

# Star Wars: The Force-ful return of a modern myth

Even past the mask, we knew Darth Vader was agonizing in conflict: watching Luke Skywalker, his son, being destroyed by The Emperor. Vader's gaze turned to Luke and to his master, and for the briefest of times we saw a man's heart pierced by conviction of his own wrongdoing and the longing for redemption.

That was the first time I experienced "catharsis," along with about 300 other people crowded into the theater that first Saturday night of *Return of the Jedi's* showing back in '83. It was also the most berserk I've ever seen a movie audience get. When Vader betrayed the Emperor the whole place erupted with screams and applause and mad laughter, mine included. For six years Darth Vader had been the ultimate symbol of evil in the American conscience, and in just over two hours we went from loathing him... to loving him. How did that happen? I don't think any of us left the theater quite the same as when we entered.

It's been 22 years since George Lucas first blessed storytelling with his Star Wars saga, his tale set "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..." The movies so far, *A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* told the tale of a lone farmboy, Luke Skywalker, catapulted by fate into a larger world of fantastic places,

wondrous faces and secrets of darkness and light. Along the way we were introduced to Han Solo and Chewbacca, Princess Leia, the irascible Yoda, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Boba Fett and dozens of other characters that have become endeared to millions.

From the getgo, Star Wars was something unique. It wasn't science-

**Chris Knight**  
The Pendulum  
knigr5c0@elon.edu

fiction, but more of a fantasy/fairy-tale influenced by everything from Flash Gordon to Joseph Campbell to westerns to the films of Akira Kurosawa. It was *new*, and yet so familiar: Alongside exotic aliens and vehicles, there were kindly aunts and roguish scoundrels. There was Abbott and Costello re-created in R2-D2 and C-3PO. There was heartaching loss... and love. It was the things of life we always know of painted over in bold strokes of new imagery and names: "What the heck's a Wookiee?"

What is it about Star Wars that has had appeal across generations? It all seems so unlikely... I mean, think about how hokey the name "Star Wars" sounds. If you were writing a sweeping epic, would

you call it "Star Wars"? Why not something like "Gone with the Wind" or "Lord of the Rings?" "Star Wars" sounds almost too cheesy. And not just the name either, but consider the dialogue: "You're my only hope," "I've got a very bad feeling about this," and dozens of

other bad clichés... enough cheese to run Kraft out of business.

And yet, the story hits on something that's hard to let go of. Say what you will of how outrageous the

films' spirit gets at times, perhaps that's part of the quality that makes Star Wars a classic. Apart from the Old West, it's the only mythology that America has created that's uniquely its own. Every culture has had its great heroes: England's Arthur, Sumeria's Gilgamesh, Scandinavia's Beowulf, all the myths of heroes and good against evil. That's what Star Wars is for the modern era: The great hero archetype given new life. The power in myth is to inspire and pass down legends to the younger generations. However or wherever that story is told, it is timeless, and will be told

for ages to come long after we are gone.

It's been 16 years since the Rebels won the Battle of Endor. During that time the myth has been sustained by a series of novels, computer games and toys... and the fans. In the last few years fans have used the Internet to keep the faith: you can go to TheForce.net and watch "Troops," an intensely clever parody of stormtroopers and TV's "Cops," or you can download sound files and gossip with fellow fans.

The faith is about to be rewarded. On May 19 the first chapter of the saga, *The Phantom Menace*, will be released. Episode 1 focuses on the early adventures of Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor, inheriting the light saber from Alec Guinness). The cast also includes Liam Neeson, Natalie Portman, Samuel L. Jackson and Jake Lloyd as 9-year old Anakin Skywalker: the future Darth Vader. Episodes 2 and 3 will chronicle the fabled Clone Wars, Palpatine's rise to power and Anakin's fall to the Dark Side.

This new crew has their work cut out for them. Boba Fett, Yoda and the rest have become legends. The next batch of characters sounds as if they fell off the Lollapalooza tour: Padme, Darth Maul, Watto, Mace Windu, and more.

Still, who wouldn't want to play a small part in it all? Ever since my childhood I've dreamed of being one of the Jedi Knight in the Clone Wars, or one that Vader wipes out in Episode 3: Fight hard then die and disappear... yeah, that would rock!

Here's a secret I'll share with you: No matter how old you get, keep one little bit of your childhood alive. Something that will always hold a bit of that innocence that you can share with your own children someday. Do that, and you will always stay a child at heart.

My thing is Star Wars. And in just over two months, childhood will get relived by millions of people around the world.

May the Force be with you... always.

## Easter break anyone?

**Lisa McChristian**  
The Pendulum

I've been perplexed by a certain situation for the last few weeks. Elon, a supposedly Christian school, does not provide students with an Easter Vacation.

We receive a fall break, winter holiday (a.k.a. Christmas vacation), winter term break, spring break, and we honor Martin Luther King Day by forgoing class; yet, we have no Easter Vacation.

This may sound like little kid whining to get out of classes but Easter is major Christian holiday honoring and celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To many on the Elon campus this holiday is religiously and emotionally significant.

Easter has always been a major holiday for my family. We would get up early in the morning and have a big breakfast together while the little kids in the family would hunt for their Easter eggs. Afterwards everyone would get dressed in their Sunday best and head to church for a sermon on love, sacrifice and salvation. In the afternoon sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. would get together for food, talk and basically a happy day.

I'm not going to turn this column into a sermon on the religious importance of Easter. I know many students on campus have dif-

ferent beliefs and hold different religious faiths and I respect that. I'm writing this column to draw attention to a major religious holiday that some students are not being allowed to properly celebrate.

I know some of you are saying, "You've got Saturday and Sunday, that's plenty of time to get home." Well I have several problems with that.

First, many students (myself included) suffer from hungry-wallet syndrome. Plane tickets aren't cheap and buying a ticket home would be an extra burden on an already stressed financial situation. A flight to and from home would almost cover a semester of books.

No flight means a road trip. Personally I have a combined 12-hour drive, 6 hours to and from Maryland. That eats up a majority of the weekend right off the bat. There's another added problem for students without cars, they either have to hunt down a fellow traveler or convince Mom and Dad to make a run down to Elon to pick up their beloved offspring.

What harm would giving students two extra days off for this holiday do? If the school doesn't want to consider extra days, why not move Spring Break? Then students would be able to decide what they want to do with their time. If they want to be with their family to celebrate the holiday they would have the opportunity.

## Williamson Ave.: Main Street, Elon style

**Mark Richter**  
SGA Executive President  
richm5s0@elon.edu

Have you ever strolled past the quaint little village of Elon College? Besides the College Coffee Shop, a couple places for you to get your hair cut, and a few small restaurants, the downtown area is pretty pathetic. Why does it seem that every other store front on Williamson Avenue has the name "Elon College" in front of it? "Elon College Accounting," "Elon College Information Systems" and "Elon College Faculty Offices."

Why is it that these offices are located in the down town area, taking away from small businesses which could more productively operate in these areas? I know the campus is pressed for space to house these offices, but the need for small businesses on Williamson is essential.

A few years ago there was a music store located on Williamson. Although I never went in there, and apparently neither did most people,

that was the type of business our town needs to attract. Could you imagine an expansion to the existing College Coffee Shop? With its popularity, it has already outgrown the existing building. What if the Elon College Accounting Offices were not located next to the coffee shop? Maybe that facility could be the coffee shop annex.

As I was speaking with people about the downtown area, other ideas for small businesses on Williamson came up. How about a bookstore, a "Dunkin' Donuts," a pharmacy, a travel agency?

OK, of course the college may not be able to support every type of specialty store, but as our enrollment approaches 4000 students, we are becoming a small city. A bookstore in the downtown area could offer some competition to our own college bookstore. A bookstore would also allow for us to access more books, promoting a more academic climate on campus.

Ask anyone who has ever visited a Dunkin Donuts and they'll tell you it is a must for any town.

My best idea so far for the Williamson Avenue Revitalization Project (WARP) is to attract a "Gap" clothing store to the area. I know it does sound a little far fetched, but Gap has been opening up their stores on more and more Main Streets of America.

Picture it; it is Friday night and you and your friends are getting ready to go out for another night of boy hunting. Just when you look through your closet and think you don't have a thing to wear, you can run to the Gap, whip out daddy's credit card, and voila, you're looking beautiful.

I know that not all of these ideas will fly. Maybe none of them will. What good are we doing by locating these offices where small businesses could locate. By encouraging some growth in Elon College, we will be giving greater opportunity to students, without having them travel to Burlington or Greensboro. With all of our new buildings on campus, we certainly need to focus on ridding our main street of Elon offices.

