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# The Director and the Jedi - Five Things We Learned

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**Bio**

Likes loud rock music and pink lipstick. Working all the experience...

## The Director and the Jedi - Five Things We Learned

It was a long journey for director Rian Johnson to bring *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* to life, beginning in the summer of 2014 and ending with the release in December 2017.

And, if you've read the reports about the movie's making, then you'll know there was almost as much drama off screen as there was on it.

Was there really tension between director Rian Johnson and Mark Hamill over the writing of Luke Skywalker? Is there an actor sweating inside that prosthetic headpiece, or is it animatronic?

Well, thanks to the documentary *The Director and the Jedi*, which will be released as part of the special features on *The Last Jedi's* Blu-Ray, all is revealed.

As the movie arrives on shelves on Monday (April 9th), we caught a full preview of documentary and have rounded five things to look out for...

**Star Wars: The Last Jedi was comprised of 120 sets and shot on a seriously tight schedule...**

For the production of the movie, Rian Johnson kept a tight ship. If one actor called in sick, it delayed the entire production. So tight was the schedule in fact that all the scenes on Luke Skywalker's hideaway were shot on location in just two days.

Those scenes were filmed on the remote island Skellig Michael, a world heritage site accessible only by boat. That's a problem for a movie the size of *The Last Jedi* so roads were constructed to transport lights, props and set dressing. Production designer Rick Heinrichs lamented "next time we build a set like this, we shoot for a month." At least the weather enhanced the atmosphere, lashing Luke Skywalker harsher than his own ego...

**The animatronics were so expressive that the cast couldn't tell if they were costumes with actors inside...**

For fans still bitter about the charming practical effects of the first trilogy being replaced with ageing animation, there's a reason for that. Production designer Neal Scanlan moved away from CGI to provoke authentic reactions from the actors on set. The original cast for Yoda was shipped to the studio and a replica was created to match the exact cracks in the original mould to recreate Yoda's first interaction with Luke in *The Empire Strikes Back*. It worked, as Mark Hamill cried on set during the reunion.

**All the department heads had worked on a big budget blockbuster before...**

Rian Johnson is pretty open about the fact he felt the force of responsibility signing the film's final budget of \$200 million dollars as he had never carried such a large project. But he had some help. All the other department heads had worked on a blockbuster before. Production designer Rick Heinrichs worked on *Captain America* and Michael Kaplan was the costume designer for the rebooted *Star Trek* films, and you can follow their process in the doc.

**Rian Johnson directed the action sequences in the style of a classic Jackie Chan movie...**

Tapping into nostalgia for retro aesthetics, Johnson achieved this effect by tracking action sequences with a single camera shot through a wide-angle lens. Mark Hamill may have mastered the power of the force, but he is no stunt master. As with the use of practical effects, Johnson wanted to ground the space opera in reality for the story to connect with audiences and convinced Hamill to perform without a double.

**Mark Hamill wasn't thrilled about the direction of his character...**

Those tensions you've read about between Johnson and Hamill? It all played out. In particular, there was tension between Johnson and Hamill over the wallowing Luke Skywalker. Hamill had envisioned Luke's optimism as a



Star Wars: The Last Jedi  
Rian Johnson

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beacon of lightness for fans in trying times. Eventually, Hamill conceded that he is only "renting [Luke] out" to fans and the franchise. We're glad that he became one with the force to give us closure.

*Star Wars: The Last Jedi* will be released on DVD and Blu-Ray on Monday (April 9th and is available to pre-order from hmv's online store [here](#).

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