



Every saga has a beginning. And at the beginning of the *Star Wars* saga, the most terrifying man in the galaxy is Darth Maul. Ruthless, deadly and unrelentingly evil, Darth Maul spells trouble for both the Galactic Republic and the Jedi in *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace* and skilfully sets the scene for the exploits of his Sith Lord successor, Darth Vader.

The role of Darth Maul in Episode I marked Ray Park's hard-hitting acting debut. Prior to learning the secrets of the Sith, the Glasgow-born martial arts expert and Wu-Shu champion had only worked on one film, *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, as a stunt double. On the strength of his scene-stealing performance in Episode I, Park promptly found himself being courted by filmmakers across the globe and was swiftly cast in

the part of the evil mutant Toad in Bryan Singer's comic-strip blockbuster *X-Men*. The London-based actor is staying in the comic-strip arena for his next big screen offering, *Iron Fist*, which he is set to topline as the heroic martial arts master Danny Rand, aka the eponymous Iron Fist.

Jedi Journal quizzes Ray Park about his varied screen offerings, and learns how Darth Maul has really propelled his career forward...

Darth Maul has less than 10 minutes of screen time in *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace*, yet he is undoubtedly one of the film's most memorable characters. Have you been surprised by people's response to Darth Maul?

It's all been a complete surprise. I had no experience in anything like that. *Star Wars* was sort of my first acting job and the first time I've been part of a marketing campaign. So I didn't know what to expect. I was just like, 'Yeah, I can't wait for this movie to come out and see it.' I didn't know about all the other side to it.

But the response I've been getting from the fans and from the general public who've seen the film has been really amazing. A lot of people have told me that Darth Maul is actually the most memorable thing in the film.

What do you think is the secret of Darth Maul's appeal?

I honestly don't know. I'm not too sure.

When I think about it, I sort of ask myself what would have happened if it wasn't me playing the character, but someone else? Would the character have made less of an impact, or is Darth Maul's success all due to his place in the *Star Wars* phenomenon,