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### CULTURE

Science fiction: "Star Wars has changed the emotional experience of cinema," says actress Orli Shoshan

**INTERVIEW.** *Disney's blockbuster "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu" has been a smash hit, grossing \$165 million at the worldwide box office since its release on May 20, 2026. During a trip to a galaxy far, far away, Valeurs actuelles met with Orli Shoshan, the unforgettable face of the Star Wars prequel trilogy. Between 2002 and 2005, the actress portrayed Jedi Master Shaak Ti in the films "Attack of the Clones" and "Revenge of the Sith." In this exclusive interview, she discusses the behind-the-scenes aspects of filming, the discipline required to wield a lightsaber, and how the Jedi embody a form of wisdom and serenity that many seek in their own lives.*

Par **Maxime Coupeau**

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*Between 2002 and 2005, Orli Shoshan portrayed Jedi Master Shaak Ti in the films "Attack of the Clones" and then "Revenge of the Sith": "Each generation seeks meaning and a glimmer of hope in difficult times, and Star Wars has always known how to touch that part of ourselves." Photo © SP O DESIGNS / Copyright Lucasfilm Ltd. / Photomontage Olivier Aujean-Valeurs actuelles*

**Valeurs actuelles. Between 2002 and 2005, you portrayed the Jedi Master Shaak Ti in the new Star Wars prequel trilogy. As an actress, do you feel that Star Wars transformed cinema in a way few works ever have before ?**

**Orly Shoshan.** Yes, I think Star Wars changed cinema in a very deep way. But beyond the visual effects or the scale of the films, it changed the emotional experience of cinema. A movie was no longer just something people watched for two hours. It stayed with them long after they left the cinema. Even today, decades later, audiences still feel deeply connected to the characters, the values and the memories these films gave them. That is very rare. And when I meet fans from different countries and generations, I realize Star Wars became much bigger than cinema. It became part of people's lives.

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**With The Mandalorian and Grogu, a new chapter is opening for Star Wars. In your view, what explains the fact that this galaxy far, far away continues to inspire generations of moviegoers nearly fifty years after its creation ?**

I think people continue to connect to Star Wars because, at its core, it is very human. It speaks about good and evil, hope, fear, choice and belief. These are things that never really change. Every generation searches for meaning and light during difficult times, and Star Wars has always known how to speak to that part of us. There is also something deeply emotional about it. People do not just watch these films. They grow up with them. They remember where they were when they first saw them, who they watched them with and how the films made them feel. I think that is part of the real magic of Star Wars.

**How does a cinematic universe as codified as Star Wars manage to function both as vast popular entertainment and as a profound philosophical ideal ?**

I think that is exactly what makes Star Wars so unique. On the surface, it is this huge cinematic world filled with action, adventure, unforgettable characters and iconic music. But underneath all of that, there are deeper

emotions and ideas. The films speak about balance, fear, responsibility, inner strength and the struggle between light and darkness. Those are things many of us connect to in our own lives. I think people come to Star Wars for the spectacle, but stay because of how it makes them feel.

*« Star Wars is no longer just a film : it has become a collective emotional memory. »*

**What do you make of the way Star Wars continues to reinvent itself almost fifty years after its inception ?**

I think that is one of the most beautiful things about Star Wars. Many cinematic worlds are successful for a certain time and then slowly disappear, but Star Wars keeps evolving without losing its soul. Each generation connects to different characters and stories, yet somehow it still feels like the same universe. I also think there is more room today for quieter storytelling, not only big action. Stories with emotion, vulnerability and personal journeys. That allows Star Wars to keep growing naturally. I also love that younger generations continue discovering Star Wars through new films, series and stories. That keeps the universe alive for both longtime fans and new audiences. And even now, after so many years, people still get emotional when they hear the music or see the Star Wars logo. That says a lot.

**In your eyes, why do the Jedi hold such a powerful fascination in our contemporary era ?**

I think the Jedi represent something many of us feel is missing in the world today. There is wisdom, discipline and balance in them. They are powerful, but not driven by ego. Their strength comes from inner connection, not external noise. In today's world, which can feel very loud and fast, I think many people are searching for that again. Peace. Meaning. A deeper connection to themselves. That is probably why I connect so much to minimalism and quiet spaces in my life today. Sometimes simplicity allows you to feel things more clearly. And honestly, one of the most beautiful parts of this journey for me has been meeting fans around the world. I truly enjoy the conventions, the conversations and hearing personal stories from people who grew up with these films. There is something very special about being part of a world that means so much to so many people.

**Were you somehow destined to become a Jedi Master ; Why did George Lucas choose you for the role, and how did you prepare yourself to embody such a character ?**

I never imagined that I would become part of a world like Star Wars. But looking back, I think George Lucas was searching for something beyond acting itself. A certain energy. A certain presence. Shaak Ti had a very quiet strength. She was not the loudest character in the room, but you always felt her presence. I think my connection to the character came from that place.

Even in my personal life, I have always felt more connected to intuition, balance and stillness. Of course there was also the physical preparation. Movement, posture and lightsaber training. But for me it was just as important to understand the energy of the character. How she enters a room. How she listens. How she stays calm even in chaos.

*« Even after so many years, hearing the music from Star Wars is still enough to move audiences. »*

**Natalie Portman, Samuel L. Jackson, Christopher Lee... what memories do you retain from filming scenes alongside that now-legendary generation of actors ?**

I did not work very closely with all of the actors, but I definitely remember Samuel L. Jackson and Ewan McGregor as being very kind and professional. There was a serious atmosphere when it came to the work, but also warmth and respect on set. The truth is that at the time, I did not fully understand how enormous Star Wars was around the world. I grew up in Israel, and I did not grow up around these films the way many people did in other countries. Only later, through meeting fans from all over the world, I realized how deeply these films affected generations of people. Today, I feel very lucky to have been part of something so iconic.

**Do you have a particular anecdote from the set that, in your opinion, captures the magic of Star Wars all by itself ?**

I think one of the most special moments for me was seeing how everything finally came together. Many scenes were filmed in front of blue screens, so during filming we did not always fully see the world around us. We worked with imagination, technical markers and trust in the process. Then I remember sitting in the cinema and watching the finished film for the first time. Suddenly, everything came to life. The music, the visual effects, the worlds and the characters all became something much bigger than I had imagined during filming. I remember thinking, "this world is going to stay with people for a very long time." It was amazing to see how all the small pieces became a complete universe people could emotionally disappear into. And after meeting fans around the world for many years, I understand even more why these films stayed with people for so long.

**Lightsaber duels have become iconic in the history of cinema. What does one feel when taking part in such a mythical choreography ?**

It was honestly a lot of fun. Of course there was a lot of training and concentration behind it, but at the same time, there is something surreal about holding a lightsaber and realizing you are actually part of Star Wars.

Not everyone gets to say they were a Jedi Master. And honestly, I would still love to pick up the lightsaber again one day and show people that Shaak Ti can still put up a pretty good fight.

*« The strength of Star Wars is that it has grown with several generations without losing its soul. »*

**Is there a specific scene from the prequel trilogy that still gives you chills today ?**

Yes, there are a few moments like that. But for me, one of the strongest moments is watching Anakin's fall to the dark side and seeing the shift happening around him. There is something emotional and tragic about that story, because he did not begin as a bad person. It is really the story of someone talented and powerful who slowly loses himself. I think that is one of the reasons audiences remained so emotionally connected to the prequel trilogy over the years. Behind the fantasy and visual effects, there are very human emotions.

**Do you believe that the female characters of Star Wars opened a new path for women in science-fiction cinema ?**

Yes, I believe they did. The female characters in Star Wars were strong and important, but they were not trying to be "like men." They had strength in their own way. I think that was very important, especially at a time when there were not many female characters like that in science-fiction films. Even today, audiences still connect to those characters because they combined strength with emotion, wisdom and humanity. And for many women and young girls, there was something empowering about that. To see that a woman could be strong, intelligent, calm and deeply present without losing her femininity. Personally, I always loved that Shaak Ti represented a quieter kind of strength. She did not need to be the loudest person in the room to leave an impression. And over the years, when I saw the comic books, the LEGO characters, the action figures and all the different Star Wars merchandise, I realized how much Shaak Ti meant to people and how important she became in the larger Star Wars story, even without having a huge amount of screen time. I also think her appearance made her unforgettable. There was something spiritual and powerful in her design, inspired by Indian goddesses and feminine energy. Even the name Shaak Ti sounds close to "Shakti," which represents strength and power. I do not think that was accidental. She became a very inspiring character for many people because her strength came from presence, wisdom and calmness, not only from fighting. And if

there is one thing I would have loved, it would be to see a little more of what Shaak Ti could really do. I think there was still a lot of strength in her story. Thank you again for the thoughtful questions and for giving me the opportunity to revisit such a meaningful chapter of my life

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