

Star Wars in Concert: May The Strings and Brass Be With You

by Barry Hom, PassPorter Guest Contributor

The Star Wars series is a pop culture phenomenon that spans across generations. My 6-year old nephew and my 27-year old girlfriend have recently discovered the movie series and they both enjoy them immensely. The Star Wars movies have memorable epic battles that span through space and planets in a galaxy far, far away. I also have great memories of the music. When I think of Star Wars, John Williams' great score plays in my head. The music is as important as the special effects and the battles. "Star Wars in Concert" is an amazing tribute to the great orchestrations of the movie series. I saw the concert on May 15 at the Amway Arena in Orlando, Florida. I saw the 3:00 pm show (there was also a 7:30 pm show).

I must say that I consider myself a casual Star Wars fan. I have seen the movies, but I haven't seen them in years. I am more of a Star Trek fan. I've been known to make obscure Star Trek references, but when it comes to Star Wars I know the difference between a Wookiee and a Gungan, but I can't tell you the name of Chewbacca's home planet. The Star Wars music has a more epic feel than Star Trek's, so I decided to check out Star Wars in Concert to hear this fantastic music played by a live 86-piece symphony orchestra and choir.

I arrived at the Amway Arena around 1:20 pm. Many people were gathered around the doors, waiting for them to open. The crowd had people of various ages, from kids to senior citizens. I saw many people in Star Wars t-shirts and jeans, and some were dressed up as Star Wars characters. The doors opened at 1:30 pm.

It's a good idea to arrive early to visit the exhibit area. The displays have numerous props, conceptual drawings, and costumes from the movie series. The most exciting display was a few pages from John Williams' handwritten score from Episode I. The other props were Star Wars weapons and helmets. The costumes were housed in glass cases. I saw Ewok costumes from Episode VI, Queen Amidala's costume from Episode I, an Imperial Officer costume from Episode IV, the Jedi Master Yoda, and the evil one himself, Darth Vader. Many people dashed in front of the glass cages for a photo op. Take your pictures quickly or you may have a stranger in your shot!

Other photos ops were blown-up images of scenes from the Star Wars series that you can stand in front of and snap a picture. Star Wars characters walked around the facility and posed for photos. I saw

Princess Leia, R2D2, and a pilot in one area. Another area had a group of X-Wing fighters. A Jedi and Boba Fett posed heroically for patrons. Darth Vader and a group of Storm Troopers garnered the largest crowd.

About 20 minutes before show time, I took my seat. I was in Section 108, Row Q, Seat 18. As most of you are not familiar with the Amway Arena, this seat put me about in the middle of the lower section with an almost straight-on view of the stage. Although I bought my tickets ahead of time, there were still plenty of seats available. The stage had a three-story tall, high definition LED super-screen. The screen was so big that I believe even the nosebleed seats would have had a good view.

Then the concert started. It began with a nice touch -- the orchestra played the THX logo music and the 20th Century Fox music. It made me feel like I was watching the Star Wars saga on the big screen again. The Star Wars main title theme blared from the orchestra and the audience saw the Star Wars logo from Episode IV. The audience broke into uproarious applause. The LED screen had a montage of Star Wars scenes and when I saw it, my jaw dropped. Not only did it bring back memories of seeing Star Wars for the first time, the images were also the sharpest I've ever seen. Even clips from Episode IV looked great! I wonder if this is how the Star Wars saga will look when it is released on Blu-ray?

The narrator for the concert was Anthony Daniels, who played C3PO in all six Star Wars movies. He introduced each musical segment with great dignity and style. Each segment presented selected moments from the Star Wars saga, accompanied by video edited to the beat of the music. A laser light show was cued to some of the music. I heard musical themes for a certain character, like Anakin Skywalker or Princess Leia. During the Anakin Skywalker theme, the clips were mostly of young Anakin in Episode I. Princess Leia's clips were interspersed with beautiful artwork of the character.

Other musical sets included Star Wars memorable moments. One segment, "The Flag Parade," is set to clips from the amazing pod race in Episode I. "Cantina Band" has a montage of the visit to Mos Eisley by Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke Skywalker, C3PO, and R2D2. This montage takes the side of Han Solo, as Greedo shot first. I saw the great, enhanced Death Star explosion with a laser light show during the "TIE Fighter Attack" set. "The Forest Battle" showed that the Empire wasn't so tough, as Ewoks beat them! My favorite set was "The Asteroid Field." The clips cut between the asteroid field scenes of Episode II and Episode V. The video clips not only showed memorable scenes from the film series, it also showed some beautiful artwork taken from storyboards, concept

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art, and other sources.

While the video segments and Daniels' narration was very impressive, the biggest compliment belongs to the orchestra and the conductor. The music was pitch-perfect and really hit each note of John Williams' score perfectly. Without the great music, the video clips would have fallen flat. The crowd was so impressed with the performance that they gave the orchestra two standing ovations -- one at the end of the concert and one after the encore. The huge video screens presented shots of all the talented performers in the orchestra. They deserve to have their faces shown for their exceptional job.

You can purchase Star Wars in Concert merchandise at the two stands in the arena. However, they are quite pricey. A t-shirt costs \$35. A hat is \$20. A souvenir program ran \$30. Ouch! I stopped looking at prices because I was having too much of a sticker shock. I did buy a t-shirt, though. I wanted something to remember the concert!

As a casual Star Wars fan, I thought that I would enjoy the concert, but not be amazed. As it turned out, I was amazed! The music and the video were nothing short of incredible. If anything, it brought back memories of me watching each Star Wars film for the first time. I started as a causal fan when I stepped through the arena doors. When I stepped out, I became a bigger Star Wars fan. I wanted to dig out my Star Wars Saga DVDs and watch them all night. You might wonder why my girlfriend didn't attend. We were planning on going, but she had a last-minute illness. When I told her about the concert, she kicked herself for missing out on it!

Star Wars in Concert is currently touring North America through July. To see if it is coming to a city near you, check out www.starwarsinconcert.com

About The Author: Barry Hom is a roller coaster and theme park enthusiast. To date, he has ridden 498 roller coasters and has visited theme and amusement parks in 20 states and 5 countries. He is also a self-proclaimed "Star Trek geek." He is looking forward to attending Star Wars Weekends at Disney's Hollywood Studios from June 4-5.

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