

HIGHLIGHTS OF 'STAR WARS' HISTORY

1977 to PRESENT



1977: George Lucas releases "Star Wars," launching another kind of empire and enthralling moviegoers everywhere.

1980: "Star Wars: Episode V — The Empire Strikes Back" continues the film saga, with Irvin Kershner directing instead of Lucas. Love it? We know.



1983: The original trilogy concludes with Rebel victory in "Star Wars: Episode VI — Return of the Jedi," leaving behind a grudge against Ewoks and fanboys drooling over Leia's gold bikini.



1997: The original trilogy returns to theaters in "Special Edition" format, with updated special effects and deleted scenes. Greedo now shoots at Han Solo first, enraging fans and igniting a debate that rages to this day.



2002: "Star Wars: Episode II — Attack of the Clones" shows audiences an angsty, romantic Anakin Skywalker and the origin of the stormtroopers.

2012: Disney buys Lucasfilm Ltd. for \$4 billion and announces plans to continue the franchise with Episode VII in 2015.

2015: "The Force Awakens" fever is in full, well, force, as trailers, toys, commercials and more give hints at what is to come. The film will arrive in theaters Dec. 18.



1970s

1978: The widely panned "The Star Wars Holiday Special" airs, garnering a place in TV infamy.

1980s

1981: "A New Hope" gets added to the first film's title for its re-release.

1990s

1994: Lucas tells Entertainment Weekly that production on the first film in a trilogy of prequels will start within two years.



1999: The first prequel, "Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace," begets a memorable villain (Darth Maul) and killer fight scene (Darth Maul vs. the Jedi), but the rest of the film plods along.

2000s

2005: The prequels conclude with the slaughter of the Jedi, the birth of Luke and Leia, and the rise of Darth Vader in "Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith."

2010s

2014: The name of the next film, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" is announced, and the first teaser trailer debuts.