

Remembering a Princess at Star Wars Celebration



The Star Wars Celebration convention is often touted as creator/director George Lucas's love letter to fans, and never more so than this year's 40th anniversary event in Orlando. What began as a little "space opera" opening with ten simple words shining blue on a black screen: "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...." has grown into a powerful film franchise spanning decades, and has attracted an enormous global audience of fans both young and old.



Actress Carrie Fisher is remembered at Star Wars Celebration Orlando (photo courtesy Riccardo)

The joy surrounding this Celebration convention was expected to be somewhat subdued by the death in December 2016 of actress Carrie Fisher. Emotional tributes to *Star Wars'* feisty and much-beloved Princess Leia certainly abounded during the 4-days, as cast and crew members from the film series appearing onstage shared many fond memories of working with the candid actress/writer, portraying Fisher as a no nonsense woman who wielded an acerbic and often

outrageous wit.

“When I cast it, I said I want somebody young to play the part,” said director Lucas. “I want somebody very young. When Carrie came in, she was that character. She was very strong, very smart, very funny, very bold, very tough, and there really wasn’t much of a question. There are not very many people like her. They are one in a billion. For this particular part, it was absolutely perfect. ... She wore a dress through the whole thing, but she was the toughest in the group.”

Lucas went on to say, “She will always be the princess who took command and never backed down, never was in jeopardy. She was always helping the other guys get out of the messes she created. We’ll all love her forever and ever.”

Mark Hamill Speaks About Fisher



Little fan as Princess Leia at
Star Wars Celebration
(Deborah J Bell)

In his moving talk, Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) began by saying, “Here’s a panel I hoped we wouldn’t have for another 30 years.” After pausing for a moment of obvious emotion, he then went on to share many of his favorite personal stories of Fisher. Hamill also played touching video tributes from both director Lucas and Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy.

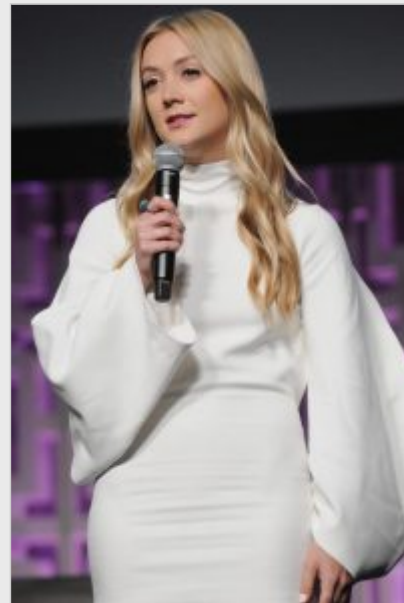
Onscreen, Kennedy described what would be the final time she saw Fisher, when she went to her house to show her the “young Leia” CGI-enhanced cameo from *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

“I rolled this shot, and she didn’t say anything right away, she just sort of leaned back stunned. She...dropped the F bomb several times,” Kennedy added. “She said, ‘Oh my effing God!’ I said,

'Yeah, it's pretty amazing, isn't it?!' She said, 'Yeah, I can't believe it.'

"We will see a lot of Carrie in **[Episode] VIII (The Last Jedi)**", Kennedy assured fans.

Surprise Appearance by Fisher's Daughter Billie Lourd



Fisher's daughter Billie Lourd onstage at Star Wars Celebration (courtesy Lucasfilm)

Of all the moving tributes to the late Fisher, perhaps none was more poignant than the unannounced appearance of her daughter Billie Lourd, making her first public appearance since her mother's death, wearing a custom-designed Princess Leia-inspired white dress. Lourd was introduced by Lucas during Celebration's "Forty Years of Star Wars" opening panel, and spoke directly to fans about the mother she loved and the person she most admired.

"My mom used to say she never knew where Princess Leia ended and Carrie Fisher began," Lourd said. "She was imperfect in many ways but her imperfections and willingness to speak about them are what made her more than perfect. My mom, like Leia, wasn't ever afraid to speak her mind and say things that might have made most people uncomfortable."

"She taught me by her own example, that the most evolved person is seemingly a contradiction - they are both the strongest and the most vulnerable person in the room. And that was her. That is Leia."

Lourd finished her speech by introducing a special tribute video featuring the first footage of Fisher on the set of what would be her final film, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

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