

¿What's your story?: A Conversation with Tim Veekhoven

By Sifo Dyas – September 5th, 2010

[Tim Veekhoven](#) is a *Star Wars* fan whose love to the Saga has motivated him to publish various works, either in [Teekay-421 magazine](#) or [Yodapedia](#). But his most important contribution has been the story of four characters of this universe published first in the [Databank of the Official Site](#) and then in the *The Complete SW Encyclopedia*. That achievement is only part of Tim's great job, also known as *Sompeetalay*, made for *Star Wars* in his country, Belgium, a job that everybody should know. That's the main reason of this interview. Enjoy it.

Which was your first contact with Star Wars?

My parents took me to see the re-release of ANH and the release of TESB what must have happened in 1981 (I think). I remember waiting in the lobby and seeing black and white pictures of the movie. I remember a picture of Luke on his Tauntaun. I must have enjoyed the film – which was in English of course – because a few days later I could choose 4 Kenner figures at the toy store. I chose Han Bespin, Chewbacca, Ben Kenobi and a Tusken Raider. I played the entire afternoon with those figures and that was the start of more figures, vehicles and etcetera... because my parents saw that I really liked playing with them.

How were the early years of TEEKAY-421 and what is his vision and mission?

Well, most of all it was fun and exciting! TeeKay-421 was founded in 1997 out of the ashes of a local fan club called "The Bounty Hunter Capture Log". I already wrote for that fan club magazine but when they decided not to do any promotion at all during the Special Editions, I knew this wasn't going to work out. So together with two other guys, who shared my idea, we asked if we could take over the fan club. This happened without any problem and we gave it a new name: TeeKay-421.

We didn't have to start from zero because the previous club had constructed the base. We took over their members (well, there weren't that many) and just started running the fan club with three guys. The magazine was totally different than what it is today because in 1997, the Internet was still something rather new. We began to make rudimentary flyers, we did appear in several newspapers because of the foundation of the fanclub and slowly we began to get more and more members. I remember that each new member was always the cause for a small celebration. In 1998 some new people reinforced our ranks. One of them made a great website and the other one was a great graphics guy. This help enabled us to expand our activities off- and online.

The vision / mission of TeeKay was and has always been to offer the fans information and news about Star Wars in the first place. In second place the club was founded to bring fans in Belgium together through meetings, contacts and conventions.

Which do you think is the main point in publishing a magazine, in comparison to a web site?

There are several, I think. Unless you throw it away or your dog eats it, a magazine will never be gone. A magazine is still so much easier to read than text on a screen and you can touch the magazine instead of e-text that is not truly tangible. A magazine is more 'valuable' than a text on a website. We were even asked several years ago by the famous National Library King Albert I in Brussels to send them one copy of each magazine we publish. The TeeKay Magazines will be there for a long time!

I think that we all have witnessed the disappearance of a website we loved. And then one day, it was totally gone! The official site of SW is a fine example of that. The site has

been redesigned to many times that a lot of interesting content has been lost. Maybe even forever when you didn't download it.

You are a pioneer and had visited some Star Wars locations. What places have you visited?

Well, I haven't travelled that much, but I did go to Tunisia in 2000. That was before organised trips to locations became more familiar in SW-fandom. I was on Djerba where a lot of locations can be found in Ajim. I saw Ben Kenobi's house from the original edition, Falcon 'blast-off' point, Mos Eisley streets, the Cantina (exterior of course) and Hotel Sidi-Driss in Matmata (Lars Homestead interior). The hotel was a lot of fun because the crew of AotC had only left two weeks before I was there. I should have visited Anchorhead as well, but ironically a large storm had made the road very wet during the night and I couldn't get there on the motorcycle I had rented. So I wasn't able to visit Anchorhead after all.

Does these travels change the way you look the films where this locations were used?

Yes, in a certain way. It does feel a bit strange to see the Lars Homestead again when you have actually been there. And Ben Kenobi's house in the original trilogy now makes me smile because immediately behind the house there is a large strait that separates Djerba from Tunisia's mainland. Of course there is not that much water in the Jundland Wastes. Fishermen used to load in their cargo straight from the sea into the house.

What did you think when you were in the Mos Eisley Cantina?

Well I never went into the Cantina. Ponda Baba wasn't blocking the entrance, but it's just a plain house. The outside was easily recognisable though. When I took a picture of that building, there were some locals who were looking at me and wondered why that guy would want a photograph of that building.

Some of these locations are in bad condition. Do you consider there's a possibility that this places will totally disappear in the near future?

Yes that is a possibility. The desert is not the safest place for these buildings that were never meant to endure for so many years. When I was in Tunisia I was surprised to see that the locals didn't have the slightest clue that SW was filmed there. Just the people in Hotel Sidi-Driss knew what role their hotel had played in the saga. So the people didn't care because some of the locations are just plain buildings to them. And others are in the middle of the desert. Recently petitions have begun to support the idea to restore some of the locations themselves as did already happen to the paintings on the ceiling in the Lars kitchen. If that will not happen, I think some of the locations will disappear.

Where these travels inspiration for your databank entries in WTS?

No, not really. Three of my characters do appear on Tatooine, but that was mostly because of my love for 'the common guy' instead of my love for sand and heat ☺

Do you see yourself as a xenoarcheologist?

I like that question. I studied history and I often compare my interest in Star Wars to a historian or anthropologist who studies a certain culture. So I guess I am some kind of earthly Xenoarcheologist. Sometimes I get asked if I want to live in the SW universe, but to be honest, I don't think it's a universe that can be compared to ours. If I had to live in the SW universe I would probably be a historian, teacher or something else I'm doing here as well. I wouldn't have any ambition to become a Jedi Knight.

What does "What's the story" means for you?

It may sound funny but it does mean a lot to me. I've always been interested in source information, even before West End Games started to publish their fantastic books. I always want to know as much as possible about something that I really enjoy. I'm the guy who makes the quizzes for the fan club and I write nearly all the articles about the

SW-universe for the TeeKay Magazine. So I did consider WTS to be some kind of personal test to see if I did indeed understand the SW-universe well enough to meet the standards of the official canon. I am very proud that my stories were chosen and that they have also appeared in books such as the Complete SW Encyclopedia.

What can you tell us about your contributions?

A lot, so I'll try not to exaggerate ☺ I can tell you that each story that was chosen always came as a surprise. Sometimes I thought I had a better chance to be chosen with another story. I really liked my own story about Slyther Bushforb as a private detective on Coruscant, but it wasn't chosen. Instead other stories were picked that I didn't think had any chance. Three of my four stories basically are about 'losers'. Swilla is a former slave who lost her tribe, Tzizzvt is a misunderstood professor on the run for the Empire and a poacher kidnapped Wam Lufba on Endor. But at the end everything turns out fine for them. I struggled mostly with the entries of the human characters in the Coruscant Opera House because I just couldn't find a way to connect to them.

I was surprised and happy when my story for Maxiron Agolerga was chosen. Because, and I don't mean to offend anybody, I think that Maxiron is probably the only WTS subject that can be remembered by somebody who has seen the movies but who isn't truly a fan. They have all seen the wedding of Anakin and Amidala and it's basically "the guy who married Padmé and Anakin".

What is the methodology you used to do these great contributions, very consistent and respectful of canon?

WTS was fun, but it was also unpleasant. I got up early each time a new entry was posted and I started to think right away about a possible story. And, this is really true; within the hour I always had the frame of my story. Without a few expectations, I always stayed true to that basic story. I then started to refine the story and search for interesting names or connections to be inserted. Please don't think that those stories magically popped into my mind. I had to use my knowledge to think of a proper story. And sometimes your brain wants to cooperate, but other weeks (and depending on the subject) it was a lot harder. I always kept checking my entries for spelling because English is not my native language. I wanted to make as few mistakes as possible. I'm proud to be one of the few non-native English speakers that managed to write WTS-stories.

Near the end of WTS, I even started to create some backgrounds for characters that I thought would make great subjects. I also wrote down every interesting planet or name that I stumbled upon, so I could use these things in a story. Who knows that they might come in handy someday in the future?

Do you have any future Project In-Universe?

Well, living in Belgium and being Belgian is not easy for a SW-fan interested in source. Because, whether we like it or not, the centre of the SW-universe is the US. Belgium is an obscure planet in the Outer Rim, so it's difficult to get noticed. I have a lot of ideas for the SW Insider and I would really like the Visual Guides to restart on SW.com. And someday I'd love to do something about the lack of information from the Droids Cartoons, which I really like. Wouldn't an article about the species or creatures in the Droids cartoons be wonderful? I certainly would love to write such articles.

I think you are a 24/7 Star Wars fan and your work also has to do with continuity and canon. I would like to know your idea about the difference between Source and Expanded Universe.

I'm glad you ask about this. I think – and this is just my opinion – that Lucasfilm Licensing has been using the term EU way too often during the past ten years. Everything that isn't really in the movies is considered EU nowadays. Well, then the names of Lobot and Dengar are also EU because they aren't mentioned in the movies and

they aren't seen on the credits. EU is a term that was created in the middle of the nineties to classify all the new stories that were written by Bantam, but West End Games used it in a far stricter way. They even made sourcebooks about EU novels and they mentioned that the visions in those EU stories belonged to the author and were not the ideas of George Lucas.

If EU and Source are the same, then why is 'The Star Wars Sourcebook' called like that? Well, because they are two different things. In my history classes, we got a class about historical methods that enabled you to check sources for credibility. When you study the SW phenomenon, George Lucas and the movies are the centre of it. The further away you go from that centre, the possibility that your information is wrong becomes bigger and bigger.

To me Source is information about the movies, tv spin-offs and the state of the galaxy, but it doesn't alter the universe created by Lucas. Sources are facts that exist, like names of species, planets and weaponry. A source just adds facts, that could create a certain puzzle, but it will never jeopardize Lucas' ideas. EU to the contrary, are stories told to expand and sometimes alter the universe, such as novels, comics and games. Sometimes EU turns out to be source; the background of a lot of Jedi Council members was established in comics, so that EU background became source. And sometimes Source can become EU, like in 'Tales from the Mos Eisley Cantina' where most of the stories are based on the Sourcebook 'Galaxy Guide 1' by West End Games.

I have to admit that I really don't like all those stories that happen after RotJ, with the exception of the 'Legacy' comics. I have read a lot of post RotJ EU novels and though some of them are well-written, like the Thrawn trilogy, I just don't accept that a bunch of arbitrary authors can decide what happens to characters created by Lucas. A lot of people forget that Lucasfilm Licensing publishes EU novels. I know that Lucas has granted his permission to do that but Lucas doesn't really care much for those novels. It's not his cup of tea so he just let it happen.

Licensing is about selling merchandising. Now, I'm also a passionate SW collector for many years, but selling a story is more 'dangerous' than selling figures. Of course Lucasfilm Licensing has never said that the EU novels are just the thoughts of the authors and are not the ideas of George Lucas. Have you ever wondered why a new sourcebook is hardly advertised and a new EU novel gets all the publicity it can get?

I do enjoy comics and novels that take place between movies because the author is limited in his freedom because of the movies or spin-offs. They have to stay more true to the movies and Lucas' story.

What do you think about The Clone Wars series and the way they're working with continuity?

I love the Clone Wars series, no doubt there. I think Dave Filoni and his team are doing great work. But it's true that they do not always truly follow what has been created in the continuity. The entire Clone Wars continuity has become a huge mess and I'm wondering if everything (comics, 2D cartoons, CW series, novels, games) will ever be able to fit into a single timeline. But that's not to blame Filoni and the Clone Wars.

I often say that the creators of the CW look at the images in sourcebooks, but that they don't actually read what's been written in them ☺ They've altered many small and larger things in the series, but most of the time a plausible explanation can still be found for these changes. I just don't like the fact when they start to ignore established things, even if that was written in comics. It's not much fun reading comics that seem to be officially ignored. At the other end we know that when George Lucas is involved, he cares little or nothing about what has been established in Lucasfilm Licensing's 'EU' (which isn't always true EU). He does what he wants to do and that can cause some 'problems' from

time to time. My advice is 'don't hold novels or comics in too high-esteem'. Sure they're fun to read, but they will always be less important than the movies or the TV spin-offs.

Today, Lucasfilm has the Holocron and Leland Chee as a continuity control unit, but as you know there are many incongruities in some books, specially the Wizards books. Do you have any idea why these mistakes aren't stopping?

I don't want to speak badly about Wizards because they published some really fantastic books in the past. But it's true that some of their last books often didn't match with other material published by DK. I think this happened because nobody recognised these discrepancies. I had 'Galaxy at War' for 5 minutes and I had already discovered things that made my eyebrows frown. So I also wonder why these contradictions weren't noticed on time. I even wonder if there was anybody at all who checked these books for contradictions. I certainly don't blame Leland Chee who is always very helpful. I think a better communication between publishers and their editors would certainly be very helpful, so they can adjust the themes they're working on before it's too late. But it's a bit hard to blame 'Wizards' for these contradictions. I think Lucasfilm Licensing could have avoided them easily by caring a bit more about source information.

Do you consider that maybe Lucasfilm trust in people like Pablo Hidalgo, Daniel Wallace or Tim Veekhoven to always fix this kind of things?

Guys like Dan and Pablo are playing in a much higher league than I am ☺ They've won the World Cup and I have only won some friendly games. I would really love writing articles and books about SW though. I can do that day after day. I'm happy that Lucasfilm Licensing is choosing their authors wisely during the last years. They have now realised which authors are best suited for 'An Essential Guide' and which authors can write an excellent book about merchandising or about SW in the popular culture. And a lot of the authors are great people who are open to communicate with the fans.

And yes, I think such authors are absolutely needed. Who else would be able to set things straight with a great retcon? ☺

And talking about canon. I thought Stewjon was a joke, but Chee and Wallace say is canon... Do you have any idea what's going on?

Well ... the worse thing to ask George Lucas is something about the SW-universe. He doesn't care that much for all those names anymore and whoever asked that question knew something like that was coming. Lucas already gave Motti's first names (Conan Antonio) and that wasn't a joke either. So yes, it's canon because it comes straight from Lucas, though it was clearly meant to be a joke. We know where the name's from, but at the end it's just a name like another. I just feel that this question should never have been asked to Lucas. Not because I didn't want to know Obi-Wan's planet but because Lucas just says something that pops into his mind nowadays. He's never written about Obi-Wan's homeplanet so he has fun with it and invents something right on the spot. And we're stuck with it. I'm just curious to find out what official source will publish Stewjon first as Kenobi's homeplanet :)

What can you tell us about Yodapedia?

Yodapedia is the Dutch counterpart of Wookieepedia created for The Netherlands and Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium where I live. It was founded in 2007 and I knew I had signed a deal with the devil when I started occupying myself with it. I'm a perfectionist when it comes to SW source information so I knew when I created my first article that it was the beginning of something much larger. Luckily I had already found Kevin Beentjes in The Netherlands who shares my passion for information and together we create like 95% of all the articles on YP. Though there are more users, basically it's just the two of us.

YP also focuses on the movies, spin-off and source. We immediately decided not to follow Wookieepedia blindly. None of the articles are plain copied from WP, because a monkey

can do that as well. You will find articles on YP that aren't even on WP or articles that are more elaborate on YP than on WP. Of course WP has a lot more articles than YP and WP is a fantastic Wiki, but they often seem more concerned about the colour of a shirt of a character that appears during a second in a EU novel than basic information about characters that appear in the movies or the spin-offs. I think that can be confusing for the common visitor.

YP also has several interesting galleries and lists which are useful for all fans throughout the world. We have lists of all the characters, species and Droids from the Clone Wars series for instance. I thought YP had to be useful and practical as well.

Why "Sompeetalay"? Are you a Greedo fan?

Foremost, I wanted a nickname that wasn't too obvious. I wanted people and fans to think about where it came from. I like Greedo but I didn't pick that name because of that. Once I took it as a nickname, I never changed it.

Your final words to all the Peruvian Star Wars Fans.

It has been an honour and a please to do this interview. To all Peruvian SW-fans, please continue to support 'The Force Peru' because there are a lot of countries in the world that don't have such a beautiful SW-website and don't have an organization that actually does things for fans like creating good publications and running the website on a daily base. In the last years, SW-costuming has attained a lot of global attention, but there are so many more things that fans can do to express their love for SW. You don't have to wear a costume to be a SW-fan. True fans have to join their local fan club... forever!

Endnotes:

1. **Pioneer:** common term among *Star Wars* fans used to identify those who had traveled to the locations used in the films.
2. **Xenoarchaeologist:** In-Universe profession dedicated to the study of disappeared worlds or alien cultures through scientific analysis of ancient remains.
3. **Spin-offs:** In the case of *Star Wars* are movies or animated series derived directly from the six films.
4. **Retcon:** "*Retcon (Retroactive Continuity) is the science of making things fit resulting in better stories*" – Karen Traviss