



THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE

Can George Lucas reap more from the Star Wars brand with the creation of a video game that has the production values of a Hollywood blockbuster? The Big Issue tours Skywalker Ranch for a sneak preview...

By CHRIS PRINCE

SITTING IN THE SHADE WITH A GLASS of Skywalker Wine and watching deer frolic in the fields around Lake Ewok, you have to admire the visionary genius of Star Wars creator George Lucas. Bringing his ambitious space opera to the screen in 1977, he battled studio interference and technological restrictions to create a global phenomenon that would allow Lucas to beat Hollywood at its own game. Settling up shop in San Francisco, Lucas poured his millions into the special

effects company he had created for Star Wars, the now-revered Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), as well as state-of-the-art post-production facilities which he situated on the immense acreage of his ranch in nearby Marin County.

While Lucas is known primarily as a film-maker, it is for his latest video game, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, that The Big Issue has been invited to tour Skywalker Ranch – the understated opulence of the faux-Victorian ranch house itself and the natural beauty of the surrounding area being a true monument to the spoils of foresight. In 1982,

Lucas took the prescient step of setting up his own video games wing, LucasArts, a company that, during the '80s and '90s, led the way in interactive entertainment long before the medium was taken seriously by the rest of the world.

While LucasArts began to tread water in the new millennium, churning out a series of lacklustre Star Wars titles, a managerial shake-up in 2004 led to a new business strategy – emphasising quality over quantity. With the next generation of video games consoles, such as Playstation 3 and Xbox 360, on the horizon, the LucasArts team set about >>