

the left-wing film-makers to whom Coppola had incautiously given house room the previous year. They'd formed their own union, and Zoetrope's productions, such as they were, became the battlefield on which they struggled for jurisdiction. It cost Coppola another \$40,000 to extricate himself from the firefight.

Patton brought Coppola numerous offers from Hollywood to script and direct films, but he turned all of them down. The most insistent came from Paramount, who wanted him to film Mario Puzo's bestselling novel *The Godfather*. Coppola thought it a potboiler, and refused repeatedly. Eventually Peter Bart, a Paramount staffer and, later, editor of the trade paper *Variety*, rang one last time.

Lucas was in the office that day, and Coppola, covering the mouth-piece, asked, 'George, what should I do? Should I make this gangster movie or shouldn't I?'

'Francis, we need the money,' Lucas said. 'And what have you got to lose?'

While Coppola was away filming *The Godfather*, Lucas moved into the Zoetrope offices. He was constantly on the phone, setting up *American Graffiti* and finding editing work for Marcia. None of the calls were on behalf of Zoetrope, so after a few weeks office manager Mona Skarger presented him with a phone bill for \$1800. With only \$2000 in the bank, Lucas had to borrow the money from his father. He was so angry and humiliated that he shunned the offices and sent Marcia in with the check. Coppola later claimed he hadn't authorized Skarger to demand payment: 'I would never have done that to a friend.' Lucas didn't believe him. Their friendship inched one step nearer a break, though really it was just another aspect of the general withdrawal from personal relationships which paralleled Lucas's abandonment of Los Angeles. 'George feels,' says Willard Huyck, 'that he made enough friends at USC, and doesn't need any more.'

One new friend Lucas did accept was a calm, indeed grave young man a few years older than himself named Gary Kurtz. Kurtz wore his beard even shorter than Lucas's, and cut it back severely from his chin in a style usually associated with the Amish. In fact, Kurtz was raised as a Mormon, and refused to fight in Vietnam from religious conviction. Having graduated from the USC film school in 1962, he was made a combat cameraman with the Marines and served three years 'in country.'

Kurtz was the same age as Coppola, whom he knew from their days with Corman, but in his gravity, stability, and morality the direct antithesis. 'I worked for Roger Corman as a student on lots of little films,' he says, 'most of which I can't even remember the titles of now; some of which we didn't even know the titles of then. Shooting little bits and pieces. That's how I met Francis. I was on *Dementia 13*, his first film. He shot most of it in Ireland but we did little bits of it in Los Angeles.'

'When I got out of the Marines in 1969, I went back to doing a few low-budget films and doing odds and ends, and another friend of mine whom I'd worked with with Roger, Monte Hellman, wanted to do this film, *Two Lane Blacktop*. We got Universal to buy into it under their under-\$1 million-budget program. I went up to talk to Francis about using his Techniscope equipment for *Two Lane Blacktop*. He said, "We've just finished shooting this film on Techniscope. I'll take you out to meet George, and he'll show you some of the material on the Steenbeck." We went out to Mill Valley. George was editing in his attic. He was very gracious. He showed me the footage, and we had a chat about Techniscope, and I went back to San Francisco. I called George a couple of other times about technical aspects of using Techniscope in the next week after that.'

Aside from *Radioland Murders* and *American Graffiti*, Lucas had one more idea: a science fiction story, a movie comic-book inspired by Edgar Rice Burroughs, the *Flash Gordon* serials and *Dune*, but shot in a style inspired by old Hollywood action films. At some point, wearying of turning images into words, he created an outline in collage, with images cut from comic books and science fiction magazines.

Lucas didn't aspire to compete with Hollywood science fiction like *Forbidden Planet* or *Planet of the Apes*. Another kind of science fiction film had always existed parallel to them. This strain was disreputable, catchpenny, its plots vulgar, its costumes cheap. It encompassed Ed Wood's *Plan Nine from Outer Space*, Roger Corman's *The Beast with a Million Eyes* and *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, and Japanese imports like *Godzilla*. Its market was revival houses or drive-ins, its audience teenagers with one hand up their girl's skirt and the other clutching a Coke.

Whenever Hollywood got more money for a science fiction film, it

MYTHMAKER

■ The Life and Work of GEORGE LUCAS ■



JOHN BAXTER

31143006657630

B LUCAS, G.

Baxter, John, 1939-
Mythmaker : the life and
work of George Lucas
1st ed.

AVON BOOKS, INC.

1350 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10019

Copyright © 1999 by John Baxter

Published by arrangement with HarperCollins/Publishers, UK
ISBN: 0-380-97833-4

All rights reserved, which includes the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever except as provided by the U.S. Copyright Law. For information address Avon Books, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data:

Baxter, John, 1939-

Mythmaker : the life and work of George Lucas / John Baxter.—1st ed.

p. cm.

"An Avon book."

Filmography: p.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Lucas, George. 2. Motion picture producers and directors—United States Biography. I. Title.

PN1998.L3L835B39 1999

99-37051

791.43'0233'092—dc21

CIP

First Spike Printing: October 1999

SPIKE TRADEMARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES, MARCA REGISTRADA, HECHO EN U.S.A.

Printed in the U.S.A.

FIRST EDITION

QPM 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

www.spikebooks.com