

✦ A documentary by **Carrie Jo Coaplen** ✦

# HALCYON DAZE

The Final Voyages of  
Disney's Star Wars Galactic  
Starcruiser

[www.halcyondaze.com](http://www.halcyondaze.com)



**STAR WARS**  
**GALACTIC**  
**STARCRUISER**

***Halcyon Daze: The Final Voyages of Disney's Star Wars Galactic Starcruiser***

follows one passenger's journey from casual interest to full on obsession with Disney's one of a kind, award winning, yet short-lived, interactive theater experience. The film immerses viewers in a universe of live-action adventure and colorful fantasy characters, as well as in the profound feelings shared by dedicated cast members and fixated fans. As the Starcruiser potentially docks forever, what will become of this innovative playground that brought superfans together?

# THE FILM

Halcyon Daze is a feature-length documentary tracing the ambitious launch, spectacular run, and crushing closure of Disneyworld's Star Wars Galactic Starcruiser. From the fan's eye view of director Carrie Coaplen's own immersive journey aboard the "luxury space liner" Halcyon, viewers will experience a unique attraction of dazzling scope, meeting its intensely passionate fan community and the incredible artists, cast and crew that brought it to life. The film will also feature experts such as interactive designer Ashlyn Sparrow, cosplay researcher Suzanne Scott, and a range of leaders in the immersive theatre and theme park industries.

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Halcyon Daze



When Disney first announced the Star Wars Galactic Starcruiser in 2017 critics balked at the steep price tag, dismissing it as a hotel without windows and mocking it for its overstuffed passenger itinerary. The immersive attraction finally launched in 2022 and within months Disney began lowering prices and offering promos as voyages failed to fill. For some the 2023 closure was a foregone conclusion, but this view ignores the fervid love and rich experiences of fans, as well as the broader cultural and industrial contexts.





Reviews from the Starcruiser's first media voyage called it "like living inside a video game" and praised its "immersion to the extreme." Passengers were swept up, creating a community of repeat cruisers, character fan clubs, and Facebook voyage groups. Whether or not the Galactic Starcruiser worked as a business, it clearly transformed casual Star Wars enthusiasts into full-on fanatics for the Halcyon.

# KEY QUESTIONS

Halcyon Daze approaches the Star Wars Galactic Starcruiser from three central questions:

- What exactly is the Galactic Starcruiser?
- Why did it resonate so strongly with some fans and cast?
- In what ways did it succeed and fail?

And, ultimately, what do the answers to these questions tell us about adult play spaces, fandom, human psychology, and the future of immersive attractions?

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# THEMES

**Fandom Communities**

**Rise of Immersive Experiences**

**The Themed Entertainment Industry**



Halcyon Daze

# FANDOM COMMUNITIES



Fandom groups have emerged as a hallmark of 21st-century pop culture. Enthusiasts of everything from NASCAR racing to Taylor Swift build communities, develop relationships, and create compelling and quirky subcultures. Many people find their social identity in fandom. In the words of author Michael Bond: "They give us companionship, purpose and a sense of security, and allow us to do things we wouldn't do on our own. Fandoms are social groups like any other. They connect us with people who share our interests, and they give us the courage to follow our convictions." The colorful, creative group of people active in the Starcruiser fandom demonstrate this point perfectly.



# RISE OF IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

The recent era of popular culture has brought a burgeoning number of interactive and immersive experiences driven by new technologies and the social landscape of post-internet culture: MMOGs (massively multiplayer online games,) Meow Wolf's psychedelic art experiences, the free-form exploratorium of St. Louis' City Museum, groundbreaking interactive theater piece *Sleep No More*, and Netflix's experiment in choose-your-own-adventure streaming cinema *Black Mirror* "Bandersnatch," to name a few. Disney's Star Wars Galactic Starcruiser brings together elements in common with all of these, and also adds numerous interactive tricks of its own, making it easily the most ambitious creation (in terms of scale and complexity) within this rising pop culture field.





# THE THEMED ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

The themed entertainment industry is big business -- and growing. The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) boasts 1200 companies spread across 40 countries among its members. But, even as millions of people participate in themed attractions each year, the industry is characterized by boom and bust cycles and often surprisingly thin margins.

Features that made Starcruiser innovative (and award winning) also made it expensive and hard to sustain. The initial build cost an estimated \$400 million, and an unusually high number of cast were professional actors and musicians, which elevated operating costs. The project's delayed launch, short run, and eventual closure highlight real tensions in themed entertainment as business.

# ARCHIVES & INTERVIEWS

We have extensive documentation of the Starcruiser from fan perspectives, including videos, photographs, and forum posts and have comprehensively reviewed media coverage of Starcruiser beginning from the project announcement and continuing through present. In addition, we have connected with a number of key community figures, including founders of the Heroes of the Halcyon podcast, the organizer of the Together as One 5k, and multiple repeat voyagers. We have interviewed or have scheduled interviews with 20 diverse experts including game designers, social scientists, business leaders, immersive theatre professionals, travel agents, journalists, and Star Wars superfans.



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# TONĒ & STYLĒ

Our approach to capturing the Galactic Starcruiser is based both in fandom and in critical consideration. Starcruiser is easy to love, and easy to make fun of, yet very hard to actually understand unless you've been there. Halcyon Daze takes fans and their experiences seriously and puts them in conversation with recognized industry and academic experts. A first person viewpoint will guide viewers through the immersive journey aboard the Halcyon, providing a framework for elaboration, critique, and narrative investment in the fate of the Star Wars Galactic Starcruiser. Comparable documentaries include King of Kong, Darkon, The Pez Outlaw, Bathtubs Over Broadway, The Barkley Marathons, and Crip Camp.

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# INTERVIEWEES

- Dan Amrich & Katrin Auch: Starcruiser fans, cosplayers, and Dan co-wrote “Princess Leia’s Stolen Death Star Plans,” an album-length parody of Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band
- Brooke Geiger McDonald: Travel journalist and Starcruiser fan
- Sara Maciel: Travel agent specializing in Starcruiser and Star Wars events, co-founder of Galactic Bound
- Suzanne Scott: Associate Professor, UT-Austin and editor of the *Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* and *Sartorial Fandom*
- Kristine Smith & Martin Smith: Producers of the *Heroes of the Halcyon* podcast and starcruiser fans
- Ashlyn Sparrow: Award-winning immersive experience designer
- Evan Torner: Associate Professor, University of Cincinnati and co-founder of the Playable Theatre Symposium

# OUR TEAM

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## Carrie Coaplen

### Director/Producer



Dr. Coaplen is a native Louisvillian, and an experienced academic and creative writer who has earned three academic degrees: English BA, University of Louisville; Creative Writing MFA, George Mason University; Rhetoric and Composition, PhD, University of Louisville. She holds expertise in nonfiction narratives and researched composition with over twenty years of experience as an academic, writer, instructional designer, coordinator of online learning, facilitator, project manager, faculty developer, and dual credit college teacher. Her CV, including publications, appointments, honors, awards, and achievements, [can be viewed here](#).

## Carly Kocurek

### Producer/Lead Researcher



Carly Kocurek researches games and play and has more than 15 years of experience as an interviewer. She has published two books, *Coin-Operated Americans* (Minnesota, 2015) and *Brenda Laurel* (Bloomsbury, 2017). While serving as Professor of Digital Humanities and Media Studies at Illinois Tech, she also serves on the research, interpretation, and education board of the Strong Museum of Play. She's an award-winning game designer and has appeared as an on-screen expert for *Insert Coin* (2020) and *The Toys That Built America* (The History Channel).

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# OUR TEAM



## Ben Daughtrey

### Executive Producer

Mr. Daughtrey is a multi-talented show business veteran whose accomplishments include producing and editing Official Sundance Selection feature film 100 Proof, three Emmy nominations for editing (PBS documentary If I Can't Do It, the 2002 Academy Awards, and Extreme Makeover- Home Edition), producing, directing and editing a series of post-Katrina documentaries for Arnold Advertising and Southern Comfort entitled New Orleans Stories, and serving as executive producer on the docu-series Bordertown Laredo for the A&E Network, and Breaking Point for Discovery I.D. The Wild and Wonderful Whites of West Virginia, a 2009 film Daughtrey edited, was an official selection at multiple film festivals including Tribeca and the L.A. Film Fest. It is now widely viewed on Showtime, Netflix and other media outlets. Most recently he edited the documentary film Scandalous for CNN and Magnolia Pictures, and Telemarketers for HBO, Elra, and Roughhouse Pictures. [Ben's IMDB page](#)



## Kenzie Greer

### Director of Photography/Editor

Kenzie is a documentary filmmaker based in Louisville, KY who graduated from University of Alabama with a degree in anthropology and filmmaking. She has been involved in more than 30+ films, and participated in multiple film fellowships. Kenzie was awarded the 2018 Undergraduate Media Studies Student Award and worked with the National Holocaust Museum, HGTV, Hallmark, GE Appliances, and a multitude of non-profits. Professionally Ms. Greer is known for her cinematography on [Autophagia](#) and [Alex](#). [Kenzie's IMDB page.](#)



## Jonathan Hawpe

### Producer/Writer

Jonathan is a writer/artist and long time book and music retail worker who also multi-tasks on film productions for [Everything Cinema Productions](#). He's worked in the film and music industries in Los Angeles, writing screenplay coverage and producing music licensing pitches. Jonathan has also published film reviews, cultural criticism, and satirical cartoons, as well as done developmental editing for novel manuscripts, and various illustration/design projects. [Writing site](#) -- [Art site](#)

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