOTR* trilogy and take our time with the story. We could still have that really cool experiment of designing a story around images first rather than coming up with images around a story, which is the way a film is traditionally made. But the key is that once we get all of the different images, ideas, plot beats, and designs organized, we need to sit down and really work on filtering all of these ideas into a strong story from start to finish. There needs to be a healthy amount of plotting and pantsing, maybe with 70% plotting and 30% pantsing, and we could do the same thing where we bring on writers who are not afraid to challenge the boss's ideas in a respectful and collaborative way and are not just simple "yes men". Then we take about 3 ½ years to work out all the kinks and we write and design all three films in the trilogy before we even start rolling cameras on the 1st film.

That way we have a solid foundation and game plan for what we are going to do for the entire series, and if there's a really cool idea we like but we're not able to fit it into one film, then maybe we can hold onto it and save it for the next film because we planned ahead and we gave ourselves that time to experiment and play around in the beginning. So, from day one in our hypothetical rewrites, we'll have access to all of the artwork and ideas that existed for all 3 films and the 2003 *Clone Wars* micro series, giving ourselves the power of hindsight before the movies are even released. We also give ourselves the flexibility to refine all of our ideas into a cohesive and well-balanced story that is just as structured, and emotionally satisfying as Episodes 4, 5 & 6.