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C-3PO actor at center stage for Germain 'Star Wars' show

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Anthony Daniels knows the sadness of a toaster and the loneliness of a car stereo.

That's why he often stops and says "hello."

The actor - best known as prissy protocol droid C-3PO in all six "Star Wars" movies - says he often chats up his car, his microwave and all the other machines in his life.

It's not as weird as it sounds, he insists.

"I think a lot of people speak to their computer - not always in the nicest way," says Daniels, 64, of London. "I say good night to the burglar alarm.

"Why not? It amuses me."

He laughs.

"Maybe I'm just going a little crazy," he says.

Or maybe he's spent so much time portraying a machine, he's learned to identify with other machines.

"I must say, playing Threepio has literally changed my attitude," he says (and in his proper British voice, you can hear just a hint of uptight, fussy C-3PO). "I know how it feels to be a machine, because people often forgot I was in that suit (on the set of the "Star Wars" movies). And they would ignore me, because I was an object.

"So I kind of know how lonely it is."

Daniels won't be lonely Thursday when he steps onstage to a Germain Arena audience full of adoring "Star Wars" fans.

And he won't be hidden anymore behind that golden C-3PO costume. Instead, Daniels plans to look dapper in a black tuxedo.

The actor narrates "Star Wars: In Concert," a new show featuring movie footage, a traveling museum of "Star Wars" props and memorabilia, and a full orchestra playing John Williams' sweeping movie scores.

"It's nice to show my face finally," Daniels says. "It's my chance to shine, now that Threepio's shone all these years.

"I'm onstage, and I look like an action figure in a big arena. I'm tiny. But on the screen, my face is 60-feet

Event features giant screen, movies' music

across. So you'll never, ever forget what I look like."

Daniels co-wrote the script and does many dramatic voices throughout the show - including a certain protocol droid.

"There are moments where Threepio, shall we say, gives himself center stage," he says. "And although I'm not wearing the gold suit, there are moments, of course, when" - and here he switches to the droid's proper-and-precise voice - "C-3PO, human-cyborg relations, comes almost alive. Oh!"

Daniels has portrayed C-3PO since the original "Star Wars" debuted in 1977 - he's the only actor to appear in all six movies - but he says he's never really understood the story until now. Admittedly, he's never been a fan of science fiction, anyway.

"Finally, I get it," he says. "Basically, it's the story of a little boy who grows up to be bad, has some kids who defeat him, redeem him, and then the galaxy goes back to being good again. That's Star Wars in 10 seconds.

"In the movies, that's six or seven hours of film. It gets complicated with lots of characters. So in our show, we neaten it up."

The concert offers a new way to look at the beloved George Lucas movies. Especially because the footage will be shown on a three-story-tall, 300-foot-wide digital screen.

Daniels will be joined onstage by a full symphony orchestra and chorus. That includes 60 members of the Fort Myers Mastersingers, who will sing two rousing songs from the latest "Star Wars" trilogy: "The Battle of the Heroes" and "The Duel of the Fates" (which includes lyrics from a Welsh poem translated into Sanskrit).

That's a new one for the Mastersingers, says bass singer and president Jim George.

"We've performed music in Italian, French and German," he says. "And now Sanskrit.

"Most people just think it's wookiee-speak, but no, it's Sanskrit."

Mastersingers conductor Jeff Faux says he's a longtime "Star Wars" fan who's thrilled to share the stage with C-3PO.

"I have two teenaged boys," he says. "I grew up with 'Star Wars,' and now they're growing up with it, too.

"When this concert first came around, they thought I was the coolest dad in the world."

That's why Daniels loves going to these concerts: The fans and their love for "Star Wars."

Daniels says he's proud of his work as C-3PO - whether or not people know there's an actual human being under there.

"People get a great buzz out of realizing that it is me, it is my voice," he says. "And now, I think, they sort of get to say thank you. Which makes them happy, and certainly makes me happy."

Another thing that makes Daniels happy: Kindness to machines.

If people learn anything from him, Daniels hopes they learn to love their burglar alarms and their iPods.

After all, there just may be a lonely person inside.

So go ahead and compliment your television, or ask your blender how its day went.

And always remember this, he adds: "Be nice to your appliances!"

Additional Facts

If You Go

What: "Star Wars in Concert," featuring C-3PO actor Anthony Daniels

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Germain Arena, 1000 Everblades Parkway, Estero

Cost: \$33-73

Info: Call 334-3309, go to ticketmaster.com or visit local Ticketmaster outlets.

His clothing during "Star Wars in Concert," and the traveling mini-museum of "Star Wars" memorabilia accompanying the show.

"I'm in a regular suit. It's not a golden suit. That'll disappoint some people - but the costume is there in the exhibition outside.

"So you can actually go and look at it and take pictures and marvel that some bloke was willing to wear that on and off for 33 years."

Performing as a comedy duo with R2-D2 (played by Kenny Baker in the original trilogy, but replaced by computer-generated imagery in the new trilogy).

"It was tough because I was the only one there, you know, speaking to myself all the way through, improvising with a box. And all the sounds are put on later."

Even in the original series, Baker didn't make any noises.

"It wasn't until (sound designer) Ben Burtt put all those sounds on it that it became a double act. And I'm pretty proud of that."

How portraying C-3PO makes him tense and anxious.

"I just kind of wish I'd thought of another voice because" - and here he takes on C-3PO's precise diction - "it is very tense around the stomach area and the small of my back, to make him as upright and correct as he is. Oh my!"

Then he returns to his normal British accent.

"So there you are."

The most popular characters - and objects - in "Star Wars in Concert."

"Generally, curiously, the Millennium Falcon (Han Solo's spaceship) and Yoda get the biggest of reaction. And one is a machine, and the other is this little green thing."

As for fan-favorite Boba Fett, Daniels doesn't quite get it.

"He's really useless. He doesn't speak. He can't shoot straight. And then he bumps into the furniture and dies."
