



Mandalorian Mayhem



*Insider's Top 10 brawls, fights, and fisticuffs from **The Mandalorian**!*

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The *Mandalorian* (2019-present) has packed quite a punch in terms of storytelling, character development, and surprise reveals, and when combined with the show's unparalleled action sequences it's no surprise that the Disney+ series has turned out to be a big hitter for the streaming platform. The first sixteen chapters have also proven that bounty hunting isn't just a complicated profession, it's also a physically dangerous one too, as this look back at our favorite fight scenes from the first two seasons proves.

In 1978, Clive Smith was getting worried. Sure, Smith's animation company, Nelvana Studios, had a nice gig producing stock footage for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, but that wasn't enough. "There was a point where we were really desperate to get into the entertainment business," Smith says, "Especially me. I wanted to build the animation studio."

And then, George Lucas called. Lucas needed someone to produce a ten-minute animated short for Lucasfilm's upcoming *Star Wars Holiday Special*, and he thought that Nelvana might be right for job. The short, titled *The Faithful Wookiee*, would feature a script co-written by Lucas himself, and would introduce audiences to Boba Fett, the villainous bounty hunter who hunts down Han Solo in *The Empire Strikes Back*. It was the opportunity that Smith had been waiting for, but it came with a catch: Smith only had two weeks to finish all of the storyboards and character designs, and he would have to travel to California to get George Lucas' approval in person. "It was pretty stressful," Smith says. Ultimately, the *Star Wars Holiday Special* would

become one of the most mysterious chapters in the franchise's storied history.

By reuniting the cast of *Star Wars* in a two-hour variety show, Lucasfilm hoped to tide fans over until *The Empire Strikes Back* hit screens. It didn't work out that way. The *Star Wars Holiday Special* puzzled viewers and critics alike. And yet, the *Star Wars Holiday Special's* legacy lives on, thanks in part to Clive Smith, Nelvana, and Boba Fett. With Smith at

the helm, *The Faithful Wookiee* is the *Star Wars Holiday Special's* undisputed high point. In the short, Fett preys on Luke's naiveté and endears himself to the crew of the *Millennium Falcon*, only to be exposed by Chewbacca as an Imperial agent shortly before Darth Vader captures them all. It's a great introduction to Fett, and his no-nonsense attitude and casual cruelty have been a staple of the character ever since.

Clive Smith.

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BRINGING BOBA TO LIFE

It's a good script, of course, but it's Smith's animation that really brings *The Faithful Wookiee* to life.

In the early 1960's, Smith attended London's Ealing Art College, alongside future rock stars, Pete Townshend, Freddie Mercury, and The Rolling Stones' Ronnie Wood. There, Smith studied painting and "kinetic art," or sculpture with moving parts. "I liked to see things that were articulated," Smith says. "I loved the idea of things that moved with motions and hinges and stuff like that."

While at Ealing, Smith helped a classmate create an animated short and was immediately smitten with the art form. "It was the process that intrigued me, which was very manual, very physical, and very tactile," Smith says. After graduation, Smith parlayed his brief experience into a gig as an animator at Group 2 Studios, where he

worked on animated series like *The Lone Ranger* (1966-1969) and *The Beatles* (1965-1969). When Group 2 folded, Smith moved to Canada. In 1971, he joined forces with producers Michael Hirsh and Patrick Loubert to found Nelvana Studios.

Initially, Nelvana made ends meet by producing training films for industrial firms, short kids' movies, and "fillers," or videos intended to fill up airtime if scheduled programming ran short. The work didn't sit well with Smith. As a natural storyteller, he was eager to create something with a narrative. In 1977, Smith directed Nelvana's first animated feature, a half-hour CBS special called *A Cosmic Christmas*. The special caught George Lucas's attention, and he contacted Smith shortly thereafter about *The Faithful Wookiee*.

Smith might've had the experience, but getting *The Faithful Wookiee* ready in time wasn't easy. Even for experienced animators, two weeks isn't a lot of time to put together storyboards and character designs. The technology made it harder, too. "Remember, it was pre-digital," Smith says. "Today, storyboard artists do a panel, and they can do several different poses within that panel, and it takes very little effort to do it. We were using pencils and paper, and sticking things on the wall and moving things around."

Lucas sent Smith a script, and Smith got to work. Smith and another animator, Frank Nissen, locked themselves in a boardroom and cranked out hundreds of storyboards. Meanwhile, Nelvana's designers plugged away, rendering the *Star Wars* universe into animation for the very first time. Turning characters like Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Princess Leia into cartoons wasn't too difficult; all the animators had to do was look at the original actors for inspiration.

With Boba Fett, a brand new character, it was different. "They sent us a black and white film of an actor in a mock-up of Boba Fett's suit," Smith remembers, but the design wasn't final, and the color scheme hadn't been locked down at that point. As the story goes, Boba Fett's costume was supposed to be sleek and streamlined, like a stormtrooper's. Smith disagreed. To play up Fett's warrior past, Nelvana made the bounty hunter's costume worn and battle-scarred. The rough-hewn nature of the outfit made its way into *The Empire Strikes Back's* final Boba Fett costume, and has stuck with the character ever since.

And remember, this was 1978. The *Star Wars* aesthetic was still in flux. Aside from the original movie, there wasn't much reference material available. Most licensed efforts of the time, including Alan Dean Foster's novel, *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, and Marvel's *Star Wars* comic books, don't feel quite like the saga that we now know and love today.

Hasbro's Animated Debut Boba Fett action figure.