

A new hope arrives as 'Star Wars' mania hits OBX



Photos by Dea Celaj/Nighthawk News

Star Wars merchandise from comics (above) to figures and shirts dominate the shelves at Kill Devil Hills comic book store Earth 383. Workers at the store are preparing for the release of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' with special events leading up to Dec. 17, and the comic book shop has partnered with the local movie theater for an exclusive showing that comes with a limited-edition Star Wars print.



By Byrde Wells
Sports Editor

Virtually everyone knows that the Star Wars series will be rekindled when the seventh installment – "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" – hits theaters in the U.S. on Dec. 17.

The galaxy of special events on the Outer Banks leading up to the big day might be more of a surprise.

Earth 383 Comics in Kill Devil Hills has partnered with RC Theatres to run multiple events promoting the release, including a special screening for people who bought their ticket from the comic book store.

"They gave us a chunk of tickets and said, 'You go ahead and sell these tickets for people who want to be in your exclusive theater,'" said Duf Franco, who runs the shop at 2401 N. Croatan Highway, not far from Avalon Pier. "Of course, it's Star Wars, the tickets almost sell themselves. But what we did as an added perk for people to come by and buy them was that we hired an artist who made a limited-edition print that only people who bought tickets from us get to have."

Earth 383 will be holding an extravaganza at the movie theatre from 3:30 to 6:30 on the Dec. 17 release day, which will include some friends from Darth Vader's personal army. Carolina Garrison is a chapter of the 501st Legion, an all-volunteer international Star Wars costuming organization that promotes the series and does volunteer and charity work for communities.

"Outside of the theatre, Carolina Garrison is coming out, led by our buddy Jason Hill. We're going to be doing photo ops with the 501st, have carnival games going on, shoot the Stormtrooper, maybe some temporary tattoos with some airbrushing going on," Franco said. "We're also playing a 'jeopardy'-like game called Who Wants To Be A Jedi, which is focused on Star Wars trivia and has you gambling credit for our store. Inside the theater, we're doing an artist gallery with local artists as well as artists from Elizabeth City, Edenton and Virginia. These artists have all made Star Wars-themed art and we are going to display their art at the movie so everyone can see it."

A week before the movie release, Earth 383 will be holding a Star Wars movie marathon at the store. Movies are free to watch and will be used to refresh fans' memories. The Earth 383 shops in Kill Devil Hills and Elizabeth City will run a movie a night from 6:30-9 starting with "The Phantom Menace" on Friday and continuing with "The Attack of the Clone Wars" Saturday, "Revenge of the Sith" on Sunday, "A New Hope" Monday, "The Empire Strikes Back" on Tuesday, and "Return of the Jedi" on Wednesday.

Taking place 30 years after the events of "Return of the Jedi," the new

Photo by
Lucasfilm/Tribune
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Peter Mayhew as Chewbacca and Harrison Ford as Han Solo return to familiar roles in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens.' The film opens to great fanfare on Dec. 17. Local comic book shop Earth 383 and movie theater R/C Kill Devil Hills Movies 10 will have special events for the big day.



film delves into the stories of main characters Rey and Finn, played by Daisy Ridley and John Boyega, respectively. Finn and Rey cross paths after Finn, a Stormtrooper, escapes The First Order, which is the new empire led by Kylo Ren (played by Adam Driver) and crash lands on the new planet of Jakku, where he eventually meets Rey. The two then embark on a wild journey across the universe to put an end to The First Order and find the forgotten force.

After Disney's purchase of Lucasfilm Ltd. in 2012, J.J. Abrams was chosen to direct the new Star Wars film. George Lucas, creator and executive producer of all the previous Star Wars movies, has announced that he had virtually no creative role in the new film, and he did not receive any credits on the official movie poster.

This led to speculation about the quality of "The Force Awakens" by not just the media, but fans who care about the series.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing if Disney will have any bad affects on the Star Wars universe in general or if they're gonna keep it in good standing," junior Parker Banks said.

Lucas' universe does not seem to be completely thrown away, as many fan-favorite characters are returning to the film. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher are all reprising their roles as Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Princess Leia, respectively. R2-D2 and C3PO are making appearances as well. This is pivotal for fans who grew up in an age when these characters were stars and – more importantly – idols.

"It's nostalgia for our age group, taking us back to our youth because most of us our age had our childhood based off of 'The Empire Strikes

Back.' The prequels weren't bad, but the fact that this movie is bringing back old characters is huge," Franco said. "These were characters I idolized, and guys like Han Solo, played by Harrison Ford in the original and in this one, are coming back. When Disney announced they bought Star Wars and were going to be doing an episode seven, I said, 'Fine, as long as Harrison Ford is Han Solo.' Nobody else can be Han Solo."

For the impending release of a highly anticipated movie, R/C Theatres has its hands full. To alleviate some of that pressure, times, rules and ticket discounts have already been established. Manager Russ Blair said the earliest regular showing on Dec. 17 will be 7 p.m. and the first 3D showing will be 7:20. Ticket prices are \$11 and \$14, respectively, although the theater's "locals" pack of tickets can be used as normal.

"As for rules, costumes are allowed, but no masks in the building, no weapons like light sabers, nothing that's gonna cause someone to not enjoy the show," Blair said. "We are going to have at least 500 people on that Thursday for the release. The movie theater can hold 1,300 people. We want to use as many seats as we can to make the movie enjoyable to all."

Some students already have elaborate plans, including road trips.

"My dad and I are actually going to an IMAX theatre in Virginia to watch it the day it releases," junior Ian Corbett said.

Others have to go as far as their job to see the movie.

"I was going to get my ticket through the comic book store, but because of how my job at the theater works, we are able to preview movies just to make sure they come through correctly," Banks said. "Either the day of or day before, we will see the Star Wars movie and get to view it for free."

Junior Miller Cipriano said he will be enjoying a Star Wars marathon.

"Some friends and I are going to watch all six movies in order and time it so that when we are done with the last episode, we immediately leave to go see the new one," he said.

Without a Star Wars movie for more than 10 years, the desire to revisit a series that impacted many childhoods is invigorating.

"Star Wars has changed my life completely. As a growing child, it filled me with imagination and excitement," Cipriano said. "When I was little I was obsessed with the different games and toys and my friends and I would stay up for hours playing the games and having light saber battles. It was an important topic in my life and still is."

This not only applies to '90s children, but the children of the '70s who were first exposed to the original Star Wars trilogy.

"I'm 40, and it's such a big movie because so many people from our age want to take their kids," Franco said. "Geek culture as a whole, liking it all throughout high school was a complete stigma for me. It was kinda like, 'Well, you're not quite right if you are going to watch movies about that stuff in outer space.' It's funny, because the joke nowadays is, 'You've never seen Star Wars?'"

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