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The Visual Effects Society to Present Filmmaker George Lucas With Lifetime Achievement Award

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Oct. 2, 2003) – Filmmaker George Lucas, whose *Star Wars* saga helped transform the visual effects industry, will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Visual Effects Society at this year's Second Annual VES Awards ceremony on Feb. 18, 2004, at the Hollywood Palladium, it was announced today by VES Executive Director Tom Atkin.

The board of directors of the 850-member Visual Effects Society selected Lucas for its highest honor in recognition of the contribution that *Willow*, his five *Star Wars* films and three *Indiana Jones* movies have made to the art and science of visual effects, Atkin said.

“If it weren't for George Lucas, we wouldn't be here,” Atkin said. “He has always had a strong vision of how visual effects could contribute to the movies, and the recent steps that he and Lucasfilm have taken to advance the digital filmmaking process continue to take the art of telling stories through visual effects to new heights.”

The Visual Effects Society was founded in 1997 and is comprised of distinguished visual effects artists and technologists who are professionally committed to the specialized industry of visual effects.

“It's really wonderful to receive this award from such a distinguished and creative organization,” Lucas said. “When we made the first *Star Wars* movie, a group of extremely talented people helped me tell a story in a visually new and exciting way. Since then, the imaginations and artistic abilities of visual effects craftspeople have never ceased to amaze me. It's a thrill to get an award from their peer group.”

Lucas began his movie-making career in 1971, using San Francisco production studio American Zoetrope and long-time friend Francis Ford Coppola as executive producer to transform an award-winning student film into his first feature, *THX-1138*. Lucas' second feature film, the low-budget *American Graffiti* (1973) became the most successful film of its time and garnered the Golden Globe, the New York Film Critics' and the National Society of Film Critics' awards.

In 1977, *Star Wars* became an international phenomenon, despite the fact that few saw its potential during production. Refusing to accept the limitations of filmmaking at the time, Lucas created his own visual effects company, Industrial Light & Magic, to deliver more than 300 shots that were required to make his vision a reality. *Star Wars* broke all box-office records, set new standards for sophistication in film visuals and sound, garnered eight Academy Awards, and inspired a generation of young people to follow their imagination and dreams.

Today, Lucasfilm Ltd., of which Lucas is chairman, encompasses a number of major divisions, including Industrial Light & Magic, which has continued to grow, delivering visual effects for scores of films. In 1985, it developed the first digital creature, an animated stained-glass knight, in *Young Sherlock Holmes*. Three years later, ILM debuted the "morphing" effect for *Willow*. ILM's visual effects work can be seen in such memorable films as *Jurassic Park*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, *The Abyss* and this summer's box-office hit *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*.

In 1986, Lucasfilm's computer-graphics research division was spun-off into a separate company and became Pixar Animation Studios.

Lucas continues to write and direct motion pictures, and is currently working on *Star Wars* Episode III, which is planned for release in 2005. He has also taken a leadership role in applying his storytelling and technical expertise to the classroom, serving as chairman of the board of the George Lucas Educational Foundation. Lucas also serves on the board of the Film Foundation and the USC School of Cinema-Television Advisory Board.

In 1992, the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences honored Lucas with the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award, presented to

“creative producers whose bodies of work reflect a consistently high quality of motion picture production.” Lucas lives and works in Marin County, Calif.

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