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80 DAYS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

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FORCE FRENZY: The movie was a line-around-the-block sensation at Mann's Theatre in L.A.

May 25, 1977

The Arrival of the Jedi

By Carrie Fisher

The film wasn't supposed to do what it did—nothing was supposed to do that. Movies were meant to stay on the screen, flat and large and colorful, gathering you up into their sweep of story and releasing you back into your life at the other end. But this movie misbehaved. *Star Wars* leaked out of the theater, poured off the screen. A lot of people were affected deeply by it, requiring talismans and artifacts, merchandising and sequels.

But I've been asked to write about that day. It was bewildering. The movie was attracting giddy attention that was both exciting and unsettling. So there we were—Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill and I—jittery and on live talk shows (like acid, only more gruesomely populated), and throughout the day we attempted to deliver George Lucas' message to enlist in his "star war." Harrison was its most apparently able representative; Mark and I were clambering to get up to speed. After all, we were figuring out who we were, forming our public, never-before-aired personas in front of you, perfecting our act by the seat of our talk-show pants. But we all liked the attention.

A Look Back In
TIME



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What immature actor doesn't? Of course Harrison might have been mature, but I barely noticed, being self-obsessed and 20; he, 34, was an icon right out of the solar chute. We giggled and ran from chasing fans and were bewildered. Suddenly we went from being a carpenter, a TV actor and a movie star's kid to looking like three of the new "Fab Four"—George Lucas being John, and you can mix and match the rest.

The recorded opening date was May 25, 1977, but the thundering hooves of asteroid arrival and Death Star intervention had started many days before. It wasn't like a movie opening; it was like an earthquake. Each day that got closer to the film's release, a signal went out: a high-pitched dog whistle, not audible to the human ear but heard by sci-fi geeks everywhere, generating an excitement in the atmosphere like electricity. It crackled around the theaters. It hummed above my head. I don't know how it started; all I know is that suddenly it was everywhere. It was picked up first by the new order of geeks, enthusiastic young people with sleeping bags. "It" was coming, and they wanted to experience it first: to sit in the dark, the shadow and light of space battle flashing on their spellbound faces. And they came back over and over again. I drove by at least one long, snaking line in Westwood, holding down the humiliating urge to screech, "Yes! I am Princess Leia Organa, come to tell you all, come to tell you all!" But what had I come to tell them? So I didn't say anything. I just stared in amazement and wondered what it would ultimately mean. And now, when an old man of 43 or so strolls timidly up to me and exclaims how as a young boy he loved me, I almost know.

Fisher is now an author and screenwriter

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