

STAR WARS GAZING

REVENGE OF THE SITH MARKS END OF ERA

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

It's easy to tell who the true Star Wars fans are.

They will be the bleary-eyed legion with the frozen grins who will happily endure the May 19 midnight premiere of *Revenge of the Sith*, the sixth and highly anticipated final instalment in the Star Wars series first introduced 28 years ago.

The franchise, created by George Lucas, has created a phenomenal international following.

Diehard fans, seeking the prestige of a premiere screening, are already lining up at theatres everywhere.

York Region will be no different.

With all but three of its 86 Canadian theatres, including three in York, premiering *Revenge of the Sith*, which stars Thornhill native Hayden Christensen, Cineplex Odeon had lineups forming for the Thursday premiere since last Friday.

"The series has a strong following and people want to be the first to see it," Cinemax Galaxy communication vice-president Pat Marshall said. "We don't discourage or encourage lineups. We try and make sure they're safe and taken care of. We just want people to be respectful of neighbouring properties."

R.J. Gorman, owner of the GEM Theatre in Keswick, who earlier saw the film at a private industry screening, believes *Revenge of the Sith* is, by far, the best film in the series.

"It starts with a bang, ties up all the loose ends and answers all the questions," he said.

With the GEM's policy not to pre-sell tickets, queues for the midnight showing are expected to start well in advance.

One of the first in line will be Robert Brooks, a self-professed Star Wars superfan.



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSHEIDT

Mr. Brooks' Keswick home is chock-a-block with Star Wars memorabilia ranging from posters, VHS and DVD films, action figures, models, puzzles, replica Darth Vader and trooper helmets to books, Dixie cups and soap. There's even a package of Star Wars cookies, circa 1980.

The Force has long been with Mr. Brooks.

A collector since 11, his love affair with all things Star Wars is almost three decades strong. Wielding one of his \$150 lightsabres, he points out the museum quality assemblage of Star Wars action figures festooning in his home office. Among the hundreds of figures in their original packages are true rarities such as Yak Face, valued at \$1,000 (all figures US), R2D2 at \$400 and a Power Droid at \$225. Most carry the original price stickers, about \$2.95.

"A lot of nuance goes into collecting," he said in the shrine-like home he shares with wife Donna and sons Michael, Vance and Kyle.

"A collector covets the rare and those items with variance in terms of condition, what picture is on the package card and where it was made."

The IBM support manager's motivation for amassing Star Wars memorabilia is more for the reminiscences than the monetary.

"It's a lifestyle," he said. "I travel a lot and always look for stores with Star Wars items. I collect for nostalgic reasons. Some collect for profit. I collect for the memories. It's a way to relive my childhood. My 4-year-old is into it and I get to share it with him."

"For me, Star Wars is all about the special effects and robots. Ultimately, it's a great story about good, evil and frailty."

Mr. Brooks, who has viewed the previous five Star Wars films "absolutely hundreds of times," was so enthralled by the first, he paid to see it 78 times. "Mind you, it was only \$1.50 to get in back then."

With every available nook and

cranny utilized for display and storage, he estimates his collection has more than 2,000 pieces and is conservatively valued at \$30,000. His favourite haunts for hunting items are garage sales, stores and eBay on the Internet.

He avoids Star Wars conventions where fans dress as their favourite characters. "I don't go that far," he said.

The Holy Grail of Star War collectibles are genuine movie props. If he had his druthers, Mr. Brooks would want the lightsabre hilt worn by Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker.

Alas, the type of fantastic future technology that permeates the Star Wars saga has, in part, decelerated his enthusiasm.

"I'm starting to wind down because I can't be sure if what I'm buying is genuine," he said. "Technology has come so far that many people, even experts, can't tell the knock offs and fakes from the real thing."

Superfan Robert Brooks has a museum-like array of Star Wars memorabilia he has collected over the past 28 years. Mr. Brooks plans to be one of the first in line Thursday to see the sixth Star Wars instalment, *Revenge of the Sith*.

STAR WARS BY THE NUMBERS

Revenge of the Sith, the sixth and final instalment of the Star Wars series opens Thursday at theatres across York Region. The franchise, created and launched in 1977 by George Lucas, is a global cinematic and merchandising phenomenon.

Some intriguing US dollar figures to contemplate:

360 - visual effect shots in *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*, 1977.

2,151 - visual effect shots in *Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith*, 2005.

\$115 million - cost to make *Revenge of the Sith*.

\$95 million - cost of marketing and printing *Revenge of the Sith*.

\$9 billion - dollar amount of Star Wars merchandise sold to date.

\$2.95 - cost of *Return of the Jedi* Hammerhead action figure in 1983.

\$99.99 - collectors value of same Hammerhead figure today.

\$0 - cost of 1976 *Star Wars* promotional book distributed to theatre owners.

\$600 - collectors value of the promo book today.

2,000 - number of items in Keswick Star Wars fan Robert Brooks' collection.

\$30,000 - value of Mr. Brooks' collection and:

2 - Star Wars memorabilia items in George Lucas' office: an R2-D2 cookie jar and a Wookie mug.



NEW! Eye Lash Extensions - lasts 2-4 weeks - no need to apply mascara

Ultimate Sweet Chocolate Pedicures to indulge, relax your feet & your mind

Laser Hair Removal 15 - 20 - 25% Discounts

Especially for your eyes special

Complimentary Eye lash Tinting with any Treatment Facials

ASHGROVE SPA
WELCOME TO THE ULTIMATE DAY SPA
6633 Hwy. #7, Suite 304
Markham
905-201-0343
www.ashgrovespa.com
OPEN Monday - Saturday
GIFT CERTIFICATES