

ANAKIN SKYWALKER

WHAT IF DREAMS CAME TRUE. AND YOU COULD BE WHO YOU WANTED TO BE. YOU COULD DO WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO. AND YOU COULD HELP WHO YOU WANTED TO HELP.

WHAT IF DREAMS CAME TRUE, AND THE WORLD OPENED UP. AND YOU WERE NEVER, EVER AFRAID.

WHAT IF DREAMS CAME TRUE. BUT DREAMS *DO* COME TRUE. DON'T THEY?

ANAKIN SKYWALKER EPISODE ONE TONE POEM COMMERCIAL 1999

"YIIIPPPPEEE!!!"



Acting against blue screens, flying imaginary spaceships, working alongside people of the caliber of Liam Neeson and Pernilla August, partaking in location filming that took him away from family and friends living in America, in three different countries (with Tunisia's natural temperatures of up to 120 degrees!!), and, most importantly, knowing that you have to try and bring to life a positive character who will eventually end up becoming Darth Vader, the ultimate iconic figure in science fiction/movie bad guy history.

All of this a challenge for any adult actor, let alone a child of seven!!

On the written page, it would be easy to have Anakin Skywalker, one of the key roles that propels the middle act of this first film, project all the things that his character needs to be, not only in this episode, but also in establishing what is to come in future installments as well. It's an altogether different challenge, however, to bring those words and scenes to life on screen. For a movie this pressured, with so much at stake, many fans wondered if Lucas had made the right choice in having a young Anakin appearing in the first film (when many had wanted to see him as an adult partaking in the CLONE WARS from the onset), as well as the risky casting of Jake Lloyd, then a relatively unknown actor (with the Arnold Schwarzenegger comedy JINGLE ALL THE WAY being his only major film credit) out of 7,000 child actors tested world-wide, in the role.

In that first screen test, as seen on the EPISODE ONE DVD, Jake Lloyd's performance shines out from the other child actors tested (Devon Michael, the second choice, was also very good in his footage, and probably the better actor, but there was a little bit of coolness there, he hit the acting beats too well, too adult) - Lucas wisely knew that we had to see Anakin as a younger, warmer personality before his becoming Darth Vader (and one of the reasons why the boy's fight with Greedo was probably taken out of the film- Jake doesn't look right as the character of Anakin, for EPISODE ONE anyway, being so angry). No matter how controversial his selection was to fans and critics (especially the ones who unfairly dubbed him *Mannequin* Skywalker before any clips or even a trailer of scenes had been shown. (Thankfully, George Lucas and many other people came to his defense (Ron Howard, in particular, we salute you!!!))), Jake Lloyd truly was the best actor for the part, bringing a cherubic, but a light and cheeky innocence to the role, too. There is also a very slight edginess there- a complexity that the audience knows will become a fatal character flaw (Anakin is bright, sharp and resourceful, yet there is a willingness to bend the rules, and an insatiable enthusiasm to do everything, - those same qualities for good that will be turned against him, consuming him, in the third, and fateful, final film).

He may have forgotten his lines at occasional times during filming (don't forget, he had a lot of dialogue in this film (and it really is difficult to say Coruscant for the first time, especially if you're seven !!)), and his performance in some scenes may have had to be chopped and cut around a few times by Lucas in the editing rooms (but then, don't forget, Lucas did that to everybody else's performances in the film as well!!), but Jake, like Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker before him, also brought with him a great naturalness to the way he played Anakin (he looks very similar to Hamill too- and Lloyd's scenes with Artoo, in the Naboo starfighter, as he and the rest of the pilots try to knock out the droid control ship, eerily echo the relationship that Luke had with the droid in the classic films). And in the emotional scenes Jake's marvelous- in the most important scene of the film, the moment where he says goodbye to his mother, his performance and timing are absolutely spot on, really pulling at the audience heart strings (the scene is even more tragic when you realize the terrible circumstances that will re-unite Anakin and Shmi in ATTACK OF THE CLONES), whilst in the action sequences (especially the all important pod race) he brings believability to the difficult task of convincing us that a child could fly a spaceship so well (something George Lucas was particularly worried about when creating the character and writing the scenes in that first, early draft of THE BEGINNING).

Having taken a break from acting after several projects that followed on from EPISODE ONE, as well as getting himself a strong education for the future, Jake is now coming back onto the acting scene, and his recent STAR WARS convention appearances continue to show us all what a friendly and dedicated person he has become-not unlike his young Anakin persona (and we definitely think that is *his* face being used for Anakin in the current animated THE CLONE WARS series, too!!) . We at AFICIONADO truly hope that Jake, long term acting career wise, doesn't suffer from his having appeared in the first of the "new" STAR WARS movies (the dreaded type casting syndrome, born from lazy people in the film industry, is a worry at any age, but to be in a film so epic, and so in the public eye...), that he transcends any problems that might occur and that he continues to be successful in whatever he ends up pursuing in life.

