

Beat: Vips

Star Wars; makeup artist Stuart Freeborn, creator of Yoda, dies

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USPA News - Stuart Freeborn, the movie makeup artist behind creatures such as the big-eared, big-brained little Yoda in the popular 'Star Wars' franchise, died in London this week from a combination of ailments, his colleagues said on Thursday. He was 98 years old.

Freeborn passed away in London on Tuesday from a combination of ailments due to his old age, his family said. Production company Lucasfilm also confirmed the death, saying the pioneering movie makeup artist leaves behind a "legacy of unforgettable contributions to film." "Stuart was already a makeup legend when he started on Star Wars," said George Lucas, who launched Lucasfilm in 1971 and released the first Star Wars film in 1977. "He brought with him not only decades of experience, but boundless creative energy. His artistry and craftsmanship will live on forever in the characters he created." Lucas added: "His Star Wars creatures may be reinterpreted in new forms by new generations, but at their heart, they continue to be what Stuart created for the original films." During his six-decade career, before his involvement in Star Wars, Freeborn was responsible for the creation of the apelike human ancestors in the "Dawn of Man" sequence of the 1968 science fiction film "2001: A Space Odyssey." He also transformed British film actor Peter Sellers into multiple roles in the 1964 comedy film "Dr. Strangelove." At the makeup department for Star Wars, Freeborn was responsible for the creation of the furry 7-foot-tall wookiee Chewbacca. He and his team also designed and built fan favorite creatures such as Greedo, Walrus Man, and Snaggletooth for the Mos Eisley Cantina sequence. But Freeborn is likely best remembered for his pivotal contribution during the development of the big-eared, big-brained little Yoda in the 1980 film "Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back." Irvin Kershner, the movie's director, said Freeborn quite literally put himself into Yoda, as the Jedi Master's inquisitive and mischievous elfin features had more than a passing resemblance to Freeborn himself. In the 1983 film "Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi", described as the definitive "monster movie" of the Star Wars trilogy, creature development was split between two teams. A British-based company led by Freeborn oversaw the development and fabrication of the massive Jabba the Hutt puppet as well as the creation of the Ewoks. Freeborn is survived by seven grandchildren and a number of great-grandchildren. His wife Kay passed away last year and his three sons - Graham, Roger and Ray - also died before him.

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