



RETURN OF THE FRANCHISE

A decade after 'Revenge of Sith' closed the book on the prequel trilogy, a new film thrusts the 'Star Wars' saga decades into the future with new heroes, new villains and some of fans' favorite old friends

erhaps the most iconic entertainment franchise of all time, Star Wars encompasses six films; countless books, video games and television series. It has sold billions of dollars in toys, comic books and clothing — becoming a vital part of the American pop culture lexicon. On Dec. 18, the next chapter begins as "Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens" hits theaters.

Tickets for the movie went on sale Oct. 19, nearly two months before its release, following the debut of the film's full-length trailer during "Monday Night Football" on ESPN – The Walt Disney Co. owns both ESPN and the "Star Wars" franchise – and immediately set presale records.

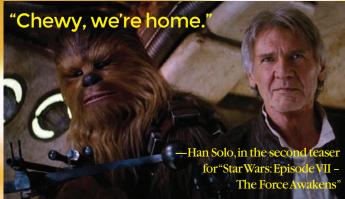
Ticket site Fandango said it sold eight times as many first-day tickets as 2012's "The Hunger Games," the previous record holder, including more than \$6.5 million in IMAX sales, also a record.

"This is an extraordinary time for the industry, which experienced unprecedented ticketing demand last night for 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens,' Fandango said the following day in a statement. "The enthusiasm for this year's most anticipated movie is out of this world and we expect it to continue all the way to its debut on Dec. 18."

Whether you're a longtime fan of the franchise or a newcomer to the "Star Wars" universe, here's everything you need to know to get ready for the new film.

THE BACKGROUND

The Force awakened in October 2012 when "Star Wars" creator George Lucas sold Lucasfilm Ltd. - including, of course, the



entirety of "Star Wars" – to The Walt Disney Co., and Disney in turn announced three new "Star Wars" films. Referred to as the "sequel trilogy," the new films start with this year's "The Force Awakens," followed by currently untitled Episodes VIII and IX in 2017 and 2019, respectively.

J.J.Abrams, who rebooted the "StarTrek" film franchise to enormous box office success, was tapped to direct and cowrite the film. Lawrence Kasdan, who co-wrote "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi," and Michael Arndt, who penned "Toy Story 3" and "Inside Out," also were brought on to co-write the screenplay. John Williams, who scored all six previous franchise films and won an Oscar for 1977's "StarWars," again will be composing the music.

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THE STORY

What do we know about the new film – other than, you know, The Force awakening? Not a whole lot, it turns out. It's set about 30 years after the events of "Return of the Jedi" and will feature both new and old characters. But the series of three teaser trailers released in the past year have given viewers a bit of insight into the characters, conflicts and story to come.

TEASER TRAILER 1:

RELEASED NOV. 28, 2014

The teaser begins with a voice-over.

There's been an awakening. Have you felt it.

Then, viewers are introduced to a slew of new characters in quick succession: Finn (John Boyega) appears in a desert,



panicked, wearing a Stormtrooper suit. New droid BB-8 beeps and rolls quickly across the screen. Rapid flashes show a platoon of new First Order Stormtroopers. Rey (Daisy Ridley) mounts her speeder and cranks the throttle. Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) leads a fleet of Resistance X-wing fighters.

The Dark Side ...

Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) walks through a forest in the nighttime and draws his tri-blade lightsaber

... and the Light.

Finally, the Millennium Falcon, Han Solo and Chewbacca's famed ship, flies on screen and blazes past two attacking TIE fighters as the "Star Wars" theme kicks in. Cut to "Star Wars" title screen.

TEASER TRAILER 2: RELEASED APRIL 16, 2015

The trailer opens with a speeder – presumably Rey's – zooming across the landscape of desert planet Jakku as the screen pans to reveal both a crashed Resistance X-wing fighter and a downed Star Destroyer ship halfway buried in the sand. Next, a voice-over from Luke Skywalker:

The Force is strong in my family. My father has it.
Cut to Darth Vader's melted helmet.

I have it

Next, a cloaked figure placing a mechanical hand on R2-D2. *My sister has it.*

Two unknown people exchange a lightsaber.

You have that power, too.

From there, viewers get a big action sequence: Poe Dameron leading an X-wing fleet, Kylo Ren swinging his saber, Rey and Finn and BB-8 fleeing an explosion, a Stormtrooper army, Captain Phasma and, a dogfight between a TIE fighter and the Millennium Falcon before the big reveal:

Chewie ...

Cut to Harrison Ford's 70-something Han Solo and Chewbacca, with nary a gray hair.

... we're bome!







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FULL-LENGTH TRAILER: RELEASED OCT. 19, 2015

The final trailer opens with a couple shots of Rey scavenging a ship, walking the surface of Jakku with BB-8, working on her speeder. Then the voice of pirate Maz Kanata (Lupita Nyong'o) asks: *Who are you?* To which Rey responds: *I'm no one.*

Next, a shot of a Stormtrooper fleet, followed by Finn, in a full Stormtrooper suit, removing his helmet. Then a Finn voice-over begins:

I was raised to do one thing ...

A damaged TIE fighter falls toward Jakku, followed by Finn standing on a dune.

... but I've got nothing to fight for.

Next, the camera zooms in on Kylo Ren.

Nothing will stand in our way ...

The melted Vader helmet again appears.

... I will finish what you started.

It then cuts to Ren torturing Poe Dameron. Cue the music and the Millennium Falcon evading attacking TIE fighters.

Rey: There were stories about what happened ...

Solo: It's true ... All of it.

The Falcon makes a jump to hyperspeed, and the screen cuts to some First Order baddies, led by Ren, on a dark field in the rain. Then, a sequence of battle shots as Solo continues: the Dark Side ... the Jedi ... they're real.

Kanata: The Force. It's calling to you.

More of the action and battle sequence, and then viewers at long last see Leia (Carrie Fisher) embracing Solo. The final shot is Finn drawing what looks like Luke Skywalker's blue lightsaber from "Star Wars" as Ren walks toward him, drawing his own saber and preparing to battle.

Kanata: Just let it in.

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Meet the heroes and villains that battle for Light and Dark in 'The Force Awakens'



escape his past, Finn is plunged into adventure as his conscience drives him down a heroic, but dangerous, path.



Portrayed by: Daisy Ridley Rey is a scavenger toughened by a lifetime of dealing with the cutthroats of the harsh desert world of Jakku. For some reason, she's been waiting for her family.



POE DAMERON Portrayed by: Oscar Isaac An ace pilot, Poe Dameron is a leader in the Resistance's fight against the evil First Order. He soars into battle behind the controls of a modern X-wing fighter.

May the Dark Chocolates be with you!

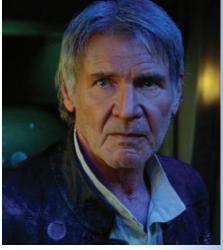
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Han Solo Portrayed by: **Harrison Ford** Smuggler. Scoundrel. Hero. Han Solo, captain of the Millennium Falcon, was one of the great leaders of the Rebel Alliance. He and his co-pilot



Chewbacca came to believe in the cause of galactic freedom, joining Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia Organa in the fight against the Empire.



General Leia Organa Portrayed by: Carrie Fisher

General Leia Organa was one of the Rebel Alliance's greatest leaders, fearless on the battlefield and dedicated to ending the tyranny of the Empire. Daughter of Padmé Amidala and Anakin Skywalker, sister of Luke Skywalker, and with a soft spot for scoundrels, Leia ranks among the galaxy's great heroes.



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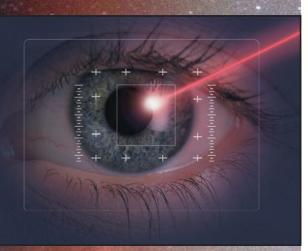
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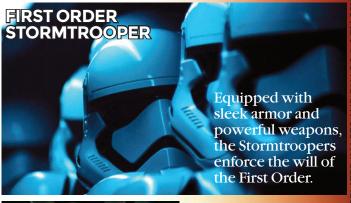
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A dark warrior strong with the Force, Kylo Ren commands First Order missions with a temper as fiery as his unconventional lightsaber.







TIE FIGHTER PILOT

Following the traditions of the Galactic Empire, the First Order has kept the TIE fighter design in service, but has updated the craft to modern combat standards.







Portrayed by: Mark Hamill

Luke Skywalker was the central protagonist in the original trilogy of Star Wars films. However, with just days before the world premiere, Luke's role in The Force Awakens remains one of the film's most closely guarded secrets. Mark Hamill has been confirmed as returning to the sets of Star Wars, but his character is mysteriously not present in the promotional materials for the film. In the trailers and material that's been released so far, only one shot of a cloaked figure reaching out to touch R2-D2 can be seen. Is this Luke? Director JJ Abrams hasn't commented on Luke's absence other than to say, "it's no accident."

Chewbacca Portrayed by: **Peter Mayhew**

Let the Wookiee win. A towering warrior and Han Solo's co-pilot aboard the Millennium Falcon, Chewbacca was part of a core group of Rebels who restored freedom to the galaxy in the original trilogy.

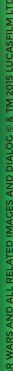


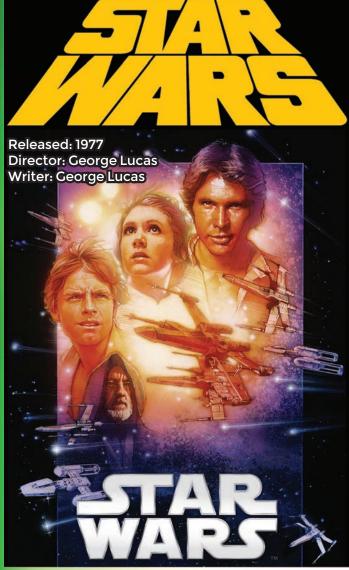
Known for his short temper and accuracy with a bowcaster, Chewie also has a big heart, and is unwavering in his loyalty to his friends.

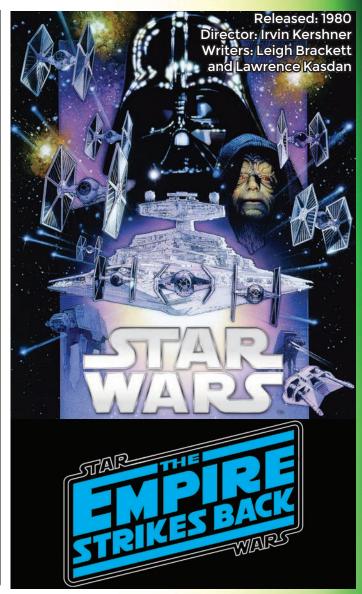
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The film that started it all. Farm boy Luke Skywalker yearns for adventure and is thrust into the struggle between Rebel Alliance and Galactic Empire. Teaming up with the mysterious Obi-Wan Kenobi, dashing rogue Han Solo and the terrifying yet cuddly Chewbacca, Luke is soon on quest to save Rebel leader Princess Leia and stop the tyrannical Empire's new doomsday weapon — the Death Star. Along the way Luke learns about The Force and begins his Jedi training under the tutelage of Kenobi. One of the heroes will be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to stop the Empire's most dreaded enforcer — Darth Vader — and his legions of faceless Stormtroopers.

After the destruction of the Death Star, Imperial forces pursue the Rebels to their secret base on the ice planet Hoth. Following a devastating defeat, Luke journeys to the planet Dagobah in search of the famed Jedi Master Yoda. In an attempt to convert Luke to the dark side, Darth Vader lures young Skywalker into a trap in Cloud City on Bespin. In the midst of a fierce lightsaber duel with the Sith Lord, Luke faces the startling revelation about his parentage. The Empire Strikes Back is considered one of the finest films ever created as it deepens the themes and characters introduced in the 1977 original with humor, romance and drama. Also, the bad guys win.



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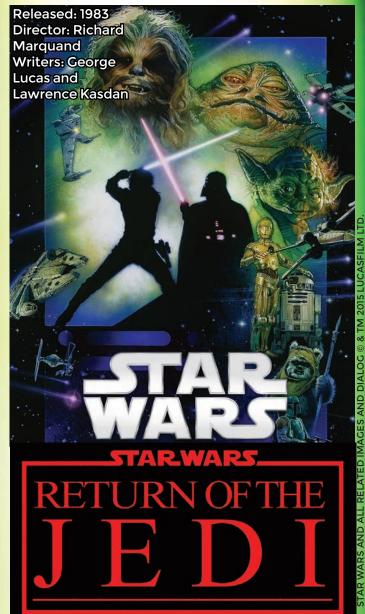


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In the epic conclusion, the Empire prepares to crush the Rebellion with a more powerful Death Star. Meanwhile, Luke, Leia and Lando attempt to rescue Han from the clutches of gangster Jabba The Hutt as the Rebel fleet prepares for a massive attack on the new space station. As the Alliance tries to defeat the Empire and restore freedom to the galaxy, they find help from an unexpected source. Luke Skywalker confronts the secrets of his past as well as Darth Vader in a final climactic duel before the evil Emperor.



STAR WARS: EPISODE I - THE PHANTOM MENACE

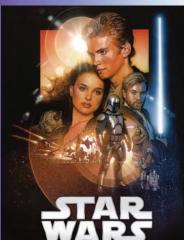
Released: 1999 Director: George Lucas Writer: George Lucas

Stranded on the desert planet Tatooine after rescuing young Queen Amidala from the impending invasion of Naboo, Jedi apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi and his Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn discover 9-year-old Anakin Skywalker, a young slave unusually strong in the Force. Anakin wins a thrilling Podrace and with it



his freedom as he leaves his home to be trained as a Jedi. The heroes return to Naboo where Anakin and the Queen face massive invasion forces while the two Jedi contend with a deadly foe named Darth Maul. Only then do they realize the invasion is merely the first step in a sinister scheme.

STAR WARS: EPISODE II - ATTACK OF THE CLONES



Released: 2002
Director: George Lucas
Writers: George Lucas and
Jonathan Hales

Ten years after the invasion of Naboo, the galaxy is on the brink of civil war. Under the leadership of a renegade Jedi named Count Dooku, thousands of solar systems threaten to break away from the Galactic Republic. When an assassination attempt is made on Senator Padmé Amidala,

the former Queen of Naboo, 20-year-old Jedi apprentice Anakin Skywalker is assigned to protect her. In the course of his mission, Anakin discovers his love for Padmé as well as his own darker side. Soon, Anakin, Padmé and Obi-Wan Kenobi are drawn into the heart of the Separatist movement and the beginning of the Clone Wars.



STAR WARS: EPISODE III - REVENGE OF THE SITH

Released: 2005 Director: George Lucas Writer: George Lucas

Years after the onset of the Clone Wars, the noble Jedi Knights lead a massive clone army into a galaxy-wide battle against the Separatists. When the sinister Sith unveil a thousand-year-old plot to rule the galaxy, the Republic crumbles and from its ashes rises the evil Galactic Empire. Jedi hero Anakin Skywalker is seduced by the dark side of the Force to become the Emperor's new apprentice — Darth Vader. The Jedi are betrayed, as Obi-Wan Kenobi and Jedi Master Yoda are forced into hiding. Anakin's own offspring, the twin children born in secrecy, appear to be the only hope left for the galaxy plunged into darkness.

Source: StarWars.com, IMDB.com



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STAR WARS AT THE BOX OFFICE

"Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens" is anticipated to break box office records and gross more than \$1 billion in domestic box office sales, which would put it nearly a quarter-billion dollars ahead of current record holder "Avatar" (\$760M). When the first pre-sale tickets for The Force Awakens were offered to the public, the response was so large that several websites reported crashing due to the high level of interest.

That fervor could not be any more different from the release of "Star Wars" nearly 40 years ago, which premiered on just a few dozen screens. In fact, 20th Century Fox was so concerned about how it would perform versus other summer films that it moved up its premiere to the Wednesday before Memorial Day to give a few days at theaters without big head-to-head competition. Needless to say, they had nothing to worry about. Here's a look back at how each film in the "Star Wars" franchise performed at the domestic box office:

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Release: May 25, 1977

Opening Weekend Box Office: \$1,554,475 in 43 theaters Initial Domestic Box Office Total: \$307,263,857 in 1,750

1977 Average Ticket Cost: \$2.23 **Current Domestic Box Office Total:** \$460.998.007

Adjusted for inflation:

\$1,485,517,400

Wind" in the adjusted for inflation domestic Box Office totals of all time.

"Star Wars" is ranked number two behind "Gone With the

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Release: May 21, 1980

Opening Weekend Box Office: \$4,910,483 in 126 theaters Initial Domestic Box Office Total: \$209,398,025 in 1,278 theaters

1980 Average Ticket Cost: \$2.69

Current Domestic Box Office Total:

\$290,475,067

Adjusted for inflation:

\$818.826.500

The Empire Strikes Back is ranked number 12 on the adjusted for inflation Box Office totals.



Release: May 25, 1983

Opening Weekend Box Office: \$23,019,618 in 1,002 theaters

Box Office Total: \$252,583,617 in 1,764 theaters

1983 Average Ticket Cost: \$3.15

Current Domestic Box Office Total:

\$309,306,177

Adjusted for inflation: \$784,455,500

Return of the Jedi is ranked number 15 on the adjusted for

inflation Box Office totals.

STAR WARS: EPISODE I - THE PHANTOM MENACE

Release: May 19, 1999

Opening Weekend Box Office: \$64,820,970 in 2,970

theaters

Box Office Total: \$431,088,295 in 3,126 theaters

1999 Average Ticket Cost: \$5.06 Adjusted for inflation: \$753,202,700

STAR WARS: EPISODE II - ATTACK OF THE CLONES

Release: May 16, 2002

Opening Weekend Box Office: \$80,027,814 in 3,161 theaters

Box Office Total: \$302,191,252 in 3,161 theaters

2002 Average Ticket Cost: \$5.80 Adjusted for inflation: \$445,927,000

STAR WARS: EPISODE III - REVENGE OF THE SITH

Release: May 19, 2005

Opening Weekend Box Office: \$108,435,841 in 3,661

theaters

Box Office Total: \$380,270,577 in 3,663 theaters

2005 Average Ticket Cost: \$6.41

Adjusted for Inflation:

\$494,767,000

Sources: BoxOfficeMojo.com, National Association of

Theater Owners

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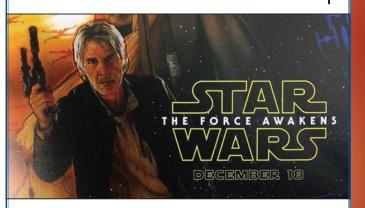
The original "Star Wars" had a production budget of \$11 million, which was a modest amount for a movie in 1977.

Another science fiction film released in 1977 was Steven Spielberg's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," which had a budget of some \$20 million. Spielberg and "Star Wars" director George Lucas famously vacationed together in Hawaii after completing their respective projects. The result of that vacation was the two filmmakers collaborating on a little film called, "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

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