

VINCENT CANBY

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"Star Wars," George Lucas's first film since his terrifically successful

"American Graffiti," is the movie that the teen-agers in "American

Graffiti" would have broken their necks to see. It's also the movie that's

going to entertain a lot of contemporary folk who have a soft spot for

the virtually ritualized manners of comic-book adventure.

"Star Wars," which opened yesterday¹ at the Astor Plaza, Orpheum

and other theaters, is the most elaborate, most expensive, most beauti-

ful movie serial ever made. It's both an apotheosis of "Flash Gordon"

serials and a witty critique that makes associations with a variety of lit-

erature that is nothing if not eclectic: "Quo Vadis?", "Buck Rogers,"

"Taranhoe," "Superman," "The Wizard of Oz," "The Gospel According to

St. Matthew," the legend of King Arthur and the knights of the Round

Table.

All of these works, of course, had earlier left their marks on the kind

of science-fiction comic strips that Mr. Lucas, the writer as well as direc-

tor of "Star Wars," here remembers with affection of such cheerfulness

that he avoids facetiousness. The way definitely not to approach "Star

Wars," though, is to expect a film of cosmic implications or to footnote it

with so many references that one anticipates it as if it were a literary

duty. It's fun and funny.

The time, according to the opening credit card, is "a long time ago"

and the setting "a galaxy far far away," which gives Mr. Lucas and his

associates total freedom to come up with their own landscapes, hous-

ing, vehicles, weapons, religion, politics—all of which are variations on

the familiar.

When the film opens, dark times have fallen upon the galactical

empire once ruled, we are given to believe, from a kind of space-age

Camelot. Against these evil tyrants there is, in progress, a rebellion led

by a certain Princess Leia Organa, a pretty round-faced young woman

of old-fashioned pluck who, before you can catch your breath, has been

captured by the guardians of the empire. Their object is to retrieve

¹ which opened yesterday: Wednesday, May 25, 1977.

◀ **Critical Viewing** In what ways do these characters—R2D2 and C3PO—remind you of Laurel and Hardy? [Compare]

Reading Check What is the setting of *Star Wars*?

apothecosis (ə pə'thē ə o' sis)
n. glorification of a per-
son or thing
eclectic (ek lek' tik) adj.
composed of material
from various sources

facetiousness (fa sē' shəs)
n. act of making
jokes

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