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## The Last Word...

*A Mark of Excellence* is the quarterly newsletter of the **International Mark Hamill Fan Club**. Yearly dues are \$15 US, and include 4 consecutive issues of the newsletter, a membership card, access to the fan club area on the website, and special mailings as appropriate.

Submissions, including photos or original artwork, are welcomed; final editing is the discretion of the editor. If you wish your photo or artwork returned please enclose a sase, and attach your name/address on the back of your submission.

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# A Mark of Excellence

Volume 7, Issue 2



25 December 2003



## Six Dance Lessons In Six Weeks

**Belasco Theatre**  
111 W 44 Street NYC  
29 October 2003 Opening night  
Mark Hamill, Polly Bergen

'Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks' is the company Lily Harrison (Polly Bergen) hires to send an instructor to her St Petersburg, Florida condo for dance lessons. Lily is the widow of a southern Baptist minister, and is confused, then astounded and a bit insulted when brash, wise-cracking Michael Minetti (Mark Hamill) shows up to teach her. The play, in two acts, four scenes each, follows their changing relationship.

Throughout the play, there are constants... Lily and Michael argue about something, the downstairs

neighbour rings to complain about the dancing ('No, the Clydesdale horses are not here for a return engagement!'), and, of course, a new dance is learned. Things are not what they seem to be... Michael is not married to a vet that works at the Seminole Cat, Dog, Bird, and Snake Animal Hospital- he describes himself as a 'passive-aggressive queen with a bad attitude'; Lily admits that her husband has been dead for six years. They share other secrets that help change, and strengthen, their relationship. From the bickering, sniping and arguing, they emerge as good friends. Lily and Michael slowly realise that the differences between them are not so vast, as each once assumed. The final scene closes with Michael and Lily dancing slowly in front of the window with the sun setting.

Mark and Polly are well-paired in this comedy; they play their characters very well. Yes, there is some stereotyping. It is part of the characterization. So were the costumes. From Michael's

loud 'Hawaiian' shirt worn when teaching 'contemporary dances' ('I don't know how you define contemporary, but the Beach Boys broke up twenty years ago!') to the evening skirt and top Lily wears for the waltz lesson. And while this is a comedy, and the audience laughed quite a bit, I could see this working equally well without all the laughs.

Unfortunately, health issues, among other things, resulted in the closing of 'SDL' after 30 performances.



## Notes From the Editor...

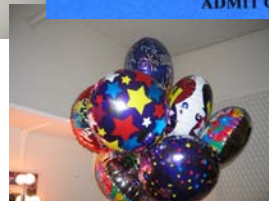
Happy Holidays to All!

The Fan Club received a thank-you note from CHPHP, for for the donation in honour of Mark's birthday.

To celebrate opening night of the play, the fan club sent a balloon bouquet to Mark, and a rose and balloon to Polly Bergen. I went backstage after the play, and was able to take pics of



Please join us for a celebration immediately following the performance at **SARDI'S RESTAURANT**  
234 West 44th Street  
Between Broadway and Eighth Avenue  
ADMIT ONE



Mark's, before heading to Sardi's for the party. Great fun, and I watched NY1 doing their interview with Polly and later with Mark. On Saturday, 1 November, I

saw the play for a second time, and met up with a number of friends and a couple of fc members. Mark graciously took a few minutes from his busy schedule to meet with us after the matinee. Afterwards, four of us were chatting outside the theatre, preparing to go our separate ways. Mark came out, and stopped to talk with us for a short while longer.

## Future Watch



Look for 'Comic Book: The Movie' dvd to

be released on 27 January 2004! Check out the official website [www.comicbookthemovie.com](http://www.comicbookthemovie.com), as they are taking pre-orders with an

exclusive collectible 4 colour lithograph!

The airdate for 'The Wrong Coast' has been changed, with no new date announced.

Mark is continuing to voice the robot, Larry 3000, in the new episodes of 'Time Squad'!

Remember to keep your ears and eyes tuned for Mark interviews the end of January.

## My Dream Came True

Eija Vilmunen

I am Mark's fan since his first role as Luke Skywalker in Star Wars in the 70's. And also active member of his fan club since 1999. Deep down in my dreams, I have always wished someday to meet him in person. However, that is not very easy as I live thousands of miles away in Finland in Northern Europe and do not have of-

ten have occasions to visit USA.

I had once been in L.A. in 1999 and that time I never managed to meet Mark as he was out of town. I was planning a trip to US this year in October and I checked with Sue Mark's whereabouts. I knew from years' e-mail correspondence with Sue that Mark is

a very busy person with many projects and travels a lot. I learned that Mark will be in New York in mid October for previews of his Broadway play "Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks". I decided to make a stop-over in



ple you've worked with before. It's a very special project because so much of my sensibility is part of it.' It is populated with voice-over people- 'enormously entertaining people' and many others who have worked behind the scenes from other projects. His hairdresser from 'The Flash', the costumer from 'Body Bags', and the composer- from 'Harrigan 'n Hart, to mention a few. No auditions were held; Mark simply went around asking the people he wanted to have in it. He is very happy he 'could do something that has meaning in my life and do something with colleagues and remain friends.' Rather on the lines of the old Mickey Rooney bit 'Let's put on a show!'

So look for Bill Mummy, Rob

Paulson, Kevin Smith, Roger Rose, Hugh Hefner, Donna D'Errico, among others, in this. Kevin Burns came through with the archival photos. There is a wonderful biography section for each of the characters and some very creative work went into this as well. Bill plays himself playing Liberty Lad in the long-lost pilot, with an archival photo to back it up.

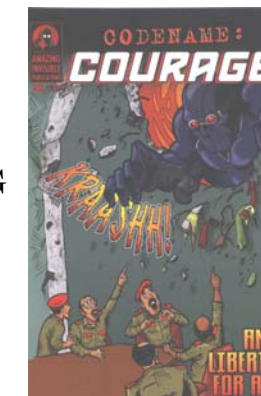
One of the extra bits was shot at one of the San Diego Comic Con panels, preparing for the climax of the film. While basically placeholder while shots were being set up, the actors involved were out of character, playing themselves. While it wouldn't fit into the movie itself, it was too good to cut.

Also, look for a scene with Tom Kenny, (from Cartoon Network-and a real life comic book fan), his wife, and young son. My only comment is to quote Mark: 'Lie, deny, and busted!'

Mark stated that he feels this will appeal to comic book fans in particular, because for once they are the insiders, and that he wanted to do something that had nothing in it that one wouldn't show a young child.

Coding:  
Region 1  
(Canada and USA)

Rating: PG  
13



## Trivia Time!

We haven't had a trivia contest for a good while now. With the release of 'Comic Book: The Movie', I thought one would be appropriate.

First, the rules.

- 1) Entry must be time-stamped (e-mail) or post-marked (snail mail) by 12.01 am 2 May 2004.
- 2) One entry per fc member

- 3) You must be a current member (as of 2 May 2004) of the IMHFC
- 4) You must answer all 3 parts correctly.
- 5) E-mail response to: [HdShroom@aol.com](mailto:HdShroom@aol.com)  
subject: Trivia Contest  
-or-  
Snail mail response to: IMHFC-Trivia Contest  
PO Box 287

Grand Blanc MI 48439  
USA

- 6) Any questions, e-mail [HdShroom@aol.com](mailto:HdShroom@aol.com)

Now, the trivia:

On one of the CB:TM dvd's, there is a scene with a vague reference to a previous project Mark has done. Name the speaker, the project, and what was said.



# Talking With Mark

Friday, 9 January 2004, I had the pleasure of talking on the telephone with Mark about his soon-to-be-released project, **'Comic Book:The Movie'**. Apologising for how late in the afternoon it was, he explained that he had just gotten back from taping another episode of **'The Wrong Coast'**. We chatted a bit about that, (no air date has been set, but this is episode 12, so it is a matter of time), dogs and children, then turned our attention to **'Comic Book:The Movie'**.

A two-dvd set, look for it to hit endcaps and store shelves on 27 January 2004. Check out the official website, comicbook-themovie.com, for a link to Creative Light to pre-order it now! It will be shipped with an exclusive 4-color lithograph of the cast.

**'Comic Book:The Movie'** is a quasi-documentary, though it did have a fictional story line to fall back on if necessary. As Mark explained, Creative Light was very good taking a chance with how he wanted to do this project. In an age where every microsecond needs to be planned and rigidly set

out, Mark said he went in with 'a blueprint and road-map, but was not sure where this would end up.' By doing it this way, it allowed for the performers to be empowered. You can go from point B directly to point F. The actors could pretty much say and do what they wanted. It is 'very gratifying to step up to the plate and do more than hit your mark and say your lines.'

He mentioned wanting to do this project cinema verite, something that is not done much any more. Reminiscent of when one grabbed one's movie camera and just went out and shot footage. 'If your family had a colour tv **and** a pool **and** a movie camera, you were rich! Wow!'

SD: 'And now look. The digital camera I had with me in NY- I can shoot avi. with it. Our children have grown up using camcorders. They think nothing of borrowing it, running out and shooting footage of... whatever.'

'Right. It was always a big deal when you used the

movie camera-setting up the camera itself which was so big. And the lights. And having to send the film away to be developed.'

SD: 'Today, it's almost instant gratification.'

Just over one hundred hours of tape was shot, with some of the usual 'mistakes' familiar to anyone using a camcorder. It was difficult to make decisions on what to include or cut, so this two dvd set is loaded with extras!

Mark's character is Donald Swan, who is off to Hollywood to protect the comic book characters his grandfather had created, Commander Courage and Liberty Lad. In true Hollywood fashion, a studio wants to change the characters into something completely different. This movie is the first film about fans, made by fans, and it shows. It gently satirises both Hollywood and the hobby of collecting-anything.

When I asked what the most enjoyable part of doing this was, Mark responded 'It was gratifying to work with peo-

NYC to be able at least technically to meet Mark and visit New York at the same time. Sue helped me, of which I am so thankful to her, to liase with Mark with my special wish to meet him.

## And I met him!

To my very, very great pleasure, Marilou, Mark's wife had kindly left me a message at my hotel to meet Mark after the Wednesday afternoon matinee on the 15 October at the Belasco theatre. I found myself waiting in the front of the Belasco theatre at 44 Street, in Broadway with sweating and trembling hands. I was not sure how to recognise Mark's wife whom I was supposed to meet at the theatre entrance. However, talkative as I am and saying to myself that if I have come this far in fulfilling my dream, I will not give up now before I meet him and I informed the door man, that I have meeting with Mark Hamill agreed. At the same, Marilou was at the entrance and she heard me talking with door man and said "You must be....". Gee, I was so happy that now for sure, I will finally meet Mark.

## Mark is absolutely a fantastic person

We went to the back stage with Marilou. And then Mark came in!!! What a moment! There he was finally in full flesh and blood in front of me! And hugging me! I felt like melting hot wax.

You never know how the actor can finally be as a person. But Mark is ever so nice. You could feel that he is most warm-hearted person. He looks as handsome with beautiful blue eyes like in any movie I have seen. Also you can easily recognise his voice. But as a person he much more talkative and laughing than his castings allow usually.

I brought him a special present from Finland, which you are guaranteed not to get anywhere else than in my home country. It is wine bottle cover and napkin called "Allu" made by a Finnish company "Aarikka". Mark wanted to pose in the



picture with my gift. What a gesture from him! I was touched and I hope that he and Marilou liked my gift and can make use of it.

Mark also wrote a very nice autograph with personal greetings to me. I will never forget our meeting and you can be sure that all the pictures and autographs will hang framed in my room here in Finland.

## Thank you and welcome to Finland!

I had prepared many questions that I wanted to ask him but he had very little time in between the shows and interviews. I do appreciate so, so much that he shared so much of his busy time with me. Thank you Mark for making my dream come true!! You are such a lovely person! I wish you all the success for your Broadway show and for the future life. And, I welcome you and your lovely wife to Finland.





## 'Surprises in Store...'

Susan Lin



It's a busy time of year, and when Sue asked me to write

something about *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks* for the newsletter, I thought about simply submitting my review again—before deciding that most of you have probably already read it, since it was up on the IMHFC Web site. But when I was in the thinking stage, I re-read what I'd written, and this sentence jumped out at me:

"Some of this territory indeed looks familiar, but there are still plenty of surprises in store for you—perhaps the biggest being how much you will find yourself moved by this play long after the lights have come up."

It jumped out because here I am, another month having gone by, and I'm still being surprised by the show. But this time, the surprises come when I am reminded, either

by watching clips or in talking with others who have seen the show, of all the specifics, all the details, and I find myself realizing just what a first-rate performance Mark gave.

That sounds a bit odd, I guess, to admit that it didn't hit me over the head right away. I'll confess that I was a bit star-struck the day I



attended the play—I was so overwhelmed by realizing a dream that had been born so long ago, the dream of seeing Mark Hamill in person, that I failed to appreciate all that he was bringing to the role. In fact, I was so overwhelmed that when a few of us had the great good fortune to meet Mark after the show, I must confess—with an incredible pang of regret—that I didn't even re-

member to compliment him on his performance!

And so I'd like to now. Bravo, Mark. What an incredible job you did. Somehow, in just two hours' time, you made us loathe Michael Minetti and then you made us love him. You played at every level, big and small, alternating going over the top and under the radar. You gave Michael an astonishing array of qualities and kept it all convincing and cohesive: You were cynical and crude; youthful and exuberant; angry and bitter; tender and loving. You added countless details in every gesture, every movement, conveying an incredible wealth of information without saying a word. And then when you did speak, you kept us guessing with your incredibly savvy timing.

All this, and you can dance, too. What a show.



## A Broadway Meeting

Deb Kittle

The week of Halloween every year since 1996, I've hosted 'DebCon'—I have some friends over for some major shopping and sightseeing. I try to do something with Star Wars as that is how we met, and it remains a passion of ours. Then we head to NJ for Chiller Theatre Con on Sunday, but we reserve Saturday for NYC.

I always try to keep DebCon fresh and different when I can. In 1997, George Lucas and several ILM staff came to DC to Lisner Auditorium to accept an award. We got a sneak peak of the SW Magic of Myth videotape that would be playing during its stay at the National Air and Space Museum.

We also got to be first in line at the opening of the Exhibit where we were interviewed by a



reporter for the **Modesto Bee**. The following year since the Exhibit was extended, we got to take a private tour there, thanks to a friend who was a volunteer guide.

So this year, we read in the *Star Wars Insider* that Mark was going to be doing a B'way play and thought it would be something great to do. I had never done Broadway in any way, shape or form.

Everything seemed to fall right into place, especially when we found out Sue was going to be in NYC as well. We met up on that Sat at Dis-

ney, and did some shopping. Then we had lunch at Virgil's, which is right across the street from the Belasco.

The Belasco was small, but it seemed more intimate. I liked that. There didn't seem to be a bad seat in the house.

The play started and I loved it. It was funny and so sad. Mark and Polly both did a fantastic job, such energy and chemistry together.

Afterward, Sue took us to the stage door where Mark came out and graciously gave photo ops and autographs. It certainly was a tremendous high point to a wonderful vacation.

Thank-you to Mark and Sue for their time— it was great!