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Exclusive: J.J. Abrams Talks STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS and That New Lightsaber

BY ADAM CHITWOOD FEBRUARY 5, 2015

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When you're the director of the most anticipated film of the year—and, quite possibly, one of the most anticipated in recent memory—you're constantly fielding questions that you can't answer given the enormous amount of interest in said film. In the case of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, the sequel luckily has someone at the helm who is well-versed in teasing without revealing: **J.J. Abrams**.

Last night, Abrams attended the [Visual Effects Society Awards](#) to accept the Visionary Award. Coincidentally, Steve was at the event and had the chance to speak with Abrams on the red carpet. While no one expects Abrams to be very



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of hilts on a lightsaber, and Abrams himself hasn't been left out of the discussion:

"I will say that what's been funny is, since the lightsaber's come out, I cannot tell you how many contradictory emails I have received from people who have both defended it with unbelievably detailed graphics...I've gotten things that are nuts, and I've gotten people who've shown how it'll kill you and how it doesn't make any sense. It's been the funniest thing to see the arguments that have developed over this thing."

While Abrams declined to get into the origins of the lightsaber saying it's a "long story" that he'll tell at another time, he assures fans that he and his team had the exact same debates when designing the piece of weaponry:

"It was a number of conversations [that led to the design]. It was a sketch that became a whole thing and, you know, this was not done without a lot of conversation and it's fun to see people have the conversation that we had, but in reverse."



The director said that he hasn't yet seen a first cut of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* since they're still editing, but he did briefly tease the film's sequence that was shot in IMAX, confirming that the large-format is relegated to just one portion of the film:

"It's really one sequence so it's not a ton [of IMAX footage], but it's a good sequence."

Much has been made about Abrams bringing practical effects back into the *Star Wars* realm with *The Force Awakens*, and the filmmaker said they went "old school" on the movie, more often than not using CG to remove things instead of add them:



"I feel like the beauty of this age of filmmaking is that there are more tools at your disposal, but it doesn't mean that any of these new tools are automatically the right tools. And there are a lot of situations where we went very much old school and in fact used CG more to remove things than to add things."

Abrams admits that there is a significant amount of visual effects in the film, obviously, but again reiterated that they went practical whenever possible:



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"There are obviously an enormous amount of CG effects in the film, and I can't wait for you to see the combination. But it was very important that we build as many sets as we could and that the film have a tangible, sort of authentic quality that you believed that these things were actually happening in a real space with real sunlight, if it was an exterior scene, or if we could build a big portion of a scene and not have anything be blue screen, do it where we could. It was a very important piece of work."

With regards to the future of the *Star Wars* franchise, Abrams confirmed that he's involved as an executive producer on [*Episode VIII*](#) and [*Episode IX*](#), but that at least *Episode VIII* belongs to writer/director **Rian Johnson**:

"I wouldn't say 8 and 9 are my baby, Rian will be working at least on 8, but I'm executive producing those films, yeah."

Finally, with **Simon Pegg** recently signing on [to co-write the next *Star Trek* movie](#), Steve asked Abrams (who is producing the sequel) how that development came about:

"[Pegg] and I had talked quite a bit about story, he had a lot of wonderful ideas. It just sort of felt obvious that he would be a wonderful person to work on the story and help craft the story, so he's working on it."



Watch the full video interview below, in which Steve also attempts to get Abrams to confirm if *Star Wars* is coming to Comic-Con and when the next trailer will hit. ***Star Wars: The Force Awakens*** opens in theaters on December 18th.



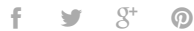


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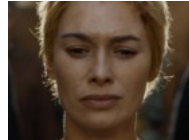
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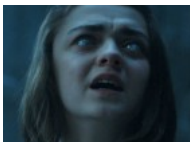
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