Star Wars sequel trilogy

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The **Star Wars sequel trilogy** is the third film trilogy in the *Star Wars* American space opera franchise, created by George Lucas. It is being produced by Lucasfilm and distributed by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures. The trilogy is to consist of episodes *VII* through *IX* and chronologically follows *Return of the Jedi* (1983) in the saga. Lucas originally planned a sequel trilogy in the mid-1970s,[1] but had abandoned these plans by the late 1990s. The Walt Disney Company acquired Lucasfilm in late 2012 and then announced the production of a sequel trilogy.

The first installment, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, was released on December 18, 2015 in the U.S., following a special premiere screening in Los Angeles on December 14. The film is directed by J. J. Abrams who cowrote the screenplay with Lawrence Kasdan and Michael Arndt. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, and other main cast members from the original trilogy returned to reprise their roles and co-star alongside Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver, and Oscar Isaac.

Unlike the previous two trilogies, whose films were released approximately three years apart, the sequel films are planned to be released two years apart. *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* is set for release on December 15, 2017, with Rian Johnson as screenwriter and director. *Episode IX* was to be directed by Colin Trevorrow; however, in September 2017, Lucasfilm announced that Trevorrow had departed from the project, and

Star Wars sequel trilogy	
The *Star Wars* logo as seen in all saga films	
Directed by	J. J. Abrams (*VII*, *IX*) Rian Johnson (*VIII*)
Screenplay by	Lawrence Kasdan (*VII*) J. J. Abrams (*VII*, *IX*) Michael Arndt (*VII*) Rian Johnson (*VIII*) Chris Terrio (*IX*)
Produced by	Kathleen Kennedy J. J. Abrams (*VII*, *IX*) Bryan Burk (*VII*) Ram Bergman (*VIII*) Michelle Rejwan (*IX*)
Starring	Harrison Ford (*VII*) Mark Hamill Carrie Fisher (*VII*, *VIII*)

shortly after announced that Abrams would return to direct the film and co-write it with Chris Terrio. The film is scheduled to be released on December 20, 2019.

Films

	Adam Driver
	Daisy Ridley
	John Boyega
	Oscar Isaac
	Lupita Nyong'o
	Andy Serkis
	Domhnall Gleeson
	Anthony Daniels
	Peter Mayhew
	Max von Sydow (*VII*)
	Kelly Marie Tran (*VIII*)
	Laura Dern (*VIII*)
	Benicio Del Toro (*VIII*)
Cinematography	Dan Mindel (*VII*)
	Steve Yedlin (*VIII*)
Edited by	Mary Jo Markey (*VII*)
	Maryann Brandon (*VII*)
	Bob Ducsay (*VIII*)
Music by	John Williams
Distributed by	Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures
Release dates	December 18, 2015 (*The Force Awakens*)
	December 15, 2017 (*The Last Jedi*)
	December 20, 2019 (*Episode IX*)
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	**1 film:** $245 million
Box office	**1 film:**

					$2.068 billion

Film	U.S. release date	Director(s)	Screenwriter(s)	Producer(s)	Status
Star Wars: The Force Awakens[a]	December 18, 2015	J. J. Abrams	Lawrence Kasdan and J. J. Abrams	Kathleen Kennedy, J. J. Abrams and Bryan Burk	Released
Star Wars: The Last Jedi[b]	December 15, 2017[2]	Rian Johnson		Kathleen Kennedy and Ram Bergman	Completed; not yet released[3]
Star Wars: Episode IX	December 20, 2019[4]	J. J. Abrams[5]	J. J. Abrams and Chris Terrio[5]	Kathleen Kennedy, J. J. Abrams, and Michelle Rejwan[5]	In development

The Force Awakens

The Force Awakens, the first film in the sequel trilogy, takes place approximately 30 years after the events of *Return of the Jedi* and includes new characters, as well as characters from the original trilogy, in search of Luke Skywalker with the help of Han Solo, and Princess Leia along with Chewbacca, C-3PO, and R2-D2.[6][7] *The Force Awakens*, like the subsequent two films, is based on an original screenplay and not a storyline from the expanded universe.[8]

The original trilogy's cast joins newcomers Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver, and Oscar Isaac. It is directed by J. J. Abrams, who co-wrote a revised version of the screenplay along with Lawrence Kasdan, co-writer of the screenplays for *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. Original drafts of *The Force Awakens* script were written by Michael Arndt,[9][10][11] but ultimately early character and plot elements in Anrdt's vision came into conflict with the conceptual ideas of director J.J. Abrams and Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy, as well as filming schedules and ultimately Arndt was removed from the project due to creative differences and time constraints,[12][13][14][15] being replaced by Kasdan as the primary co-creative visionary to Abrams' plot concepts.[14][15]

George Lucas was set to provide Abrams with advice as a creative consultant; however, Lucas had no involvement with the film, with his representative stating Lucas "ideally would love not to see any footage until he walks into the theater next December. He has never been able to be surprised by a *Star Wars* film before and he said he was looking forward to it."[16][17][18][19] The film began pre-production on October 30, 2012. Production began in April 2014;[20] it was released on December 18, 2015.[21] In the US, the film is rated PG-13 "for sci-fi action violence",[22] the second *Star Wars* film to receive that rating after *Revenge of the Sith* (the five other films received a PG rating).[23]

The film broke opening weekend box office records in North America with $248 million ($39 million more than previous record holder *Jurassic World*) and totals of $529 million worldwide, the largest opening ever. The film set another new record by becoming the first movie to break the $1 billion mark in box office sales in just 12 days.[24] It is currently the highest-grossing film of all time in North America and the third highest-grossing film worldwide, unadjusted for inflation.[25]

The Last Jedi

On June 20, 2014, Rian Johnson was announced as writer and director of *Episode VIII* and story treatment writer of *Episode IX*.[26][27] Kathleen Kennedy and Ram Bergman were the producers and J. J. Abrams is the executive producer. Steve Yedlin is the cinematographer.[28] Johnson confirmed in August 2014 that he would direct *Episode VIII*.[29]

In March 2015, Oscar Isaac confirmed he would reprise his *The Force Awakens* role of Poe Dameron in *Episode VIII*.[30][31][32] In July 2015, it was reported that Benicio del Toro was being considered for a villain;[33][34] del Toro later confirmed that he had been cast.[35] In September 2015, it was reported that Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Tatiana Maslany, Gina Rodriguez, Olivia Cooke, and Bel Powley were on the shortlist for two separate parts.[36][37] Jimmy Vee was cast as R2-D2, succeeding Kenny Baker, who died in August 2016.[38][39]

Much of the filming for *Episode VIII* took place at Pinewood Studios near London.[40][41] In September 2015, some pre-production filming took place on the island of Skellig Michael, Ireland to take advantage of better weather conditions.[42] In a November 2015 interview with Wired, Abrams stated that the film's script was completed.[43] In December 2015, Hamill,[44] Isaac,[45] Christie,[46] and Boyega were confirmed to reprise their roles as Luke Skywalker, Poe Dameron, Captain Phasma, and Finn, respectively.[47] Kennedy announced on December 17, 2015, at the London premiere for *The Force Awakens* that most of the cast would return for *Episode VIII*.[48] On January 20, 2016, Lucasfilm and Disney announced that the release of the film would be delayed to December 15, 2017.[2] Principal photography began in February 2016.[49] Additional filming took place in Dubrovnik from March 9 to March 16, 2016,[50][51] as well as in Ireland.[52] Principal photography wrapped in July 2016.[53][54][55] On December 27, 2016, Carrie Fisher died after going into cardiac arrest a few days earlier. Fisher had completed filming her role as General Leia Organa, before her death.[56] On January 23, 2017, the film was given a confirmed release date of December 15, 2017 with the title *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.[57]

Episode IX

In June 2014, Johnson was announced as writing a story treatment for *Episode IX*,[26] though by April 2017, he stated he would not be involved with writing the film.[58] In August 2015, Colin Trevorrow was announced as the director of *Episode IX*.[59] Trevorrow, along with Derek Connolly, began writing the script.[60] On February 10, 2016, Disney chief executive officer Bob Iger confirmed that pre-production of *Episode IX* had begun.[49] Cinematographer John Schwartzman is planning on using 65 mm film.[61] In late December 2016, media outlets reported that Carrie Fisher was slated for a key role in *Episode IX*.[62][63][64] In January 2017, Lucasfilm stated they would not digitally generate Fisher's performance for the film.[65] In April 2017, it was confirmed by Kathleen Kennedy that Fisher will not be in *Episode IX*.[66] In August 2017, it was announced that Jack Thorne would rewrite the script.[67]

On September 5, 2017, Lucasfilm announced that Trevorrow had stepped down as director of the film.[68][69] A week later, it was announced that Abrams would return to direct *Episode IX*. Abrams will also co-write the film with Chris Terrio, in addition to producing the film through his company Bad Robot Productions, with Kennedy and Michelle Rejwan.[5][70]

Principal photography is set to begin in June 2018.[71] The film is scheduled to be released on December 20, 2019, replacing the original May 2019 date.[4]

Production

Initial development

Mark Hamill has stated that Lucas told him in 1976, while filming the first film in Tunisia, that three *Star Wars* trilogies were planned. Lucas suggested Hamill could have a cameo role in *Episode IX*, which he imagined filming by 2011.[1][72] A *Time* magazine story in March 1978, quoting Lucas, also contained the assertion there would be ten further *Star Wars* films after *The Empire Strikes Back*.[73] Gary Kurtz was also aware of proposed story elements for *Episode VII* to *Episode IX* before 1980.[74][75]

In 1980, at the time of the release of *The Empire Strikes Back*, Lucas said there were seven further *Star Wars* films he wanted to make. He said he had "twelve-page outlines" for those films.[76] In an interview with Jim Steranko in *Prevue* magazine published in late 1980, Lucas described how the expansive scope of *Star Wars* had started with an overlong screenplay:

> So, I took the screenplay and divided it into three stories, and rewrote the first one. As I was writing, I came up with some ideas for a film about robots, with no humans in it. When I got to working on the Wookiee, I thought of a film just about Wookiees, nothing else. So, for a time, I had a couple of odd movies with just those characters. Then, I had the other two films, which were essentially split into three parts each, two trilogies. When the smoke cleared, I said, 'This is really great. I'll do another trilogy that takes place after this.' I had three trilogies of nine films, and then another couple of odd films. Essentially, there were twelve films.

He then added that he had:

> ...eliminated the odd movies, because they really don't have anything to do with the Star Wars saga. ... I'm just going to keep it pure. It's a nine-part saga that has a beginning, a middle and an end. It progresses over a period of about fifty or sixty years with about twenty years between trilogies, each trilogy taking about six or seven years.[77]

In this interview, Lucas also stated that he had "titles and ten-page story outlines for each of" the nine episodes.[77] In an interview with Gary Kurtz in the same magazine, Kurtz said:

[w]hether or not all nine or twelve films actually get made depends on how George feels as time goes along. The series may happen the way he originally planned or may completely change. As the films are made, each of the stories develops. As each is finished, I think the direction of the saga may change a bit.[78]

In an interview with *Starlog* magazine published in September 1981, Lucas confirmed that he had the nine-film series plotted, cautioning:

...but it's a long way from the plot to the script. I've just gone through that with *Return of the Jedi*, and what seems like a great idea when it's described in three sentences doesn't hold together when you try to make five or six scenes out of it. So plots change a lot when they start getting into script form.[79]

Cancellation and Disney acquisition

From 1997 to mid-2012, Lucas frequently stated that he had no plans to make the sequel trilogy, and said he would not allow others to do so either.[80][81][82][83][84] He gave various explanations for the apparent abandonment of plans to film the sequel trilogy.

In August 1999, at a press conference in New York City to discuss *The Phantom Menace*, Lucas described the "nine year commitment" required to make a *Star Wars* trilogy.[85] In 2002, he said: "Basically what I said as a joke was, 'Maybe when Harrison and Carrie are in their 70s, we'll come back and do another version.' The thing I didn't realize then, and that I do realize now very clearly, is that not only would they be in their 70s, but *I* would be in my 70s too."[86] In 2007, Lucas described making the films at that age as "an idea that seemed amusing at the time, but doesn't seem realistic now", and suggested that 'off-the-cuff' comments he had made in earlier years had been misconstrued as absolute statements.[87]

At a 1997 "Special Edition" press conference, Lucas said: "Everyone said, 'Well, are you going to do sequels to the first three?' But that was an afterthought; I don't have scripts on those stories. The only notion on that was, wouldn't it be fun to get all the actors to come back when they're 60 or 70 years old and make three more about them as old people."[80] In a 1997 issue of *Star Wars Insider*, he said: "The whole story has six episodes.... If I ever went beyond that, it would be something that was made up. I really don't have any notion other than, 'Gee, it would be interesting to do Luke Skywalker later on.' It wouldn't be part of the main story, but a sequel to this thing."[81]

In an interview published in the February 1999 issue of *Vanity Fair*, Lucas said: "When you see it in six parts, you'll understand. It really ends at part six. I never had a story for the sequels, for the later ones."[88][89] In 2008, after all six films had been released, Lucas said: "The movies were the story of Anakin Skywalker and Luke Skywalker, and when Luke saves the galaxy and redeems his father, that's where that story ends."[90]

In 1999, when asked about the possibility of someone else making *Star Wars* films, Lucas said, "Probably not, it's my thing."[88][89] In a 2008 interview in *Total Film*, Lucas ruled out anybody else making *Star Wars* films. Asked if he was happy for new *Star Wars* films to be made after his death, he said: "I've left pretty explicit instructions for there not to be any more features. There will definitely be no *Episodes VII–IX*. That's because there isn't any story. I mean, I never thought of anything. And

now there have been novels about the events after *Episode VI*, which isn't at all what I would have done with it. The *Star Wars* story is really the tragedy of Darth Vader. That is the story. Once Vader dies, he doesn't come back to life, the Emperor doesn't get cloned and Luke doesn't get married..."[91]

However, speaking after Disney's 2012 acquisition of Lucasfilm, Lucas (sitting alongside new Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy), said: "I always said I wasn't going to do any more, and that's true, because I'm not going to do any more. But that doesn't mean I'm unwilling to turn it over to Kathy to do more."[92]

However, in 2015 Lucas said he planned to finish Episode VII, release it in May 2015 and then sell the company afterward. But Disney expressed interest, with Lucas saying "It's better for me to get out at the beginning of a new thing and I can just remove myself. The time is more important to me than the money."[93]

Story development

Lucas had story treatments for episodes *VII*, *VIII* and *IX* which he turned over to Disney chairman Bob Iger around the time Lucasfilm was sold to Disney in 2012.[16] However, during an interview with Cinemablend in January 2014 to promote the upcoming release of the Lucasfilm animated movie *Strange Magic*, Lucas revealed that ultimately, Disney chose not to use the story treatments which he had written and turned over with the acquisition, and that the company chose to create brand new stories for the upcoming movies instead: "The ones that I sold to Disney, they came up to the decision that they didn't really want to do those. So they made up their own. So it's not the ones that I originally wrote [on screen in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*]".[94] No information about these has been released; however, during the previous 35 years, Lucas had given many hints about the content of the sequel trilogy, including the following (sometimes contradictory) possibilities:

- *Episode VII* would begin roughly 20 (or perhaps 30–40) years after the end of *Return of the Jedi* (according to Lucas in 1980 and 1982).[77][95]
- R2-D2 and C-3PO would be the only characters who might continue through all nine films (Lucas in 1980, 1981 and 1983).[77][96][97]
- The trilogy would deal with the rebuilding of the Republic (Lucas in 1980).[98]
- "It's like a saga, the story of a group of people, a family" (Lucas in 1980).[77]
- The focus would be on Luke Skywalker's journey to becoming the premier Jedi Knight, with Luke's sister (who was not Leia) appearing in *Episode VIII*, and the first appearance of the Emperor, and Luke's ultimate confrontation with him, in *Episode IX* (a storyline as planned pre-1980, according to *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back* producer Gary Kurtz).[74][75][99]
- Luke would have a romantic relationship with a female love interest (Lucas in 1988).[100]
- The main theme of the trilogy would be moral and philosophical problems, such as the necessity for moral choices and the wisdom needed to distinguish right from wrong, justice, confrontation, and passing on what you have learned (Lucas in 1983 and 1989).[101][102]
- The key actors, Hamill as Luke Skywalker, Ford as Han Solo, and Fisher as Princess Leia, would appear, in their 60s or 70s (Lucas in 1983).[80][101]
- In *Episode IX*, Hamill would cameo, "like Obi-Wan handing the lightsaber down to the next new hope" (according to Hamill, in 2004).[1]
- "The other one — what happens to Luke afterward — is much more ethereal. I have a tiny notebook full of notes on that. If I'm really ambitious, I could proceed to figure out what would have happened to Luke" (Lucas in 1980).[103]

Interviewed in 2012 after the announcement of the new trilogy, Lucas biographer Dale Pollock said that he had, in the 1980s, read the outlines to 12 *Star Wars* episodes planned by Lucas, but had been required to sign a confidentiality agreement.[104] Pollock said:

- "The three most exciting stories were 7, 8 and 9. They had propulsive action, really interesting new worlds, new characters. I remember thinking, 'I want to see these 3 movies.'"
- The next series film would "involve Luke Skywalker in his 30s and 40s."
- Disney would probably use Lucas's outlines as the basis for the sequel trilogy. "That's in part what Disney bought."[104]

Author Timothy Zahn, whose *Star Wars* novel series, the Thrawn Trilogy, is set in the Star Wars expanded universe, was also interviewed in 2012. Zahn confirmed the sequel trilogy would not be based on the Thrawn novels, but said he had been briefed years before on Lucas's plans for the sequels.[105] (Zahn had discussions with Lucas before the first Thrawn novel was published in 1991.)

> The original idea as I understood it—and Lucas changes his mind off and on, so it may not be what he's thinking right now—but it was going to be three generations. You'd have the original trilogy, then go back to Luke's father and find out what happened to him, and if there was another seventh, eighth, or ninth film, it would be Luke's children.[105]

As announced by Lucasfilm, the new trilogy also meant the end of most of the existing Star Wars expanded universe, so as to give "maximum creative freedom to the filmmakers and also preserve an element of surprise and discovery for the audience". Much of the old content would continue to be available under the "Star Wars: Legends" brand.[106]

Notes

a. Also known as *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens*.
b. Also known as *Star Wars: Episode VIII – The Last Jedi*.

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External links

- Sequel trilogy (https://starwars.fandom.com/wiki/Sequel_trilogy) on Wookieepedia, a *Star Wars* wiki
- *Star Wars*: Episode VII *The Force Awakens* on Wookieepedia, a *Star Wars* wiki
- *Star Wars* Official Page (http://www.starwars.com/)

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