

A Mark of Excellence

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Did you Catch? Future Watch

Mark was interviewed for one of the Sunday newspaper magazine inserts the weekend before San Diego ComicCon. In it he gave some pointers on how to survive a convention, particularly one the size of SDCC.

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Collecting

Forget those two boring political get-togethers. Actor (and comic book fan) **Mark Hamill** shares advice about

THIS SUMMER'S COOLEST CONVENTIONS

BY BRIAN TRUITT

MARK HAMILL GOT HIS first taste of comic book conventions 32 years ago: The theater arts major was a few years away from being cast as Luke Skywalker in the original *Star Wars* when he attended an L.A. convention that was showcasing Metropolis, Fritz Lang's legendary silent 1927 opus. Hamill was entranced by the displays of vintage comic books from the 1930s to the '60s. "The historical relevance of all these comic books — it was like seeing a slice of pop culture on display that really conveyed the times."

Today's comic book conventions, the largest of which draw 20,000 and 60,000 people, still feature loads of vintage fare — and current books, too. The big "cons" are multi-day affairs with hundreds of booths devoted to comic books, role-playing games, kitschy pop-culture items like *J. Janssen* board games, fantasy novels, jewelry, toys, music memorabilia and movies.

Movie studios are likely to show highlights of open-

he's working to get a film version of his comic book, *The Black Pearl*, up and running.

For the novice, comic conventions might be a bit daunting — and that's in addition to dealing with the crowds of enthusiastic fans dressed up like superheroes, vampires and *Star Wars* stormtroopers. Here are Hamill's tips for making the most of your comic-convention experience:

DRAW UP A BATTLE PLAN
Most conventions have printed and online programs listing guest artists, panels and dealers available well before the event. Hamill recommends you use these to prioritize what you want to see so you're not caught off guard when you realize that, say, your favorite writer is signing autographs at the same time the special-effects guru you've been dying to meet is discussing his latest project. "It's like every other gigantic event. You have to really get an overview of what's available," he says. "There's no way you can see everything that's there." He suggests survey-

UPCOMING NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- **San Diego Comic-Con International 2004, July 22-25**
Scheduled guests include Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jason Schude and Richard Taylor. Info: comic-con.org. Be prepared: Bring just enough cash to buy what you want.
- **Wizard World Chicago, Aug. 13-15**
Scheduled guests include Jon Whelan, Kevin Smith and Kelly Hu. Info: wizardworld.com, conventions@wizardworld.com.
- **Wizard World Texas, Nov. 5-7**
Scheduled guests include Jim Lee, Jon Casey and Barry Kiborn. Info: wizardworld.com, conventions@wizardworld.com.

COMIC-CON

Artist like Richard Taylor, who helped design *Lord of the Rings* Gollum, sign autographs.

For more info: Go to comicbookconventions.com for a comprehensive list of regional and local shows.

your menus or spend emotionally rather than using your intellect." What's the best tactic for dividing what to buy? "You say, 'Well, let me see. How much is it again? Can you hold it for me?' Go away, have a cold shower, have a time sandwich and think about it, then make wise choices."

BEWARE OF UNSCRUPULOUS DEALERS
Most fans don't have mini-star salaries and can't afford special issues worth thousands of dollars. Even

Notes From the Editor

As we have done for the past several years now, the IMHFC has made a donation in honour of Mark's birthday, to his charity of choice, Children Helping Poor and Homeless People (CHPHP). This year, thanks to some very generous additions by a couple of fan club members, our donation was \$175!

For more information about CHPHP, please visit their website at www.chphp.com

Are you a big cartoon and animation watcher? Do you try to find and tape everything Mark is in that is aired on television ?? Read as many interviews and articles you can lay your hands on? If you fit any of

these descriptions, please check out the 'Wanted' column on page 3.

FYI: With the release of the SW:OT dvd's, there has been a spate of fake autographs up for auction on ebay.

When in doubt, ask first!

Did You Catch?/Future Watch



Mark was at the San Diego Comic Con in July. Besides participating on several panels,

he also held 2 autograph signing sessions. At one point, both he and Carrie Fisher were signing at the same time in the Star Wars Pavilion booth. The pavilion was a nice 10,00 square feet, and at the centre, a life-size X-Wing was on exhibition.

Mark on either of the Star Wars specials airing on A&E and VH1? If you have bought or are purchasing the 4-disc Star Wars dvd set, the A&E special is a

shortened version of the bonus dvd material. Many of the interviews were shot up at Skywalker Ranch. The very able Kevin Burns, a long time friend of Mark's, conducted his interview. Kevin was instrumental in some of the archival shots in 'Comic Book: The Movie', among many other things.



Ebay have had some interesting Mark-related items up for auction recently. One was tickets to the opening of 'Sky Captain' and the party afterwards. Mark was

one of the stars guaranteed to be there. My recent favourite was the auction of an autographed ap (pickguard) for a Fender Strat.

Mark will be at the New York Film Festival Saturday, 2 October 2004, for 'The Big Red One'. Held at Lincoln Centre for the Performing Arts, the Festival runs from 1-17 October 2004.



STAR WARS

When I first read that the Original Trilogy was going to be released on dvd, I had reservations. I am not a fan of the Special Editions. I know most of the reasons why changes were made. Still, there are some that I have great difficulty accepting, such as mucking about so that Greedo fires at Han first. And the very aggravating scream Luke was given, when falling down the shaft. Not only did it detract from the decision to die rather than join the Dark Side, it wasn't even Mark's voice. The celebration scene at the end of *'Return of the Jedi'* didn't endear itself to me, either.

But I became somewhat curious when bits of information began to filter out. Such



as all the attention given to cleaning the original frames, in order to produce the dvds. Somewhat on the order of 100 pieces of dirt *per frame* were cleaned in preparation. This translates to however soon after release you saw *'Star Wars: A New Hope'*, it wasn't clear or clean as the dvd version. While Greedo shooting first wasn't changed back to the original scene, it was tight-

ened up. The scream has been taken back out, thankfully. Unfortunately, at least IMHO, the celebration scenes are still at the end of ROTJ, and added to. Mustn't forget Naboo, of course.

Then there's the bonus material and Easter eggs. The *'Empire of Dreams'* on the bonus 4th disc in the set. Mark was interviewed for this.

I spent the better part of 21 September watching the dvd versions. I was blown away all over again. The clarity, the colours, and some of the new changes made me remember just why I am a *'Star Wars: OT'* fan.

Go. Buy. Or rent. Enjoy!

Wanted!

Someone willing and able to write updates, credits listings and reviews/summaries of projects Mark is currently involved with, as well as past projects. Due to work and time constraints, the position has basically been unfilled for a while now, and these sections are in serious

need of updating. Ability to do vidcaps and soundbytes not a necessity. Please take a look at the credits listings and more in-depth reviews/summaries in the Photo Album area on the website. If you feel you can help keep these sections up-to-date, please e-mail

HdShroom@aol.com, subject heading Credits and Reviews, or snail a note to

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Thanks!



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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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