



When George Lucas Gets His Hands On Other Blockbusters

by Wayne Gladstone and G. Xavier Robillard

FLYMF January 2007, The Hangover Issue, Volume 4 Issue 1

In 1977, George Lucas made Hollywood history with *Star Wars*. Most filmmakers would have been content to create a classic and move on, but George found a way to generate money from his creation in perpetuity.

Similarly, anyone can release a sequel, but it took George Lucas to raise the worthless prequel to an art form. Not to mention his true genius: using new technologies to justify his re-releases of “tinkered-with” classics.

To date, the *Star Wars* movies and reissues have generated over \$5 billion in revenue. It won't be much longer before Hollywood asks George to work his money-making magic on other movie blockbusters, and when that time comes, here's exactly what he'll do.

Titanic

The classic love story will be reissued with additional CGI goodies. In this version, the *Titanic* now shoots at the iceberg first before the iceberg retaliates by sinking it. Also, the ship no longer just sinks, but explodes, becoming encircled by a blue ring before being completely obliterated.

The following year, a prequel follows the story of the iceberg when it was a promising young part of a glacier. Unfortunately, a traumatic event causes it to break free and terrorize unsuspecting ships in its quest for ocean dominance. An unknown child actor with no ability is cast as the iceberg and then never heard from again.

The Big Chill

Given full control, George Lucas attempts to fix the glaring error in Lawrence Kasdan's classic about former hippies reuniting for their friend's funeral. No, not Tom Berenger's distractingly awful moustache. Instead, Lucas turns his full attention to Kasdan's decision to edit Kevin Costner, who was originally cast as the friend who commits suicide, out of the film before its release.

Lucas understands that movies should never be subtle and salvages the unused footage, lifting some additional images from *Field of Dreams*. Through the miracle of CGI, he creates five minutes of “new” footage justifying a re-release.

Lucas also crafts the script additions himself, showing off the writing chops he displayed in *The Phantom Menace*. In the opening scene, Costner stands in a cornfield and states, “I'm going to kill

myself because I am the friend who most represents the idealism of the sixties and now in the eighties I am lost and cannot survive in Reagan's America. Therefore, for that reason that I just stated, I am going to kill myself. I just hope my death causes my friends to reunite and learn some truths about the human condition.”

Also, in this version, Kevin Costner's wrists attack him first with a laser before he slits them with a razor.

Superman

Although it garnered some good press and a decent box office, Bryan Singer's *Superman Returns* will ultimately be remembered as the movie that answered the question, “What if Superman were a gay messiah?” Lucas comes to the rescue by going back to the original movies—literally. Using only the old Christopher Reeve flicks and a little CGI know-how, Lucas creates a new Superman saga featuring the world's first all-star, all-dead cast: Christopher Reeve, Marlon Brando and Richard Pryor.

Superman (Reeves) discovers that Lex Luthor (Marlon Brando with white wig digitally removed) is actually his father. They fight to the death before teaming up to restore peace and harmony to the galaxy. On the way, we meet Superman's sidekick “Jah Mon Freex” (Richard Pryor with digitally added floppy ears), whose outrageous broken English accent tickles the funny bone with jokes and goofs sampled and altered from his PG movies. “Mee-suh, like-uh, Soosberman!”

Aliens

Rescuing a franchise that has been hobbled to extinction after *Alien v. Predator*, George Lucas takes the reins and reveals the true nature of these reviled creatures: cuddly and gentle critters who make a terrific part of any Happy Meal.

Lucas sends his lovable Aliens on a mission to spread friendship and love across the galaxy. Soon, they meet Ripley, a lollipop maker, who tries to help them reach Earth but gets quite a surprise when she learns one of the Alien offspring is living inside her. Or inside her pocket, more precisely. Upon reaching Earth, the adorable little fur beast pops his head out of her space jeans and asks, “Are we there, yet?”

Film buffs might recall that Ripley died in *Alien III*, but Lucas overcomes this difficulty, employing his *Return of the Jedi* technique in which good guys get to come back to life. Perhaps, most impressive, though, is Lucas' ability to break cinematic

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barriers by employing an arsenal of computers, lighting techniques and Academy Award-winning makeup, to make Sigourney Weaver look consistently hot for the duration of a ninety-minute movie.

Battlefield Earth

Although Travolta's turn in this L. Ron Hubbard adaptation was a critical and box office disaster, Lucas pursues the project in search of a challenge. Deciding that the movie already has all the elements of a sci-fi classic—overblown special effects, absurdly wooden dialogue, and ill-conceived religious overtones—Lucas makes only one change for the re-release: the title. *George Lucas's Battlefield Earth. A New Turd.*

Casablanca

“Ask people and they'll tell you,” says Lucas, describing his new project. “What they don't like about *Casablanca* is its ambiguity. I mean, if this Rick is supposed to be a good guy, why is he consorting with Nazis? And these so-called Nazis. If they're really so bad, why do they look like everybody else? They're not even disfigured.

With those sentiments operating as his mission statement, George Lucas sets out to fix this classic. The Nazis assume the form of mucous-covered slug beasts and The Rock is cast as The Rick. The Rick's romance with Ilsa (Hillary Duff) remains intact, but this time it is their realization that they are siblings that keeps the lovers apart. Lucas stays true to the original, and The Rick and Ilsa say their goodbyes at the airport.

In Lucas' version, however, The Rick then boards a plane alone and pilots it into the depths of a fully operational Nazi slugship, where he boldly drops explosives into the main reactor and escapes in the nick of time.