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Twenty years after *Star Wars* was originally released, writer/director George Lucas re-released the trilogy in theaters. With new scenes, improved visual effects, and a digital soundtrack, this was believed to be Lucas's definitive version of the *Star Wars* trilogy. Now the trilogy has been released on DVD. However, Lucas improved the visuals yet again before this release.

As a result of this DVD release, a debate arose concerning the visual effects. One argument says that since this is George Lucas' series, he should be able to show the films in his own way. The other argument says that these films can stand alone without these "improvements" and that Lucas should have left them alone.

I spoke to Catherine Rios, a Humanities professor specializing in film, about this issue, and she felt filming on sound stages is still the way to make films. She also believed that computer-generated imagery is just a tool to use in film making as opposed to the style of filming. Rios explained what the purpose of these technical designers were, "They are motivated to achieve a certain effect in film. They have a job to make films look more realistic," she said.

The answer that was given to the question on whether it is right

for a director to go back to his completed film and change the sound and visual effects was, "A film is a story. The director guides the story. When Lucas first made *Star Wars*, the effects at the time were not available so it is perfectly legitimate to go back and make the improvements," said Rios. She said in this case, everything in the story was merely enhanced, the story was not re-written. "However," Rios added, "If the changes are colorization of a black and white film, or changes corporations want to make to the [finished] film, then it is a big no."

The DVD trilogy is the special edition that was in theaters in 1997, with improvements made on top of that version. In Episode IV, which is the first film in this trilogy, Lucas' visual effects team at Industrial Light & Magic only made a couple of improvements. In one of the most controversial changes to the film, Han Solo, played by Harrison Ford, shoots the bounty hunter Greedo, after Greedo shoots and misses Solo. In the DVD, this scene was altered to have the two of them fire simultaneously with Solo emerging victoriously. The other noticeable change to Episode IV was smoothing the walking of Jabba the Hutt in his scene with Solo.

In Episode V, or more commonly referred to as *The Empire Strikes Back*, again only a couple of changes were made. The first change placed Ian McDiarmid back into the Emperor role that he had in Episodes I, II, III, IV, and VI. In the original release they filmed another person and dubbed the voice. Now, McDiarmid returns along with a few extra lines not heard in the

original release. The other change takes out Luke Skywalker's scream as he falling down Cloud City at the climax of the film.

For the last film of the trilogy, Episode VI, *Return of the Jedi*, the only change made is also the only change made to the trilogy that has the most potential for negative connotations. In the original ending of *Jedi*, Luke looks over to see the spirits of Obi-Wan Kenobi, Yoda, and his father, Anakin Skywalker. In the original, Anakin was played by Sebastian Shaw however in the DVD, Hayden Christensen, who plays Anakin Skywalker in the current trilogy being made by Lucas, replaces him.

These are all only minor changes made to the trilogy, but fans of the trilogy will argue that Lucas should have kept the trilogy the way in was originally released. The same arguments were made when the special edition of the trilogy was released. These "improvements" to the DVD enhance the story more than the original celluloid frames yet the argument is actually valid. Why keep making changes and improvements to works that already hold it's own?

The answer that can be given is with the rapidly changing possibilities in visual effects, if the improvements Lucas makes creates a "definitive" version, then fans and film lovers alike should take into consideration this is the version Lucas wanted to show.

An interesting footnote to this story, Lucas has also released a "definitive" version of his first film THX 1138 on DVD, and this film also has improvements to the sound and visual effects.



Photo courtesy of google.com

Murder Junkies front man takes place of brother, G.G. Allin

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The Murder Junkies are an old school punk band that has been around since the 80's. They achieved legendary status through the hard-living lifestyle that was embodied by their late lead singer, G.G. Allin. G.G., who died in 1993 of a heroin overdose, was unmistakably the most aggressive and threatening performer in rock-n-roll history. He would often perform naked, covered only in his own blood, and frequently assaulted his own audience. G.G.'s antics were chronicled by numerous home videos of performances and backstage mayhem.

One man that was a constant in G.G.'s life was his brother and Murder Junkies bassist Merle Allin. Merle made the uneasy decision to go on with the band after G.G.'s death. Although going through several different singers over the years, the Murder Junkies have continued to spread the gospel that G.G. started and have proved to stay true to their old school punk roots. Merle talked with me at length about life after G.G. and current punk culture.

For years, scensters have debated whether or not punk rock is truly dead. Like many veterans of the scene, Merle strikes a perfect balance of cynicism and honesty in revealing his view on the issue.

"I think it's been dead for a long time," says Merle. "I don't even know what they call punk anymore. It's just a bunch of shit. Today's kids didn't grow up with that in-your-face aggressive punk rock. Everything is so mainstream now. There aren't many bands out there anymore with that old school sound like us. The main reason we are still around is because the scene

sucks so badly. We have to make it exciting again."

Old Murder Junkie fans will be pleased to know that Dino the Naked Drummer is still with the band and as naked as ever. Merle says that Dino keeps a pair of pink panties on reserve for when the occasional club owner threatens to shut a show down in protest.

Of all the Murder Junkies front men since G.G., Merle admits that none of them ever attempted to recreate the insanity that G.G. was famous to perpetuate. After reminiscing about some of G.G.'s more disturbing onstage behavior, such as ingesting his own defecation and urine onstage, I ask Merle if today's Murder Junkies shows come close to the carnage of old.

"There's still a lot of blood," says Merle. "A lot of the insanity at the shows now is more with the people in the crowd. There's always aggressive people and fights breaking out in the crowd, but we're not like G.G. Our singer doesn't get out there and punch people like G.G. did. I think the music itself is all it takes anymore. We like to pump people up and watch them get into a fight for a change."

With G.G. at the helm, backstage at a Murder Junkies show was equally as intense as the performance itself. G.G. would often humiliate groupies in ways that would make Led Zeppelin's legendary acts of female exploitation look like a Sunday-school gathering. One instance of depravity that was caught on video had G.G. inserting a turkey baster full of beer in a groupie's rectum and then drinking it as it spewed back out. I ask Merle if these antics are still present at Murder Junkies shows.

"Shit still happens, but not quite to the extreme as it did with G.G.," says Merle. "Most of

the people that come to our shows never had a chance to see G.G. and they probably didn't even hear of him until after he died. We still have our hardcore older fans that come out, but our crowd is now mixed. Now we get all these young kids. They really don't have the expectations that somebody who had seen G.G. do. We're still wilder than anything they've ever seen."

Understandably, this kind of behavior got the Murder Junkies blacklisted from entire cities for years at a time. They



Photo courtesy of Murder Junkies

only recently have been once again permitted to play shows in New York City, after an 11 year ban. Merle admits there are still some NYC clubs, like CBGB's, that refuse to lift the ban.

Conditioned by comparatively tame and safe acts such as Blink 182 and Good Charlotte, Merle is convinced that the kids in today's punk scene are ill-equipped to handle a performer such as G.G.

"If G.G. were still alive today he would still be as hated as he

ever was and he wouldn't be nearly as popular as he is," says Merle. "The only reason that G.G. is so popular is because he's dead."

Since G.G.'s passing, there have been a few imitators to the throne. Merle expresses nothing but contempt for a particular imposter who's gender-bending message of self-hate and faux devil worship mesmerized teenage consumers in the mid-90's.

"Take guys like Marilyn Manson," says Merle. "All that shit he was doing in the 90's

details about his reaction and the days following.

"I found out about it that morning," says Merle of his brother's untimely death. "Apparently he died around 5 or 6 in the morning and they found him just before 9AM. They called me right away. I raced out the door, hopped in a cab, and was downtown in minutes. I was in a daze; half-asleep. I was in shock and didn't know what to think. I thought it could be a joke but I knew it wasn't. I could just tell this time. I had received that call many times before in

press. My phone didn't stop ringing for months. I made all the funeral plans and called everybody around the world that G.G. would have wanted at his funeral. Having so much to do probably kept me from breaking down."

Following G.G.'s death, the home videos of the Murder Junkies shows began to circulate in the underground faster than ever and the true legend of G.G. Allin began to take shape. Filmmaker Todd Phillips produced the film "Hated", a hugely popular documentary of the life and death of G.G.

Merle expressed that the great moments he had with G.G. were too numerous to pin down a favorite. He talks in general terms about some of the bands crazier moments.

"There were memorable times being chased from clubs," says Merle. "One time we were in this van with smashed in windows and a flat tire racing down the road as 2 or 3 carloads of angry kids chased us. There were some really scary times when we feared for our life. We used to have to park in an alley behind a gig so we could sneak out the back door to avoid all the kids who wanted to kill G.G."

Merle said that the Murder Junkies are gearing up for a U.S. tour in November and plan to put out a CD early next year. Merle is also busy serving as the official retailer of all authentic G.G. Allin merchandise and manages G.G.'s website, www.ggallin.com.

Merle says that the Murder Junkies will keep pumping out that classic old school punk sound until they all get sick of each other. You can check out tour dates on the Murder Junkies website, which Merle also manages, at www.murderjunkies.com.

the 80's. People would call me and say 'I heard G.G. was dead' or 'I heard G.G. died on tour'. But, I knew this time it was serious. It was like a dream or nightmare. I had to identify the body. I looked at him on the floor and I got mad. I had so many emotions racing through my head that it was almost too hard to comprehend. I had to go to the police station and fill out reports. After that, I had to deal with the press. I was on the phone forever just talking to the

Predictably, our conversation shifts towards the morning G.G. died, after the now famous Gas Station show in New York City. Merle talks about the moment he found out of his brother's death and reveals intimate