

The Man In the

Star Wars' C3PO Is (British) Flesh & Blood

BY DEL PORTER



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Anthony Daniels is having to adjust to fame. Fortunately, though he has reached several pinnacles, his coming-out has been relatively slow. He is a star (6th-billed) of what may well become the largest-grossing film of all time. He has appeared on the cover of *People*. And yet he can walk down the street unmolested. When he enters a shop and is recognized, he is genuinely surprised, for very few of Daniels' greatest fans have seen his face.

What they have seen, of course, is Daniels in a heavy, plastic-and-metal suit, that adds a couple of inches to his trim 5'7" and just about doubles his weight. In that suit, Daniels plays C3PO, one of two "robots" which, in the opinion of many, go a long way toward stealing *Star Wars*. When the competition includes interplanetary battles, fantastic monsters and Sir Alec Guinness, that's no petty theft.

Daniels is virtually unknown to U.S. audiences, though he is well established as a radio and stage actor in his native England. In fact, he's better-known there for his BBC appearances than for *Star Wars*, which won't open in London until next year.

Daniels was in Los Angeles a few weeks ago, lining up some commercial assignments and making a few appearances to promote *Star Wars*. For one, he placed his — or C3PO's — footprints in the forecourt of Mann's Chinese Theatre. He was resting at his hotel, easily walking distance from the Westwood theatre where *Star Wars* was lining audiences around the block, when *Ampersand* caught up with him.

Whatever one might expect Anthony Daniels to look like, he doesn't. He's certainly nothing like the seemingly tall, polished C3PO; he's medium height and dark-haired. No wonder he's not recognized on the street. In London, where he lives, Daniels might be mistaken for a young businessman. Which is not surprising, as that's what he was on his way to being before taking up drama school and winning a competition that gave him an acting job with the BBC.

Daniels' manner is rather more like that of the nervous, ever-so-polite C3PO, though Daniels would deny the resemblance totally. He finds the character humorous, though

possibly not so much so as American audiences do. Here, the rather prissy Englishman, often a butler, has long been a film comedy stereotype — Edward Everett Horton made a career of playing such characters, and there were other actors consistently cast in similar roles. In England, he's less a stock figure, just someone who might work for the Marquis next door.

Daniels became involved in *Star Wars* after a good deal of preliminary work had been completed. Which is, he says, what convinced him to take the part.

"My agent called me in one day, and told me that there was a film part available. When she told me the part was that of a robot, I replied that I was not remotely interested. I am a classically trained actor, with something of a reputation at home; getting into a metal suit would have done nothing for my reputation or career. And besides, science fiction is not really my thing . . .

"But she told me something about George Lucas, and suggested that I meet with him anyway. When I got to George's offices, I saw that on every wall there were stunning artists' impressions of scenes from the film, done by [production illustrator] Ralph McQuarrie. George and I got to talking about them, and spent more than an hour. Of course he'd been involved in the project for months; many of the ideas in the illustrations had been his to begin with. Yet when he explained them to me, George was as excited as if he was seeing them for the first time. When he explained the C3PO part to me, I realized that it could and would be very interesting. We talked some more, and that's how I got the part."

Working on the *Star Wars* set was something of an adventure in itself, Daniels says. There were dozens of script changes, resulting in parts being considerably shifted from what the cast had been led to expect. For a while, Daniels says, Lucas was planning to call the film *The Adventures of Luke Starkiller*. Fortunately, better judgment took hold, and the main character's last name was changed to "Skywalker" — at least slightly less corny — and the film title took its present form. Lucas made his decision to kill off Alec Guinness' character halfway through