



AMUSEMENT PARK: Early photos of Ray Park as Toad in *X-Men* (TOP); Park, at right under blue hood, with director Tim Burton on the *Sleepy Hollow* set at Leavesden (BOTTOM).

Yes, but I didn't know how big the fan base and the conventions were until about six months before I came to Denver. I was like, "What's conventions?" I didn't know anything about that when we shot *Star Wars*. That was all new to me.

AS A STAR WARS FAN, WERE YOU ABLE TO LOOK AT EPISODE I AT ALL OBJECTIVELY? IN OTHER WORDS—WHAT DID YOU THINK OF IT?

I've seen it six times! The other night they were showing some program on different movies and how they do special effects, and we were sitting there going, "Wow!" Looking at the stuff they did on *Star Wars*, it's just unbelievable—how they did the special effects, and the Podracing. It all sets a limit, and if you watch other films that are not quite as good, you don't want to watch as much. But then you have to think not everyone's got ILM, and not everyone is George Lucas. I really enjoyed the movie.

BESIDES STAR WARS AND SLEEPY HOLLOW, WHAT OTHER MOVIES DID YOU LIKE IN 1999?

I really like *The Matrix*. I enjoyed that because of the way they did the digital photography, the freeze frames, and how they could turn it around. I really like how they did that. I would like to do something like that—not do stunts, but be a character. It doesn't have to be the lead character, just an important part.

"DARTH MAUL IS MORE INTELLIGENT. TOAD IS A BIT MORE SLIMY—CREEPY..."

WELL, THEY'RE MAKING MATRIX 2 AND 3, SO CALL YOUR AGENT. Are they? Perfect.

SO YOU DUG THE MATRIX—WHAT MUSIC DO YOU LISTEN TO?

All sorts, but when I work out, I listen to house or trance music, because it's got a good, repetitive beat. It depends what sort of training I'm doing—like weights, it takes out a lot of aggression. But I wouldn't say that's all I listen to. If you look through my CDs, I've got the Police, the Cranberries, the Cardigans, Jennifer Lopez—it depends on how I feel.

NO RAP? I'LL NEVER FORGET THE AHMED BEST CONCERT AT THE STAR WARS CELEBRATION, WHEN YOU FREESTYLE RAPPED!

That was just me mucking about. It was just a joke between me and my friends, being an MC. My brother is actually a lot better than me. I can't believe I did it in front of everyone! I haven't really rapped before. I'm not a rapper, and I can't sing to save my life. It was spontaneous, but I was on a high, a big buzz from everyone's reaction.

HAVE YOU HEARD ANY RUMORS ABOUT EPISODE II—LIKE THE ONE ABOUT A CLONED ARMY OF DARTH MAULS?

I don't hear rumors. I think it's wishful thinking. I really don't know. George knows how to do it. He won't just do anything. I'm sure the second one will be just as good as the first. But it would be nice to work on the second one.

SO YOU WOULD BE INTO WORKING ON EPISODE II, EVEN IF IT WAS SIMPLY HELPING TO CHOREOGRAPH THE STUNTS?

It would be nice, if there were more lightsaber battles and Nick was on it, and he wanted me to come and work for him. That would be nice.

BUT I GUESS DARTH MAUL IS GONE FOR GOOD.

Yeah, kaput.

THAT'S SAD NEWS TO MANY FANS. WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS ABOUT DARTH MAUL THAT PEOPLE RESPOND TO SO STRONGLY?

I don't know—I was asking someone from Lucasfilm the other day about that as well. I

think it's the way he moves, how he looks, the costume, the double-ended lightsaber—I don't know. It's hard because I played him. If I was to say it was because he was great at martial arts and great at the lightsaber duels, it would be me being big-headed, so I just sort of subtract myself from it and try to imagine if I didn't play the character, what would it be? But because I played the character, it's hard to think why people see that.

WHEN YOUR IMAGE WAS FIRST UNVEILED ON OUR COVER, WE WERE FLOODED WITH MAIL ALMOST IMMEDIATELY FROM PEOPLE WANTING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT MAUL. WAS THAT THE FIRST INTERVIEW YOU'D EVER DONE?

Yes! It was the first interview, so I was nervous about that as well. And things hadn't started happening yet, so it was exciting for me, because I did an interview and I had to send in pictures. I was looking in the magazine store every week waiting for the magazine to come out!

OTHER THAN LOOKING FOR THIS ISSUE, WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU AFTER X-MEN WRAPS?

I'm off to Thailand in February just for fun with my girlfriend and her family, and then I'm going to pop down to Malaysia and see my master to do a little of bit training. Then I'll come back and I'm sure the roller coaster ride for *X-Men* will start.

HAS YOUR WU SHU MASTER SEEN THE PHANTOM MENACE?

I think so. I know he's really proud of me now.

DO YOU THINK HE'LL CRITIQUE YOUR WORK AS DARTH MAUL?

He might. I look at it now, and I think, "Yeah, it was really good, but if I could do it now, I'd do it better." I'm always really critical of what I do. I look at certain moves, and I think, "I was a bit slow there."

SO YOU THINK YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO A BETTER JOB?

I don't know. I might spoil it going back and doing it differently. Maybe it was a fluke. Maybe the way I did it was just right. ☺