



SILVERSCREEN  
PRIMARY  
EDUCATION

## The History of Science Fiction Cinema

*By Adam Pepper*

**Session 6:**  
**1970s – Part 2**  
*Star Wars – its legacy,  
competitors and its impact  
on cinema!*



Welcome to Session 6 of this 'History of Science Fiction Cinema'!

Over ten weeks, we will journey through space and time to uncover the secrets behind some of the greatest science fiction stories, movies, directors and characters as we try to uncover what science fiction really is, and where it blurs with our reality today.

### **Session 6:**

In this week's session, we head further into the 70s, yet this time we move further away from the bleak stories of global destruction and corporate cruelty ('Soylent Green', 'Planet Of The Apes', 'Invasion of the Bodysnatchers') and head towards 'A New Hope'! (see what I did there?)

This week is when 'Star Wars' finally hits our screen! We take a look at the gestation of this iconic story, the audiences waiting to queue for hours, cheer the titles, buy the toys and wear the t-shirts! But, more than that, we look at how, between 'Jaws' (1975) and 'Star Wars' (1977), the whole landscape of cinema had been changed forever.

Blockbuster movies. Mega movie stars. Franchises. Directors with a handle on all aspects of the film's presentation. Cinema would never be the same.

Science Fiction across the 70s created so much of the cinema we celebrate and revere today. But it also set up a mass branching out of the science fiction genre into the 80s too. Without a focus on 'Star Wars' and its impact on a film's marketing, storytelling, merchandising and film-making techniques, we cannot, in good faith, move on to the later chapters in our journey through science fiction.

So, hold on, and may the force be with you...

### **Useful information for Session 6:**

#### **George Lucas**

**George Walton Lucas Jr.** (born May 14, 1944) is an American filmmaker and philanthropist. Lucas is best known for creating the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* franchises and founding Lucasfilm, LucasArts, Industrial Light & Magic, and THX. He served as chairman of Lucasfilm before selling it to The Walt Disney Company in 2012.

Lucas is one of history's most financially successful filmmakers and has been nominated for four Academy Awards.

Lucas personally directed or conceived 10 of the 100 highest-grossing movies at the North American box office, adjusted for ticket-price inflation. Lucas is considered to be one of the most significant figures of the 20th-century New Hollywood movement, and a pioneer of the modern blockbuster. Despite this, he has remained an independent filmmaker away from Hollywood for most of his career.

After graduating from the University of Southern California in 1967, Lucas co-founded American Zoetrope with filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola. Lucas wrote and directed *THX 1138* (1971), based on his student short *Electronic Labyrinth: THX 1138 4EB*, which was a critical success but a financial failure. His next work as a writer-director

was *American Graffiti* (1973), inspired by his youth in early 1960s Modesto, California, and produced through the newly founded Lucasfilm. The film was critically and commercially successful and received five Academy Award nominations, including Best Director and Best Picture. Lucas's next film, the epic space opera *Star Wars* (1977), had a troubled production but was a surprise hit, becoming the highest-grossing film at the time, winning six Academy Awards and sparking a cultural phenomenon.

## Ridley Scott

**Sir Ridley Scott**, (born 30 November 1937) is an English filmmaker. He is best known for directing films in the science fiction, crime and historical drama genres. His work is known for its atmospheric and highly concentrated visual style. He has received many accolades, including the BAFTA Fellowship for lifetime achievement in 2018, two Primetime Emmy Awards, and a Golden Globe Award. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II and appointed Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire by King Charles III in 2024.

An alumnus of the Royal College of Art in London, Scott began his career in television as a designer and director before moving into advertising as a director of commercials. He made his film directorial debut with *The Duellists* (1977) and gained wider recognition with his next film, *Alien* (1979). Though his films range widely in setting and period, they showcase memorable imagery of urban environments, spanning 2nd-century Rome in *Gladiator* (2000), 12th-century Jerusalem in *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), medieval England in *Robin Hood* (2010), ancient Memphis in *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014), contemporary Mogadishu in *Black Hawk Down* (2001), and the futuristic cityscapes of *Blade Runner* (1982) and different planets in *Alien*, *Prometheus* (2012), *The Martian* (2015) and *Alien: Covenant* (2017).

Several of his films are also known for their strong female characters, such as *Alien*, *Thelma & Louise* (1991) and *Napoleon* (2023).



### Films to look out for:

**THX 1138 (1971)**

**American Graffiti (1973)**

**Jaws (1975)**

**Star Wars: A New Hope (1977)**

**Superman: The Movie (1978)**

**Alien (1979)**

**Mad Max (1979)**

### Forthcoming Sessions:

- 1980s Part 1 – Spielberg, Carpenter, magical sfx and replicants
- 1980s Part 2 – Cameron, Sandworms and T-1000s!
- 1990s – Dinosaurs, meteorites, 'Welcome To Earth!' Bullet Time & 'Get Your Ass To Mars!'
- 2000s – Worlds of Wonder

