

SOUND WARS



Ken Kreisel and Storm Trooper (Ken is the one on the right).

Over the last 30 years or so, I have had the pleasure of serving many of the quality manufacturers in this industry as their representative in the Southern California market. Products like Triad, Sonic Frontiers, B&W, Apogee, McCormack, Sumiko, API, Signet, M&K Sound, etc... From 1977 to 2001, I represented and distributed the best of the best.

In 1977, a movie introduction came along that changed the way we heard movies. *Star Wars* was the beginning of great sound in the theater. George Lucas was an early pioneer and wanted us all to experience his vision with incredible realism. He worked toward this goal by promoting controlled surround environments. Theaters were then challenged to improve their auditoriums as the consumer demanded better sound. THX, Dolby Digital, SDDS and DTS became common badges that we all now recognize. M&K Sound and Ken Kreisel were advocates and early adopters of the approval process as recommended speakers that met certification. M&K was one who had to do nothing to change or improve their speakers – they already did everything right – while others tried to reinvent themselves.

As a representative of M&K speakers, I was invited on several occasions to visit the Lucas facility in Northern California, Skywalker Ranch, but was never able to make it in all those years. Who knew what this whole *Star Wars* thing would become?

Fast forward to today, and as Marshal Rosenthal, our Senior Entertainment Editor, wrote his news on the release of *Star Wars III*, I was invited to tag along. WOW! There isn't anything I can say that would describe this place. Tucked away in the mountains of Marin County in Northern California, this was an escape any *Star Wars* freak would have died for. But of all the day's adventure, technology and wonders, the very first demonstration has stuck with me the most.

Within the cavernous halls of this phenomenal studio, our first stop was in a room about the size of a small home theater – maybe 17 feet by 24 feet, with three rows of modest, occasional club chairs. I made my way to center seating in the second row. A representative from THX was on hand, along with our host for the day, Jim Ward, Senior Vice-President of Lucasfilms and President of Lucas Arts. A small group of us had the first demo. Now, one

might expect a theater of hundreds of seats, one that would rival the best commercial theaters around. Well, that would come later, but this theater was intimate and incredible with a 50-inch Fujitsu plasma and an M&K surround system driven by a moderate stack of home electronics. It still resonates with me that to truly show off the incredible visual and sonic prowess by Lucasfilms, this was where they wanted to demonstrate. Kudos to M&K Sound for being a true state-of-the-art manufacturer of what audio performance at real-world pricing can offer. The six S125C centers used as surrounds, the three S150 front LCRs and the two MX350 subs – which are incredible – rocked this room. Money no object, if it's good enough for Lucas...incredible!! Thirty years later, M&K is still second to none. ●

– Thank You!
Michael R. Laurino