

EVOLUTION OF AN ENIGMA MONTROSS : A POTTED HISTORY

By Scott Weller

Of all the characters to have been linked to the evolving scripted and filmed universe of the STAR WARS SAGA, one of the most intriguing to come to light in the recent years of behind the scenes material unearthed from the LUCASFILM vaults has to be that of Montross, who was to have originally appeared in the first movie of the classic trilogy.

Montross, mostly known only by this one name title (though he would get a surname for a brief point!!), has become a shadowy figure in the history of STAR WARS creation, and his personality and physical

appearance has changed in all the various screenplays for STAR WARS that George Lucas would conceive between 1974 and the final revised filming draft in late March 1976. At one point he's a goodie, the next, he's a baddie. Yet all of the varying parts he's played in the film have proved interesting and he makes an intriguing contribution to each of the stories of the time in one way, shape or form.



Our well known gang of space adventurers-Luke, Han, Chewbacca and Princess Leia. But what would the character dynamic of the filmed saga have been like if there had been a fifth member to have joined the heroes?

In the glass enclosed war room underground fortress of Townowi, Montross starts life as a Captain in the first draft script for THE STAR WARS of May 1974 (and it's revision in July that year), a "COMMUNICATIONS/TACTICAL AIDE" who assists General Skywalker in protecting the planet's Royal family when the dark forces of the New Galactic Kingdom attack in an early version of what will become the DEATH STAR, and beginning a ground invasion not unlike what would be witnessed for the beginning of THE PHANTOM MENACE twenty five years later.

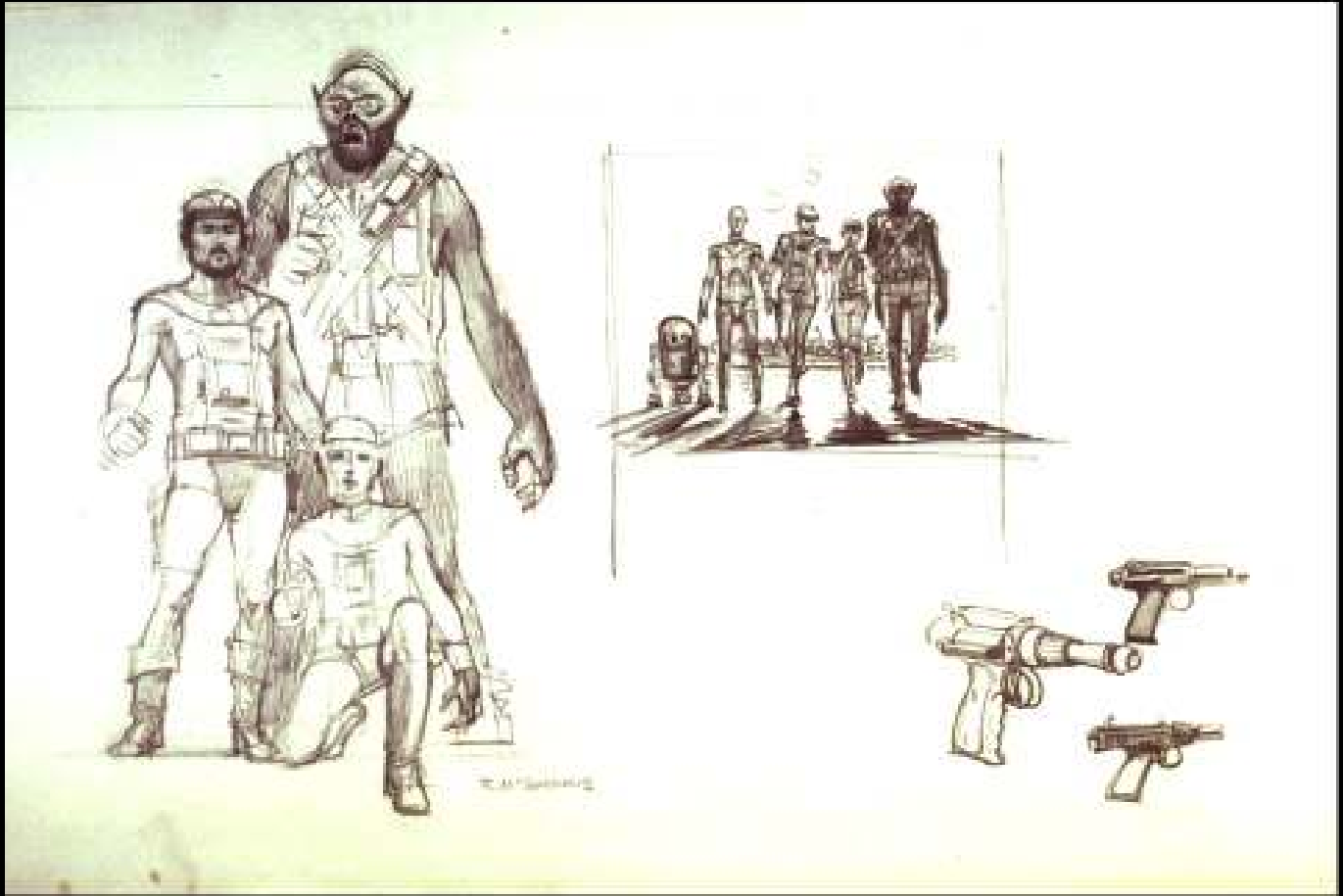
By the time of the second draft, now titled ADVENTURES OF THE STARKILLER (episode one) "The Star Wars", Montross's role in the saga has changed and become more substantial (and now with a full name-Montross Holdaack), still an heroic character of sorts (his physical appearance is described as "a large, portly man who walks with a stiff, awkward gait") and acting as a second officer serving alongside the young Corellian starship captain, Han Solo, and his savage looking, bushbaby / monkey-like creature partner named Chewbacca the Wookiee, on an as yet un-named PIRATE SHIP in taking the saga's new hero, Luke Starkiller, on an important and dangerous journey.

Intriguingly, Montross is not only an older character amongst the young heroes (in some ways he is an early version of what will become Obi-Wan Kenobi) but, as with Lucas's continued fascination with half-human, half-robot people, the character has similar traits to the earlier written Rough Draft heroic character of Kane Starkiller, who also was part man, part machine, as well as Darth Vader for the Prequels, as this script excerpt shows when we first meet Montross in Docking Port 23:

46. EXT. MOS EISLEY SPACEPORT - DOCKING PORT 23

Han and his lumbering first-mate Chewbacca hurry along behind MONTROSS HOLDAACK, a large, portly man who walks with a stiff, awkward gait. They move along a tall gantry overlooking a long, complex spacecraft.

HAN



Some of Ralph McQuarrie's early character concepts for Han, Chewbacca, Luke Starkiller and the droids, as well as their weaponry, sometime between 1973 and 1975. Did McQuarrie do any sketches for Montross from the Second Draft script of the movie?

But you're my friend, my best and closest partner. Oxus will still listen to you! He will, I tell you, I know he will. I really have a live one this time. I asked for a million, and he didn't even flinch, and the way he fights -- he must belong to one of the royal families, I'm just sure of it. This may be worth two million, maybe three. You've got to talk to Oxus... You've just got to...

MONTROSS

Like your information on the AKURIAN spice shipment... After that botch, if I WERE crazy enough to suggest another one of your plots to him, he'd have us both diced...

HAN

But this is different. This is our chance. Are we partners or not? Are you going to dream away the rest of your life, or are we going to try for the big one?



Ralph McQuarrie's early concept for Chewbacca the Wookiee and the older version of Han Solo, brandishing a laser sword weapon.

MONTROSS

The only way Oxus would go along is if you killed him...I'm too old, Han. I can't do it, you'll have to find someone else.

HAN

There's no time. What kind of talk is this? Where's the old Montross that single-handedly destroyed a colony of Banthas and rescued me from the very jaws of death?? Montross, the greatest science officer in the galaxy, too old?!

MONTROSS

You young fool!

Montross suddenly ignites in a rage and swings his left forearm down with a mighty blow across the metal rail of the gantry. The old science officer's forearm cracks in two, spewing forth wires, and many fine multi-colored electronic components.

The artificial limb flops lifelessly to Montross Holdaack's side.

MONTROSS (CONT'D)

You know, there is nothing left but my head and right arm... I've lost too much, Han... I'm dying... I'm dying this time... I'm losing control.

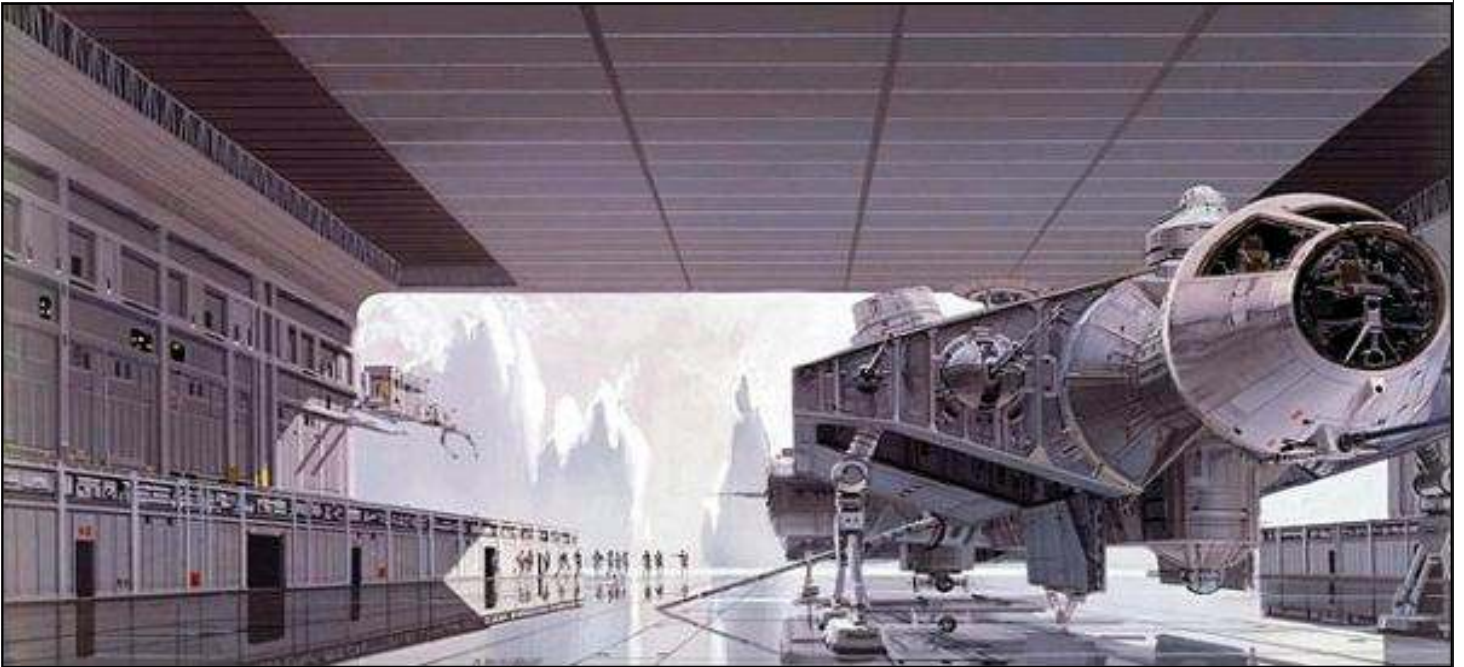
Han bows his head in sorrow and embarrassment for one of the greatest warriors in the galaxy and a dear friend.

HAN

Take it easy... I'm sorry. Don't be upset. What am I going to do? He's going to be here shortly wanting to go to Ogana! I'll just have to talk to Oxus myself. I'll take care of everything. We'll get you fixed up, once and for all.

With this Second Draft, the story is now starting to become more like the STAR

WARS we know and love today, with the heroic Luke Starkiller on a mission to rescue his brother Deak-known as THE STARKILLER, with Montross Holdaak playing a substantial part in the film's proceedings from here on in, fully a part of the pirate starship team who helps our heroes escape from Mos Eisley, assisting Han in winning back his captured ship from the clutches of Jabba the Hutt and the creatures' compatriot-the grotesque Captain Oxus (described as "a man of the grossest dimensions with a scarred face"). Disabling the ship, Han and Montross set off an alarm and rig the ship to appear as though it were going to explode in order to get Jabba and his party to leave. In this Second Draft, Montross is the Second Officer in a capacity close to Chewbacca's role, before the Wookiee's part would be expanded in the later Fourth Draft script, which would then result in Montross's part as a heroic crewman on the ship being eliminated completely.



The original version of the then un-named Pirate Ship, trapped by Imperial Forces on the gas cloud world of Alderaan, in this beautiful pre-production painting from Ralph McQuarrie of 1974/5. In the Second Draft script, Montross was a member of Han's crew.

Rescuing Deak Starkiller, who is imprisoned on Alderaan, described as "an island city suspended in a sea of Cirrus Methane", Montross later stays on the pirate ship when Han, Luke, the droids and Chewbacca take Deak in escape pods to the Rebel Base located on the fourth moon of Yavin. Receiving their reward legally, the smuggling trio then goes on to rescue Luke during the space battle against the later to be named DEATH STAR, firing at Vader and his TIE wingmen-Vader's ship is hit and dives into the pirate ship, exploding on impact. Luckily the trio escapes from the wrecked vessel in the lifepods and, with the further destruction of the



An early design from 1976, by John Mollo, for Jabba the Hutt (left) when he was still conceived as being a human. Mollo envisioned that his bodyguard, Montross, before becoming an Imperial Bureaucrat stationed at Mos Eisley spaceport by April of that year, was a part cyborg-like character-much like he had been when envisioned by George Lucas as a hero in the film's original Second Draft.

Imperial Space Fortress, receive victory medals alongside Luke from Deak Starkiller and the rest of the Rebel forces (and leaving the path open to the film's as yet unwritten sequel: THE PRINCESS OF ONDOS).

With the new Third and Fourth Drafts of THE STAR WARS, the story is revised but a lot of the basics are still there, though Captain Deak Starkiller has now become a lady-a certain feisty Princess named Leia- whilst some of the older, stronger qualities and characteristics of Deak have started to come to the fore in the creation of a new character-the venerable Jedi Knight Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi. And in those two new versions things have changed for poor old Montross as well. Such a strong character in the second draft, he has now disappeared from the Third Draft as a hero, his once hefty part transferred to the more visually

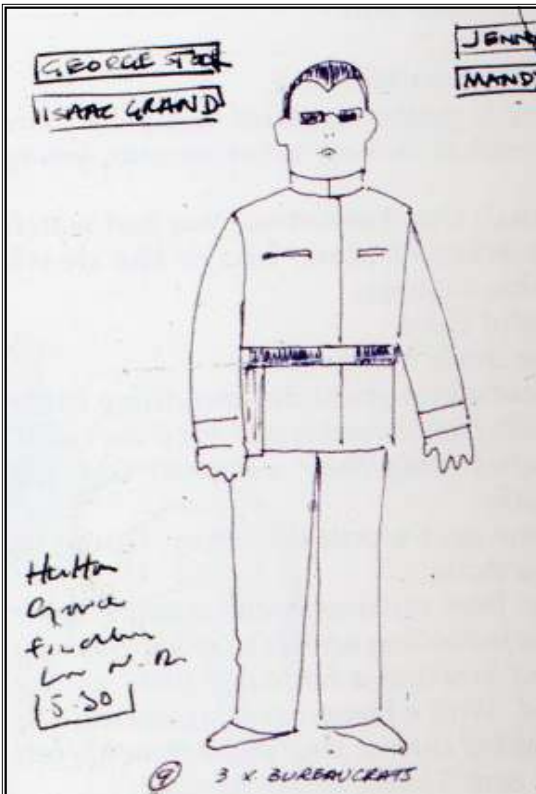
interesting, and unique part of Chewbacca instead-based on Lucas's Malamute dog, Indiana, who would ride alongside him in his car during the early seventies. Story-wise in the Third Draft (written August 1st 1975), with Luke and Ben gone to collect payment for the ride to Organa Major, Han's ship, as before, has been impounded by Jabba the Hutt and a group of pirates, and, in an intriguing piece of STAR WARS history that never was (though it seems logical considering the relationship between the pair in the cut, then later restored, sequences of STAR WARS) it is established that the ship was built by Solo but paid for by Jabba, who now wants to collect on his owed money. Sabotaging the ship, as before, and making it look as if its reactor is about to go critical, Han and Chewie bluff Jabba and his party into successfully abandoning the Pirate ship. All bar one, however- Montross (now in a small role as a baddie) - who pulls his gun on Solo but is out drawn by the faster, younger reflexes of the space smuggler. Chewbacca then shoves Montross,

previously described as “a foul looking pilot”, out of the ship's hatch as Luke Starkiller and the gang board the ship and it blasts off from Mos Eisley spaceport.

At one point in the Third Draft's evolution (the script known as *THE STAR WARS. FROM THE ADVENTURES OF LUKE STARKILLER*), with the film in its pre-production phase in the UK during 1976, Montross the pirate would be conceived by Costume Designer John Mollo (we assume having had conversations with Lucas) as a robotic bodyguard to Jabba (once again having shades of Darth Vader), who, at that stage, was still an unusual looking humanoid. Then, between the film's Fourth Draft (January 16th 1976) and the Revised Fourth Draft (March 15th 1976), submissions of the pre-production process, with the film now known only as *THE STAR WARS*, Montross would be dropped as a bounty hunter/pirate guard to Jabba and enter the final stage of his evolution- becoming an Imperial Bureaucrat who



Filming begins on the Docking Bay 94 set at ELSTREE on April 12th 1976. Already over schedule, a busy shooting day is planned involving scenes with Jabba the Hutt, and the Imperial Bureaucrat that Montross has now become.



One of three "Imperial Bureaucrat" costumes conceived and created by John Mollo for the Tatooine scenes filmed at Elstree. Is this what Montross would have worn for his shooting?

tries to stop Han Solo from leaving Docking Bay 94 on Tatooine when the smuggler has a new charter bound for the rebel system of Organa Major. As before, in a scene similar to the Third Draft with Jabba, the revised Fourth Draft shows Solo tricking Montross into leaving the newly christened *Millennium Falcon*.

It would be with this Fourth Draft that Montross finally had the chance to become a living breathing person, his scenes scheduled to be filmed in April 1976, his costume created and the part cast in the UK by Irene Lamb (and Okayed by Lucas). Actor Bill Bailey is assumed to have played the part of Montross for the scene (listed as one of the main actors to be used on the first day of filming on the Docking Bay 94 set, according to the official **MAKING OF STAR WARS** book by J.W. Rinzler-Rinzler doesn't state that Bailey plays Montross but

it is a good bet that it is that actor. It should be noted, however, that some casting information has been incorrect in the book-the only thing that we do know for sure is that, whoever was cast, the actor was a friend of Richard le Parmentier, who played Imperial Admiral Motti for the DEATH STAR scenes. Bailey would also go onto appear in one other film in which Le Parmentier would star in. Co-incidence, or friends helping each other out?).

In this to be filmed version, Montross, acting under Darth Vader's instructions that no ship leaves Mos Eisley, confronts Solo with two local policemen (whether these characters were cast and costumed for filming is not confirmed, though we know that British background actors Isaac Grand and George Stock were cast as part of three "bureaucrats" characters that John Mollo did costume designs for as part of the many background characters seen in Mos Eisley and the Cantina on the 4th March 1976), telling the smuggler that he'll stay on the ship until the spaceport re-opens (in a scene we assume is set after Solo's previous meeting with Jabba and his goon squad). This results in Solo creating a diversion that forces Montross off the ship as Chewbacca brings in Luke Skywalker (his surname now changed from



With filming time lost due to production delays, as well as additional film stock and camera problems, the re-shooting of footage for the scenes between Jabba the Hutt (played by Declan Mulholland) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford) takes a priority for George Lucas and Company-though in the end these scenes never make the final cut in the editing room. An early casualty from the filming soon becomes Montross, the actor playing him no longer required for scenes that have now been omitted from the script to save time.

Starkiller), Ben Kenobi and the droids (who have just sold the landspeeder). Imperial Troops then arrive just as the ship is taking off.

Sadly, on the actual day of filming for Montross's scene on 12th April 1976, of which the actor was costumed and waiting in the dressing room at ELSTREE STUDIOS to be called for filming, Lucas, with the Docking Bay 94 filmed scenes involving Jabba and Han Solo already over-running due to numerous technical difficulties, would change his mind about having the character in the script and decides to cut to the chase, removing the sequence with Montross and having Solo be directly attacked by the force of Imperial Stormtroopers instead. An

apologetic Lucas would tell the actor that his scenes had been cut out of the script (in the Fourth Draft revised script, could these be the later omitted references CA53, 53, 54 and 55?). We also presume that cutting this scene would also successfully have shaved some valuable time off the already pushed, and over schedule, shooting period, which had previously been affected by filming over-runs that day of Jabba the Hutt's scenes, with Declan Mulholland playing the role, a sequence which would also, later on, fall victim to the editing scissors shortly after it had completed filming.

Whether or not costume photo reference images of Bill Bailey (who would go on to appear in small roles in films such as SUPERMAN I and II, OUTLAND and TV like TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED) as Montross still exist, or whether any were ever actually any taken, is unknown (if there were pics, could they be in the Gary Kurtz/Jason Joiner personal photo collection or possibly buried deep within the LUCASFILM ARCHIVES somewhere, ready to be found and brought to light one day?). If images were taken, we presume they would have been by STAR WARS set photographer John Jay, as he covered the majority of the costume and make-up test photography, bar specially posed studio shoots by Douglas Kirkland, Terry O'Neill and David Steen (all of which is a story for another time..).

Intriguingly, what with all of the plot and character material from the unused story concepts being re-used to a certain degree for the Prequel Saga, it is interesting to note that Montross has never been resurrected. Is there a chance he may crop up within the future of the STAR WARS universe? Perhaps the live action or animated series perhaps? Here's hoping that he may become a living breathing hero once again.

With the eventual release of the entire STAR WARS saga as a DVD box set, hopefully within the next five years, with hundreds of hours of behind the scenes material being included, let's hope more information on this intriguing character comes to light soon....

So.. there we have it-a potted history, so far at least, of a minor character who came and went in the realm of the physical STAR WARS universe and it's epic behind the scenes history, but whose presence and contribution to the saga lives on in the netherworld universe of STAR WARS mysteries and what ifs!!!

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For more information on Ralph McQuarrie and all his excellent artwork, not just on STAR WARS, head over to the excellent website at www.dreamsandvisionspress.com

For more information on the original storylines and script for the STAR WARS SAGA, head over to the excellent STARKILLER: THE JEDI BENDU SCRIPT SITE at: <http://www.starwarz.com/starkiller/scripts.htm>

And don't forget to check out J.W. Rinzler's excellent MAKING OF STAR WARS book-you won't regret it!!