

OPINION

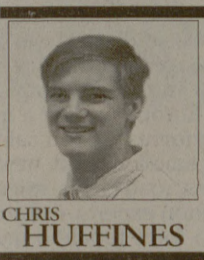
The Battalion

Long ago, in a ticket line far, far away ...

Escapism in newest installment of legendary space trilogy satisfies hopes of zealous fans

At least some people have their priorities straight.

At a music shop appearance in Dallas this past month, the line to meet Ricky Martin was longer than the line for *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*.



CHRIS HUFFINES

The first of George Lucas' prequels drew old fans and a younger generation into that milieu a long time ago and far, far away. But was the hype, the religious furor that surrounded *Episode I*, really worth it?

To adequately answer that question, the population of the world needs to be divided into our groups.

The first group are those who really don't know about *Star Wars*.

To achieve this feat in the modern world, they have either been living in a vegetative state, field-stripping their AK-47s or getting bombed by NATO for the last few months.

The second group are those who could care less about *Star Wars*. These are normal people. For them, the brouhaha around the Phantom Menace was really just an annoyance.

It was the commercials, the traffic around the movie theater, the omnipresent gushing of e-mails around the office or the whining of their children. After a while, this group of people was certainly a bit annoyed.

However, both of the above groups can be thrown out of the mix.

After all, they did not partake of the religion, so it would not mean anything nor would it be worth it to them.

The third group is made up of those people who genuinely like

Star Wars but are not obsessed with it. This is the remainder of the normal people.

For them, yes, "*Star Wars: The Religious Experience*" was worth it.

Despite a few rough spots in the film itself, and the glut of toys unfortunate parents will be forced to contend with, *The Phantom Menace* was an entertaining film that recaptured the magic of *Star Wars*.

It was worth the price of admission, and it was a good movie. As Lucas set out to do, he made an ultimate popcorn flick.

The hype and the excitement did not detract from the movie. In fact, they may have added to the experience.

But for the fourth group, those individuals who can best be represented by the readers of this column who, upon realizing it was about *Star Wars*, ran home to put on their Darth Vader mask, this film was not worth it.

These are the people who dressed up like Princess Leia, Queen Amidala or Darth Maul.

These are the people who were dueling with toy lightsabres in line for the movie, the people who waited in line for tickets for more than a day.

These are the people whose pictures were in the newspaper, with normal people (the third group) in the background looking embarrassed for them and their parents.

These people are the zealots.

Star Wars has become a cultural icon, that much is sure. But it has also become a religion for many fans, and expectations have become what the movie was judged by, not its merits.

In all honesty, short of God himself taking the director's chair, no movie could have lived up to the hype.

And nothing will ever live up to the expectations of its zealots.



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

The problem with *Star Wars* is that slowly, the majority of the population is migrating to the zealot category.

This is a bad thing because *Star Wars*, aside from being make-believe, is just a popcorn movie. It is escapism at its best.

Blue-collar America is represented by Han Solo.

Princess Leia and Qui-Gon Jinn are government workers — they are the bureaucrats.

Luke Skywalker is the basic teenager. Why be failing algebra when you can be a Jedi knight?

But escapism is not what is needed. In the day and age in which we live, the days of undeclared wars and the age of information, the days of school shootings and the age of litigation, the days of "me" and the age of "it's not my fault," es-

capism simply allows the zealots to forget their problems and immerse themselves in fantasy.

As the movie says, "I've got a bad feeling about this."

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communications ma-

Cyberspace should not become new battlefield in Balkan war

War is not noble. It never has been. Not in Europe, not in Asia and definitely not in the Balkans.

The soldiers who fight to protect, the relief organizations who tempt to provide some aid to beleaguered, the ideologists behind the action — all of these have an element of noblesse about them.

The act of war, though, is an atrocity.

Yet, the word "war" unwittingly conjures up images of a good guy and a bad guy. The good guy is ways forthright and honest in battle, while the bad guy is sneaky and without pride.

The idea of a good guy and a bad guy, hero and villain, is ludicrous.

However, for those who have never served in combat, these themes are so instilled into the psyche that one cannot help but assign these good and evil roles. Perhaps that is why it seems strange for the United States military to participate in sneaky wartime sabotage attempts, training rebels to foul up the enemy's gas reserves or to cut telephone lines. Sabotage attempts are not new to the United States, though they are hardly as recognized as the efforts of ground troops and air-strikes.

In the technology age, however, there is more than one way to get to the enemy.

As reported in a recent issue of *Newsweek*, the new form makes the old ways of sabotage seem like a punk kid putting sugar on someone's gas tank, rather than a systematic attempt to disable an enemy's supplies.

Technology has now unleashed the new mode of battle — cyberwar.

In early May, as Clinton was debating, and tentatively avoiding, the use of ground troops and more frequent air-strikes, national-security advisor Sandy Berger presented him with a top-secret plan to squeeze [Serbian leader Slobodan] Milosevic. Basically, the plan outlined the use of the CIA to unleash government hackers on Milosevic's personal bank accounts.

In other words, the United States would actively target those foreign banks that possibly hold some of Milosevic's wealth. Clinton seemed to like the idea, and issued a "finding" detailing the highly-classified plan.

Is he crazy?



BEVERLY MIRELES

The old method of sabotage was one thing; often, attempts to cut phone lines and blow up buildings damage targets that cannot be hit in an air war and undermine public support of an enemy leader.

But using National Security Agency hackers to financially cripple Milosevic is a whole new, and eminently dangerous, game.

By even considering this cyberwar, the United States is trivializing diplomacy and opening the door to attacks on our own precarious and technology-fueled banking system, not to mention throwing the whole concept of legality out the window.

No one wants to see ground troops sent to Kosovo. However, it is worse to strain ties between our very necessary allies, especially when it seems that peace negotiations are soon in coming.

Once the true end of the cyber-operation gets out, one that would only serve to drain the bank accounts of a mad man, it will be a tremendous slap in the face to all the diplomats chipping away at the barriers of peace.

U.S. leaders should note that though Milosevic is in the reins right now, that does not mean he is the only one in control.

Removing him from the situation does not solve the problem, it only sets up possible replacements. One man is rarely the source for insatiable ethnic hatred, and his "persecution" by the United States might serve as a catalyst for even more violence.

What is even more frightening than an increase in the violence in the Balkans, at least to the American public, is the idea that other countries would use this cyberwar precedent (of sorts) to engage in a few hacking activities of their own.

Terrorism of the financial kind would no doubt send the whole public into a panic by pulling at our most deep-seated fear — that we too, from the baby-boomers to the twenty-somethings, will suffer the indignities of another Great Depression.

At this moment, with peace negotiations ready to cut through the violence and hatred of the Balkans, it is too fool-hardy to risk a cyberwar against Milosevic. Toying with the idea of technological sabotage will only lead to a world of trouble.

The United States policy is to not negotiate with terrorists. Allowing our own government to act as one would make a mockery of us all.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.

Racial profiling policies based on false stereotypes, prejudices

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (U-WIRE) — Dollar Rent-A-Car should have known better — giving the keys to the Irish is like imitating bumper cars.

The idea may suit Six Flags over Dublin, but there's an element of risk here in the states.

Emergency crews are keenly aware of it — as they use the jaws of life to get to that bothersome stereo blasting the Cranberries, precious time is lost in attempting to revive the lush who is become a part of the steering column.

Think that's outrageous? Well, it's not much different from the rationale that was used in a lawsuit filed in March.

Attorney John Stemberger claimed that Dollar should have taken heritage into account before setting up Sean McGrath with a Plymouth Neon.

"[Dollar] either knew or should have known about the unique cultural and ethnic customs existing in Ireland which involve the regular consumption of alcohol at 'pubs' as a major component to Irish social life," Stemberger wrote in the lawsuit.

"[Dollar] either knew or should have known that Sean McGrath would have a high propensity to drink alcohol."

Dollar is being sued for negligence by the family of Elizabeth Cunningham.

Cunningham was killed in February 1998 when her boyfriend [McGrath] had an accident while driving under the influence.

After receiving a stream of complaints, Stemberger recognized his "mistake." He plans on refiling the lawsuit, removing the passages that reinforce the Irish stereotype.

Instead, he will unleash an attack on Dollar's driver education program, stating that an insufficient effort is made to inform Irish drivers about our driving conditions.

Dollar does, in fact, distribute brochures to renters that detail driving regulations and allow international guests to acclimate properly.

If an Irishman is driving on the left side of the road, it's not because he's going through a period of adjustment — he's probably wasted.

Now that some of the campus is enraged, observations and various points can comfortably be made.

Stereotypes can no longer be regarded as the sole intellectual property of the hilariously unfunny Jeff Foxworthy/Chris Rock/John Leguizamo triumvirate.

They are well into the implementation stage.

The U.S. Customs Service is currently under fire for "racial profiling" or targeting minorities in its effort to curb the drug trade.

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., said 43 percent of those stopped by U.S. Customs in 1998 were black or hispanic.

He also shared another glaring statistic about customs' operations — black women are 20 times more likely to face body searches than white women.

It doesn't stop there — a California housing development, Fairway Oaks, has followed in the grand tradition of discriminating on the basis of occupation. Burlington Homes has a no lawyer policy, and yep, you guessed it — a lawyer was denied residence and sued them as a result.

"Not all discrimination is illegal," said Eugene Volokh, a law professor at UCLA.

"Lots of discrimination is the essence of daily life, of daily business judgment."

Perhaps there's some logic to it — lawyers are lampreys infesting the waters of Lake Michigan, slapping their neighbors with frivolous litigation; the Irish are great for barbecues, soccer and U2 sing-alongs but unfit for any trade requiring balance and unslurred speech; some folks just have that cocaine in a body cavity look about them.

Actually, people who think in such a way should be pitied.

Somewhere along the way, atrocious jokes forwarded to our e-mail accounts became confused with our way of life; the story of the Italian, the Mexican and the Spaniard carrying a moral that would guide public policy.

And the sad part is that those in the aforementioned cases are incapable of change.

The characters in our tragedy will never be able to screw in that light bulb.

Jeff Meredith is a columnist for Indiana University's Indiana Daily Student.

"Somewhere along the way, atrocious jokes forwarded to our e-mail accounts become confused with our way of life."