

When proud new foster parents Owen and Beru Lars looked off into Tatooine's setting suns at the end of *Revenge of the Sith*, it marked the end of an era for *Star Wars* fans. The circle was

complete, Darth Vader's tragic story had finally been told, and a saga 30 years in the making was at an end. At least, that is what many fans believed. However, before *Sith* had even hit cinemas, LucasArts had secretly begun work on a brand new chapter in the intergalactic epic. This was to be a story that would bridge the gap between the classic and prequel trilogies and feature jaw-dropping revelations related to the central *Star Wars* saga.

The greatest twist of all, though, was that this epic story would play out as a videogame, developed by LucasArts, and not a movie. It would utilize the latest technology to deliver a uniquely immersive *Star Wars* experience. However, the path to the creation of *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* would not be quick or easy.

PERFECT PITCH

"It's hard to pinpoint where the idea for *The Force Unleashed* first came from because we literally went through hundreds of concepts," reveals Project Lead Haden Blackman. Tasked back in 2004 with creating a new *Star Wars* videogame that would harness the power of the next-generation of games consoles, Blackman faced the daunting challenge of creating a striking concept that would resonate with the saga's legions of fans. "Starting in late 2004 we met with George Lucas pretty regularly every couple of months," Blackman says. "We didn't have the concept for *The Force Unleashed* greenlit by George until late 2005, so a whole year was spent going back to him with ideas."

Discarded along the way were several intriguing concepts, such as a game centered around a super-strong Wookiee fighting a one-man

war against the Empire, and another set in the distant future of the *Star Wars* universe where the Jedi have discovered remarkable new ways to harness the Force. "Some of the germs for *The Force Unleashed* were certainly in the Wookiee concept: this idea that you were a superhero in the *Star Wars* universe," Blackman says. "We went out and focus-tested some of the concepts. Few of them really resonated, but the fact that you were this kind of over-the-top Force-wielder did. It wasn't really until we talked to George about the time period, that we started homing in on the notion that you would be Darth Vader's secret apprentice."

Having worked as producer on the online multi-player game *Star Wars Galaxies*, and written a number of *Star Wars* comics, Blackman instantly sensed that the idea of Darth Vader taking on his own apprentice had limitless dramatic possibilities, a notion that Lucas shared. "What was really good was that if you open the door to George to talk about something, then he'll talk about it for two hours," says Blackman. "So just talking about that period, and Vader's relationship to the Emperor was awesome, because it's all in his head and it would all come out." Melding the idea of a game that would allow players to use the Force in explosive ways never before seen, with a juicy storyline that saw the central character undertaking covert missions for Darth Vader himself, *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* was born.

ART UNLEASHED

Throughout the pitching phase, pre-production art depicting potential characters and scenarios in *The Force Unleashed* became a key factor in the game's development. Ever since George Lucas hired artist Ralph McQuarrie to produce concept paintings for *A New Hope* back in the 1970s, pre-visualization art has been essential in capturing the mood and feel of *Star Wars* projects. "We invest at LucasArts far more heavily in concept art at the beginning than I think any other studio does, and that comes straight from the days of Ralph McQuarrie, Doug Chiang, Eric Tiemens, and those guys," says Art Lead Matt Omernick. "That's the way that Lucasfilm functions, it really values concept art, so we do exactly that same thing."

Along with remarkable images for proposed games that failed to get the greenlight—such as a frenzied Wookiee tossing the cockpit of an

