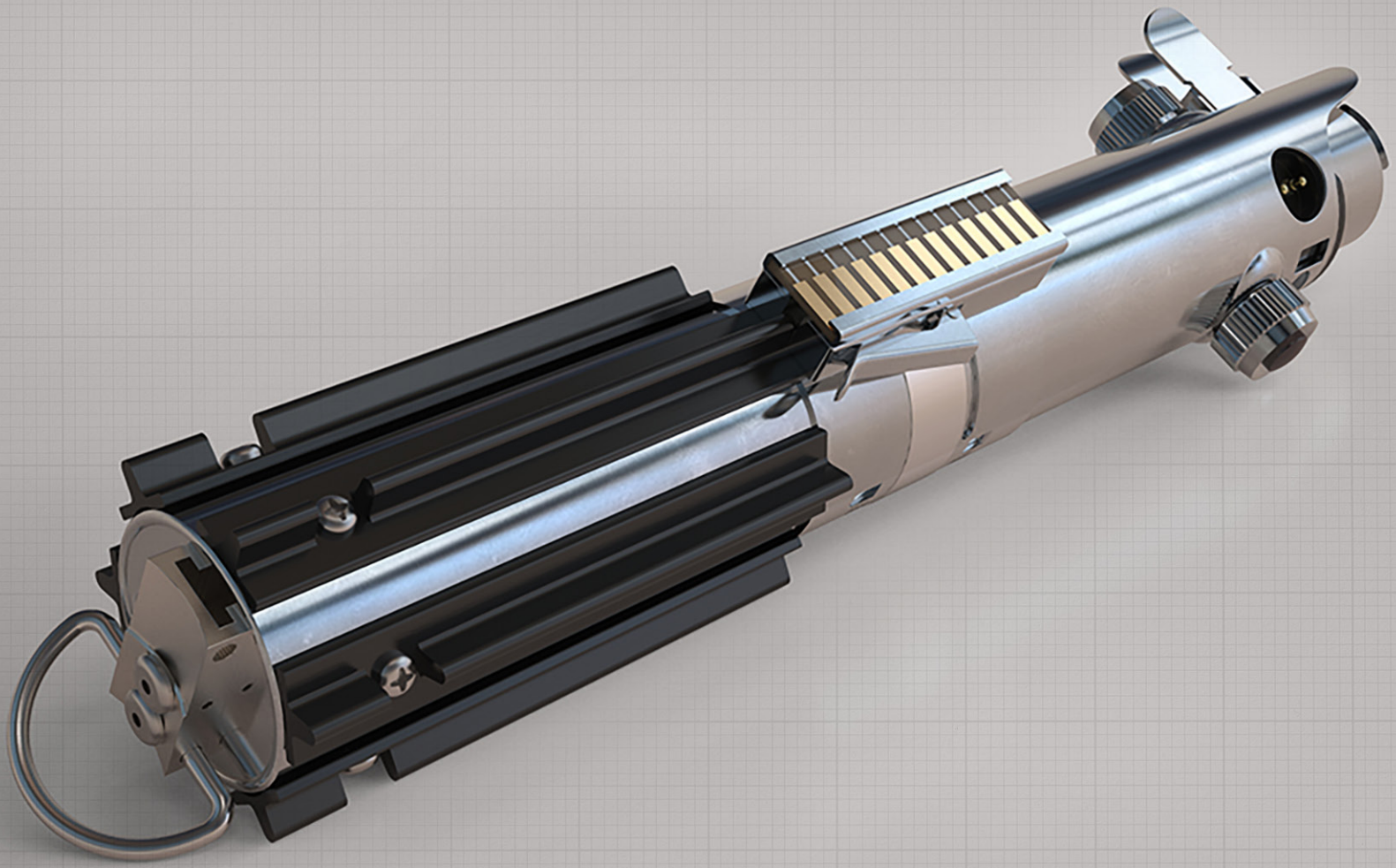

STAR WARS

THE LIGHTSABER PROP GUIDEBOOK

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to identify all the known lightsaber props, explain their reason for being, reveal their origin, and delve into their individual parts and construction for your own reproduction purposes.

This is NOT an in-universe guide to lightsabers. There will be no talk of clan-sabers, blade colors, kiber crystals, Jedi trials, lightsaber combat forms, character bios, or anything like that.

There are sections dedicated to the Prequel trilogy lightsabers, as well as the Sequel trilogy lightsabers. The prequel trilogy lightsabers don't have a very confusing lineage. They were designed and built in-house from scratch. There is no scavenger hunt needed for real-world parts.

Similarly, the sequel trilogy (Graflex aside) seems to be headed down the same road of in-house fabrication as evidenced by some unused designs and Kylo Ren's saber. The days of using photo gear and military scrap are sadly gone.

So while those sabers are documented here, the vast majority of this book covers the Original trilogy sabers as they were crafted from found real-world items.

Narratively speaking, the OT presents us with only FOUR actual lightsabers: The Skywalker lightsaber, Darth Vader's lightsaber, Obi-Wan Kenobi's lightsaber, and Luke Skywalker's Jedi lightsaber. Between those four in-story lightsabers, there are over 40 individual variants.

How does that happen? Because there are two important details to always consider when examining props. These two things are very important to keep in mind, as it explains why examining these props and presenting evidence as to how they were made is an organic, and on-going process for prop fans.

First, on set, the goal is always to be fast and cheap. A prop enthusiast will spend top dollar and put in hours of work to make a lovingly recreated piece, but on an actual production, things are often banged together with whatever is available. Minor fixes were often made along the way, and never intended to be seen— especially during the time of the OT when they had no idea that us common folk would one day be able to pause a film in HD to look at details.

Second, everything is made in multiples. Props break, they get misplaced, they might be needed in two different locations, they might get taken by some angry producer and sold later at auction for $240k. The point is— every single prop likely has a twin, if not a triplet. Add this to rule one, and you have twins that are fraternal, not identical.

Sometimes props meant to be replicas for the same usage may have their own minor differences. Whenever one of these shows up somewhere, it throws the prop community into chaos trying to place where it may have been used. There are even some instances of props being made AFTER production has ended for promotional usage.

This guide is my best attempt to cover most of these sabers, hopefully to cut down all the "HEY IS THIS A REAL GRAFLEX?" posts on the RPF and FB lightsaber groups.

To that, everything in this book is based on actual photographic proof, or the words of people who have physically handled the props.

Lastly, please read the acknowledgments page at the end of this guide. I am merely organizing the hard work and research of dozens of people whom deserve all the real credit.

GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS

Star Wars has a lexicon all its own-- as do both Hollywood and the prop community. As such, talking about lightsabers involves a vernacular that is a combination of all three which can be confusing to newcomers. As a result, there are some specific terms used when discussing lightsaber props:

Belthanger: a hero saber worn on a character's belt.

Bladed Stunt: a saber prop rigged with a "blade" for use in the duel scenes that will be rotoscoped in post; also called a "duel stunt."

Bubbles: an LED magnification strip, found in pre-LCD calculators; a bubble strip is used in some lightsaber designs

Clamp Card: A trimmed strip of a circuit board slid inside the clamp box on some models of lightsaber.

Control Box: (activation box, clamp box) a lightsaber's boxy control surface, made standard by all three ANH sabers using camera mounting clamps in their design.

Electronic Stunt: Used in the Sequel trilogy-- these stunt sabers are light-up dueling sabers with softer dummy features for the handles.

Emitter: An in-world lightsaber part, where the blade is projected from.

Found-part: a piece of a prop that was recycled from a real-world object. Most of the OT props were a collection of found-parts.

"Gag" Stunt: A gag is SFX talk for a practical on-set, in-camera effect. Star Wars makes use of the "hand gag" during lightsabers duels whens somebody loses a hand.

Greeblies: a word coined by George Lucas, referring to the extra rough and sometimes random bits and pieces added to models and props in an effort to defy the "smooth" aesthetics of sci-fi at the time ANH was made; greeblies are the root of the "used universe" that helped define Star Wars.

Hero: the version of any prop that is meant for close-up shots. It looks functional and detailed, and in some cases may have working parts, lights, etc.

Knurling: a hatched pattern added to an object to create a tactile edge or surface, very common to metal knobs.

PCB: printed circuit board; a very common component in pretty much any electronic device. Several lightsabers make use of cut section of the edge connector portion.

Pommel: sword terminology, the butt end of a saber.

Resin Stunt: most all of the "soft" sabers used in filming the saga were made of resin; these were used as belt hangers when the actors or stunt-persons must jump or fall, and ideally when the sabers were dropped or thrown (but that's not always the practice).

Scratch-made: a piece, or in some cases, an entire prop, made from scratch via a variety of machining processes; classic methods include various types of mold-making, lathing, cnc'ing, milling, and casting; modern advancements added 3D printing to the mix.

Shared-Stunt: An older term applied to three specific stunt sabers that served double duty. The Luke/Vader stunt saber from ANH, and the two Obi-Wan ANH / Luke ROTJ stunt sabers that have become more commonly known as the V2 and V3.

Short-bladed Stunt: a stunt with a much shorter blade. This is used in instances where the saber was being used in action with other performers, but not during a duel.

Shroud: technically a part of the MPP camera flash, it has become short-hand for the top piece of Vader's lightsaber.

Stunt: a version of a prop meant for less discerning views, usually in conjunction with some form of action where the prop may be damaged or must be made "safe" for whatever is happening on camera. Usually stunt items are made of rubber, wood, or resin.

LIST OF COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

BTS: Behind the scenes

ANH: A New Hope

ESB: Empire Strikes Back

ROTJ: Return of the Jedi

TPM: The Phantom Menace

AOTC: Attack of the Clones

ROTS: Revenge of the Sith

TFA: The Force Awakens

R1: Rogue One

TLJ: The Last Jedi

OT: Original Trilogy

PT: Prequel Trilogy

ST: Sequel Trilogy

ISYHCANL: "I see you have constructed a new lightsaber"

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER

Fan build and photo by RPF member Matty Matt

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER OVERVIEW

There's no question that the Skywalker lightsaber is one of the most iconic props in cinema.

Often referred to as "The Graflex" (named for the real world item it was based on), this lightsaber is the one that most frequently captures the imagination while driving eBay auctions into the stratosphere.

ANH

Created by to Roger Christian, production designer and set decorator for ANH, this is the lightsaber given to Luke, having once belonged to his father.

Christian has gone on record saying that they struggled to find a lightsaber handle that felt unique and other-worldly. The simple cylindrical designs by Ralph McQuarrie didn't feel right. Lucas was ultimately pleased when he was presented with what became the on-screen hero.

While Christian has said "several" Graflexes were acquired, it seems likely there was only one true hero, with the others serving as a source for back up parts and stunt saber details. The hero has a serial number stamped into the clamp rails. The only detail that changes from scene to scene is the position of the clamp, (see next page.)

ESB

Looking to recreate Luke's lightsaber, the production team for Empire Strikes Back returned to the well and used the same kind of parts as ANH, with some minor variations. Some changes seem to be geared toward idealizing the prop to look less like an Earth-object, while others were made for pragmatic reasons.

Like the original, the basis of this saber is the Graflex camera flash. It would seem as if production had several Graflex parts to work with for both belt-hangers and stunt work.

Despite that, their supply was not unlimited. It would seem as if parts were swapped and repairs were made in the harsh environments that the props were subjected to-- be it freezing cold, or submerged in a faux swamp. This happened throughout production making it very hard to track specific versions as pieces of both heroes and stunts were frequently swapped.

Entries follow for each of the three key locations of the film, where the appearance of the saber has noted changes. While there's no concrete proof, it would seem, over all, there are at least two primary hero sabers in ESB, likely three:

One seen on Hoth, briefly on Dagobah, and on Bespin.

A second seen for most of the Dagobah scenes.

A third in use on Hoth, with a minor shift in detail, but this is inconclusive, (see individual entries for clarity).

TFA

While the sequel trilogy team seems to be scratch-building their original lightsabers, the key story point involving the Skywalker lightsaber was thankfully driven home by using actual Graflexes.

The end result turns out to be a hybrid of details from the ANH and ESB versions combined into one. There are two distinct hero versions in the film, with only minor differences.

TLJ

While the Last Jedi is commendable for not creating yet more variations of the Graflex. The hero appears mostly identical to how it is in TFA, but the hero is not always used when it should be.

With an all new set of stunt sabers, with many variations, that were not roto-ed out or replaced in the final cut, there are many very obvious shots of the saber in TLJ that showcase the dubious designs of the stunt sabers.

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - HERO *(aka The Graflex / Luke ANH)*

The Graflex is a vintage camera flash, a 3 cell unit, meant to be mounted on the side of a 4x5 view camera, (see page 67 for details on The Graflex).

Standard features of the flash that remained as part of the prop include:

- A red trigger button on the back side
- The "bunny ear" bulb holder
- A power slide switch
- The "glass eye" preview lamp on the front side
- The "beer tab" bracket that is pinned to the back to keep the button from falling off when unscrewed
- A central box clamp used to hold its two halves together

The clamp tends to change orientation between scenes shot in the UK, scenes shot in the U.S., and promotional photo-shoots. Promo shots have the clamp at three o'clock. The most common seen orientation onscreen is with the clamp at the nine o'clock position when looking down the saber from the bottom, bunny ears set at twelve.

The endcap is obscured, so it is unknown which Graflex model is used. The glass eye lamp shape suggests an early Folmer brand version, (see page 67).

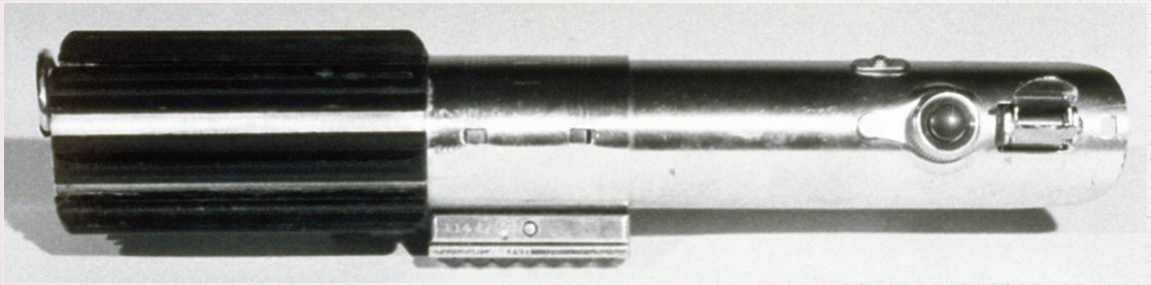
Parts added to complete the prop include:

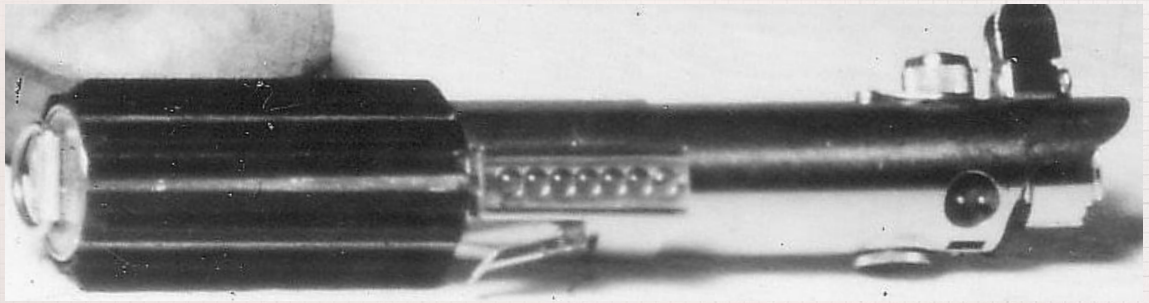
- A generic d-ring to the bottom (with a single rivet or screw)
- A magnification bubble strip from a Texas Instrument Ex-actra 19 or 20 LED calculator, slid into the central clamp
- Seven "T-Track" strips used for a grip, 3 5/8" long, with their ends tapered at roughly a 30 degree angle

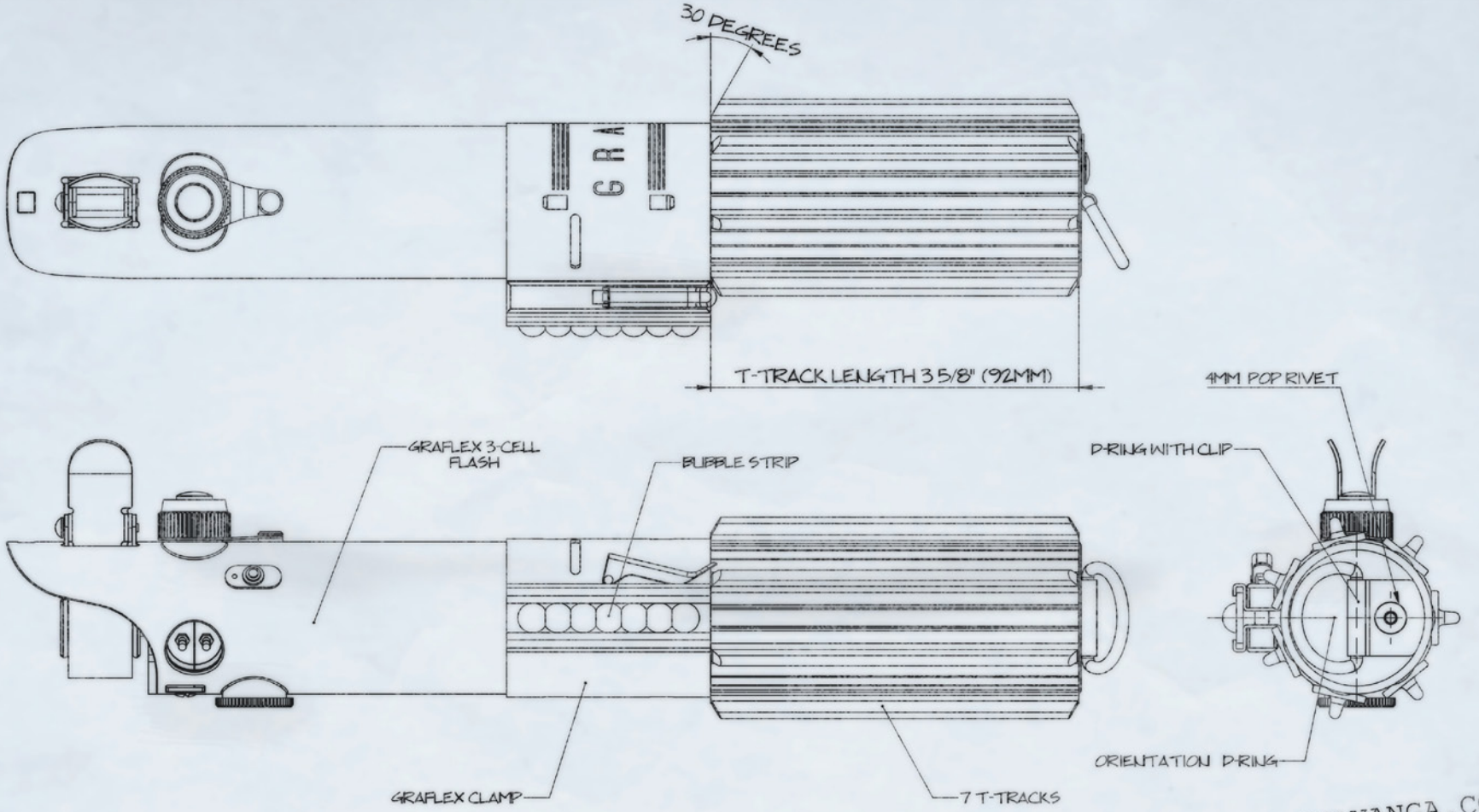
The T-Track material is kitchen guide-runner, most commonly used for cabinet door slide-tracks, or drawer rails in the 70s. While seemingly ubiquitous at the time, to date, no one has found an exact match in terms of size, profile, and color. The profile and height of the T-fin is also debated as it seems to change through various appearances, possibly due to variances of manufactures or sizes of the actual product used on different props.

The T-Track has been said to be hard plastic, rubber, and metal depending on the source. Hard plastic holds favor.

Christian has implied that chrome tape was used to cover the entire clamp band. While there is some evidence on other props that use a clamp that this may have happened, no screen-used of this saber indicates this was done.







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THE STAR WARS										E76/1
SET LUKE ANH LIGHTSABER										SET. Nº
DETAILS										SCALE 1:1
DRAWN R.G.	Carps		Metal	X	Conct		X			DRG. Nº
	Paint		SFX							542
DATE 25-6-76	Plaster									

Blueprint by Roy Gilsing | wannawanga.com

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - BLADED STUNT
(aka Luke/Vader Shared Stunt)

Many different effects were tried to get the iconic glowing blade of a lightsaber. For the filming of ANH the effect was initially going to be practical. This would be achieved by the dueling rod being coated in reflective movie screen material, and set into a small motor that would spin the rod. With the right application of light, this made the rod seem as though it was filled with flickering light.

Building a rig with this in mind, a simple tube was cut in the rough shape of a Graflex with the motor assembly inside. It was given a button knob from an older style Graflex (identified by a strip of knurling instead of the usual full knurling), a glass eye, grips, and a clamp to resemble the Graflex, but no bunny ears.

The motor was powered by an external battery and in some scenes, notably when Luke first ignites it, the cables to the battery can be seen in his sleeve. This would power a solid central core to rotate inside the hilt. The blades were then mounted inside this core.

NOTE: This stunt unit played double duty, serving also as Vader's stunt saber after a quick paint-job. It is sometimes referred to as the "Luke/Vader Shared Stunt." (see page 28)

It is also seen, sans motor, in behind the scenes images for both ESB and ROTJ as a rehearsal saber with flat grips.

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - HERO *(Hoth)*

While each of the three key locations in ESB show various differences to the prop, the idealized version is much the same as the ANH prop with the following changes:

• The glass eye has been replaced by a second button.

• The bubblestrip has been replaced by a trimmed strip of a PCB edge connector from a circuit board suspected to be a HP-44 Bus Type or an Otis Elevator board with thin silver traces and wide gold leads; the wide gold leads point toward the clamp lever.

• The "beer tab" has been removed.

• A 1/2" strip of mylar/chrome tape surrounds the clamp, covering the Graflex logo.

• A belt-hanger assembly that is made from a clip off a flashgun known as the Kobold with a D-Ring; the assembly is attached to the bottom using two rivets.

• A small screw in the clamp slot MAY be present-- this is actually an original feature of the Graflex.

• Six "T-Track" grips, the ends are NOT angled. The grips are also notched near the bottom to make room for small pan-head screws to keep the grips in place.

NOTE: For at least a decade there has been a debate of whether these are screws or rivets. (See page 65 for more detail.)

Long-standing rumor has it, the extreme cold caused the glue holding the t-track in place give up the ghost. Early promo images from the Norway shoot show Luke with a saber that has no grips at all (see appendix), as well as shots of the saber with grips as they appeared in ANH. In any exterior scene or image shot in Norway, the screws are silver (which in standard definition, indeed resemble rivets).

Any interior scenes on Hoth however, which were shot at Elstree studios, the screws were black (as they are in every other location in the film.)

We can assume that once they got to studio lighting situations, they didn't want the screws to be as obvious, so they were colored or replaced with black screws.

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - HERO *(Dagobah)*

Once Luke reaches Dagobah the saber is noticeably different. Perhaps it is prop failure due to the change in location, or environment, or simply a mistake on the part of the prop-master. While mostly the same as the Hoth version, there is one minor difference:

• Tiny screws have been added to the top of the grips, to the right of the T-Track fin.

Between the cold of Norway, and the humidity of the Dagobah set (not to mention Luke actually being fully submerged with a saber) grips staying on continued to be an issue. These screws were likely added to alleviate this problem. It is possible these screws were in place on Hoth and Bespin, and not seen, but most assume they were just used on Dagobah.

There is another difference to the saber in some shots:

• The original hole for the red button is empty, (the second red button remains in the lamp socket).

It has been determined that the lower half of the saber that is missing the button is the same lower half used as part of the "Ranch Saber" (see page 58).

This missing button is not the case in every scene. Notably, in production stills, when Luke enters the cave, the saber can be seen with two buttons, as on Hoth and Bespin.

The photo center-bottom shows a belt-hanger with two buttons on Dagobah, and also features an upper body Allen-head socket, indicating it was also a bladed-stunt.

While this raises the count to three belt-hangers on Dagobah, for the sake of clarity, the version missing a button is generally referred to as the Dagobah saber as it is the one that appears most onscreen.

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - HERO *(Bespin)*

Upon arrival at Bespin we are treated with one of the most clear images of the lightsaber in the film.

Most consider the “R2 bump” image to be the key image in determining the most idealized version of a belt-hanger hero for ESB.

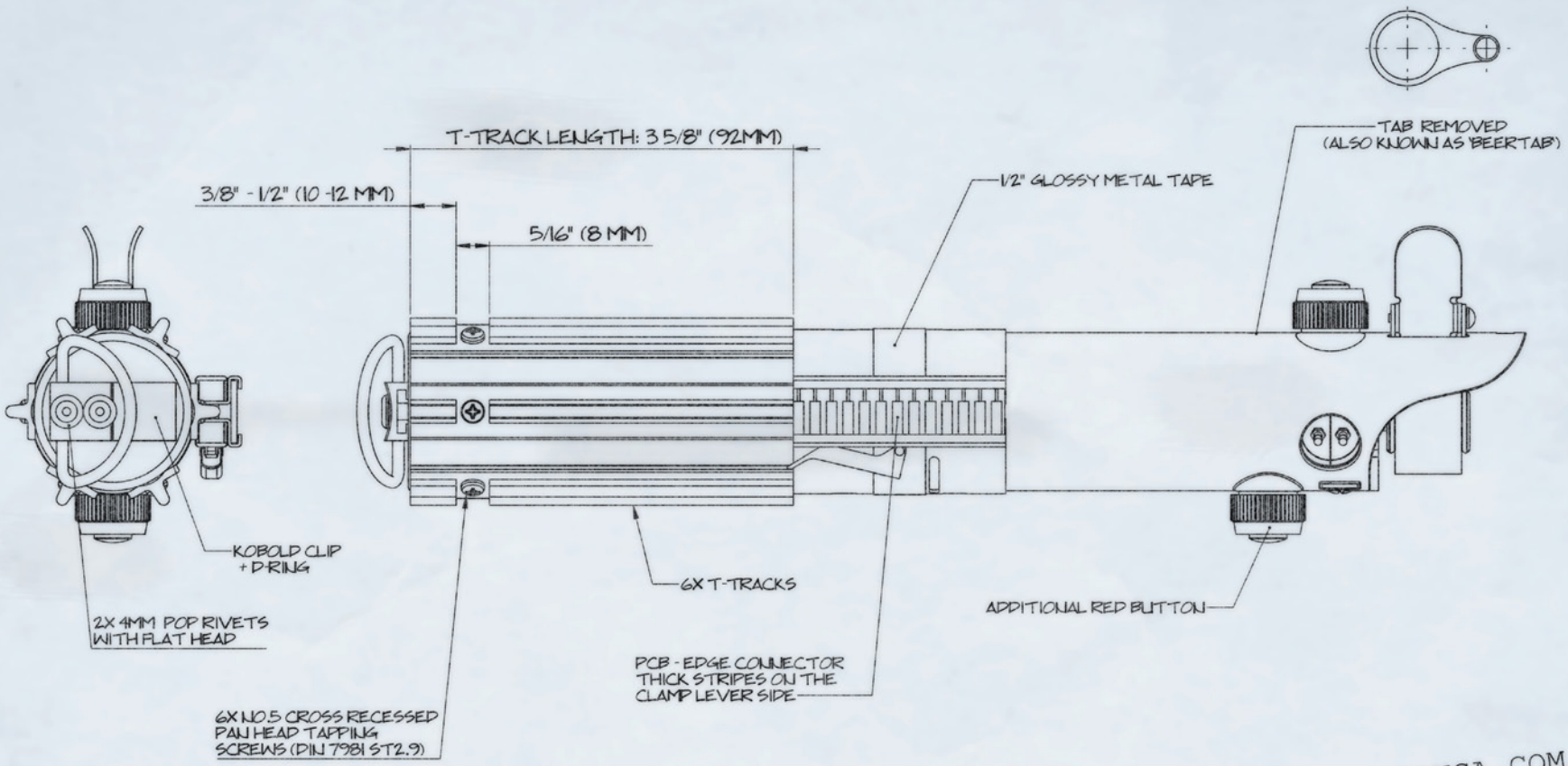
All the key details as seen on Hoth are here, the grip screws are clearly visible, and completely black.

It is not clear if the tiny upper screws are on the grips or not. While the official word from JW Rinzler’s Making of The Empire Strikes Back book indicates Dagobah was shot last, others who have seen call sheets say otherwise. The screws were added for Dagobah, so depending on the shooting order, they may or may not be present in Bespin scenes.

This is also the most clear image of what appears to be a small black clamp screw, though it could also simply be that the hole for the clamp screw is corroded black.

This saber was also used for the official promo images, where a damaged grip can be seen in some instances.

The Bespin version is considered the most idealized version of the prop as most all the pieces are in place, and tends to be the one used for replicas and representation in other media.



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STAR WARS 'EPISODE II' THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

PROD. Nº E76/1

SET. Nº

DETAILS — LUKE'S LASER SWORD HERO PROP

SCALE 1:1

DRAWN R.G.	Carps		Metal	X	Conct		X	DRG. Nº
DATE 23-1-79	Paint		SFX					543
	Plaster							

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THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - BLADED STUNTS

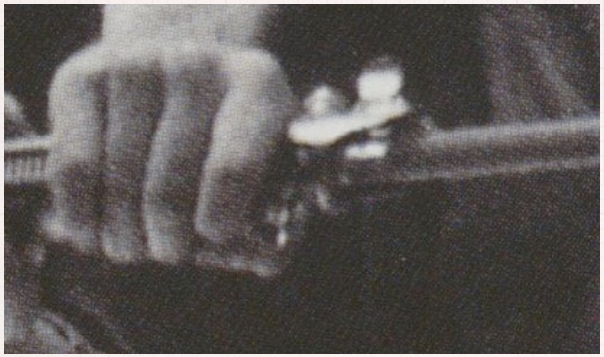
When ANH was in post, the lightsaber effect we have come to know was added via rotoscoping. Given that this only needed the guide of the dueling rod, the on-set use of the motorized spinning blade gag was dropped. As the guts of a Graflex are easily removed, their bodies could be adapted for stunt work.

Again, with the hot-swapping of parts in ESB, it's impossible to say whether there are multiple bladed stunts, or just one that was tweaked along the way, though the latter is most likely.

Details that can be made out: on Dagobah, with bunny ears intact; another wrapped with Gaffer's tape; one on Bespin missing the ears, also with a black clamp band and flattened grips; and one on Bespin with a Graflex clamp.

One detail that suggests the same stunt was modified and used throughout-- the Dagobah shot upper left, and the Bespin one lower left both have the old-style thin-knurled strip button under the bunny ears.

There are several details that indicated that this stunt saber was recycled for ROTJ as Vader's stunt/faux hero (aka the MoM) lightsaber, (see page 32).



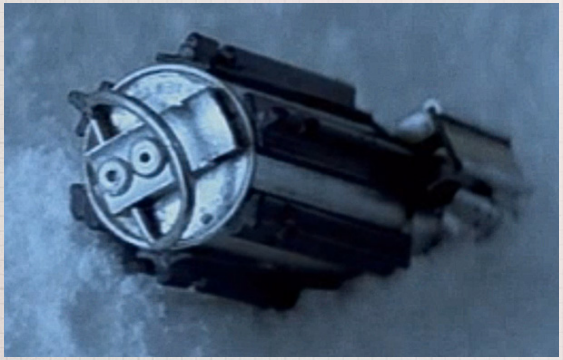
THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - SHORT BLADED STUNT

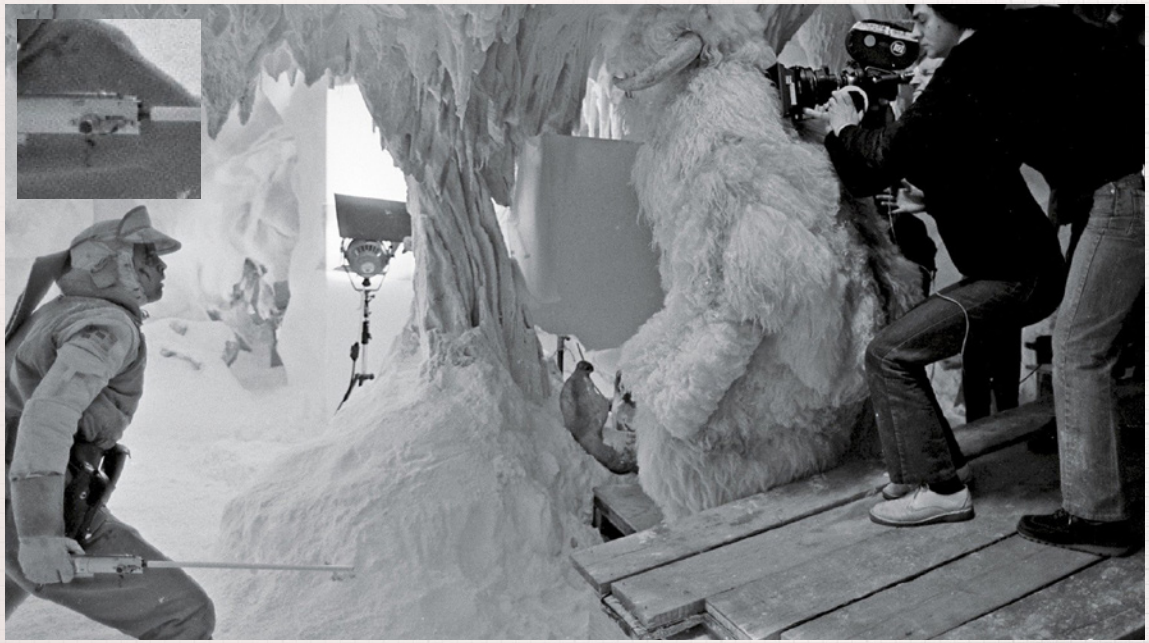
For use in scenes where the saber was active, but not engaged in a duel, (against the Wampa and in cut scenes of Luke saber-training with Yoda for example), a shorter blade would be used for the safety of the other performers and camera crew.

Like to the R2 Bump photo, the close up "Wampa Cave" image has been one that many details have been derived from. While the fact that this saber has only recently been revealed to be a stunt may technically disqualify it from determining hero details, given that the stunt sabers were also using Graflex as a base, many of the same details were added, making it still a valuable reference.

Thanks to the Wampa cave stunt, we know at least some of the models used were stamped as "The Folmer Graflex Corp." (see page 67 for Graflex flashgun specifics)

These bladed stunts also appear to be the only ESB sabers with the beer tab intact. It's been theorized that the short-blades were simply clipped into the bunny ears, making these stunts easy to swap out for belt-hangers (which accounts for some matching grips between props).





THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - STUNT *(Severed Hand)*

Rigged specifically for when Luke loses his hand, this is a Graflex upper body mounted on a Kobold flash with its knurling machined away, which is then mounted inside a fake hand. Given there was a fall and squibs involved, these were most likely made from spare parts in the shop. The Bunny ears, second button (or lamp), d-ring assembly, and clamp are all absent.

Other parts include:

- Intact Beer tab

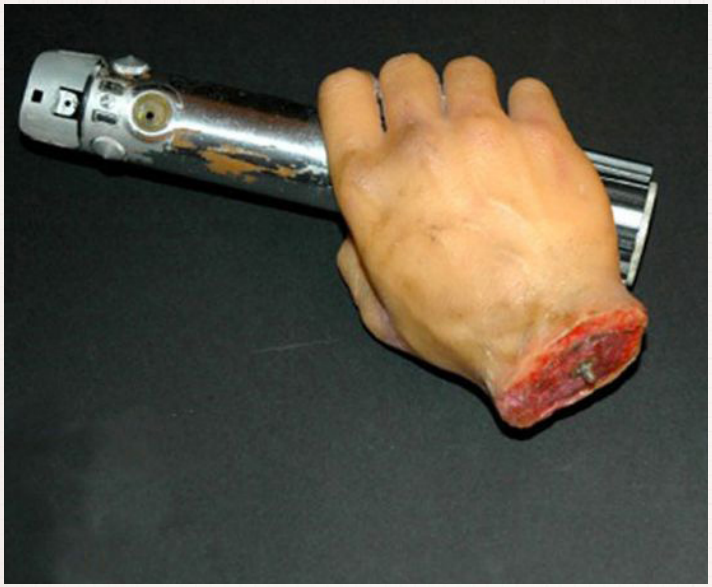
- Knurled cone knobs in the ports

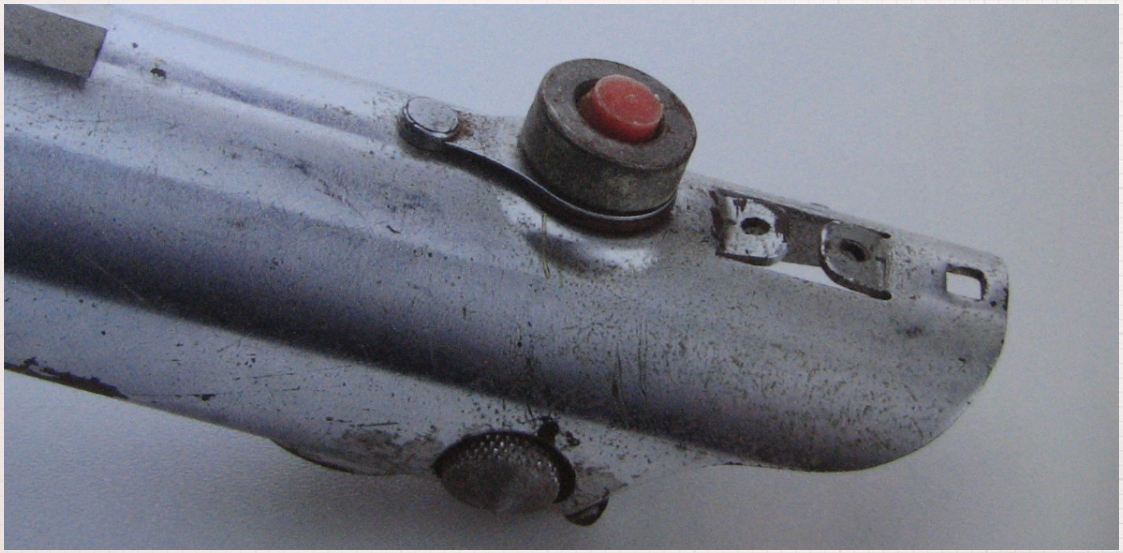
- Faux red button that is potentially the red lens from a Kobold flash

- What looks to be seven un-notched grips, unless the spacing is off.

NOTE: The 7 grips on the Kobold lower half might indicate that this piece may be left over from the ANH production. Given that the shooting props were mostly returned and restored, this would have to be something used either before or after filming ANH.

There is a unique Vader saber (see page 56) used in a promo image that appears to be made from a Kobold as well. Maybe these are the same item… or maybe it was just in the bottom of a box of junk and thrown together. It's anyone's guess.





THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
THE FORCE AWAKENS - HERO *(Rey / Finn)*

The Force Awakens presents The Skywalker Lightsaber with details of both ANH and ESB. Like ANH and ESB, vintage Graflex flashes were used. The exact model is unknown as the bottom stamp is obscured.

The upper half retains the basic general Graflex features:

- The red trigger button on the back side
- The “bunny ear” bulb holder
- The power slide switch
- The “beer tab” bracket that is pinned to the back and keeps the button from falling off when unscrewed

The lower half however more resembles the ESB heroes:

- The clamp is in the 3 o’clock position
- The Graflex logo is hidden by a thin metal card that covers the entire clamp while replicating the stamped lines and punched holes
- The Kobold / D-ring assembly is mounted with two rivets on the bottom; the Kobold is scratch made, not a vintage, as evidenced by the lack of extra holes

And some items are uniquely modified:

- The glass eye has had its knurling sanded to smooth brass
- The clamp card is semi-transparent and has a unique design emulating a PCB card
- Between the d-ring assembly and endcap, a featureless cover hides the Graflex model stamp
- Six T-Track grips attached with metal colored 3mm rivets (see next page for grip notes/details)

TFA has two separate hero lightsabers. This, the first, is the most-used version. It is wielded by Finn outside of Maz’s castle, it accompanies Rey on Starkiller Base, and is presented to Luke on Ach-To at the end of the film

Official sources claim this saber was also the primary belthanger for TLJ (see pages 22 and 67).

TFA FINN & TLJ REY HERO

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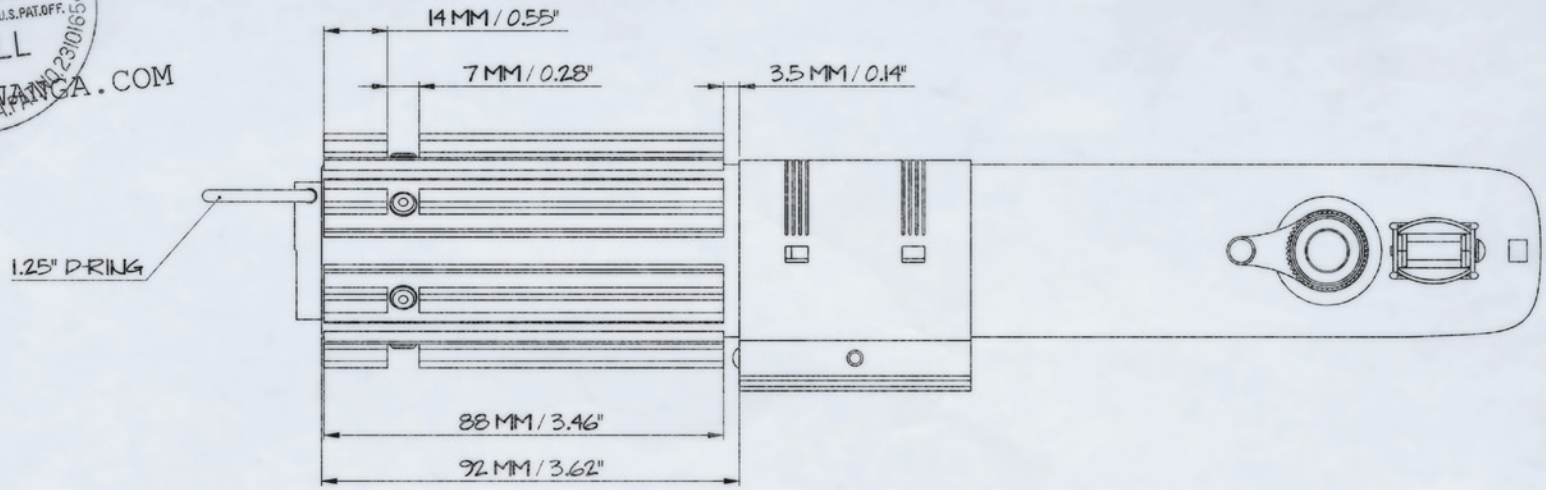
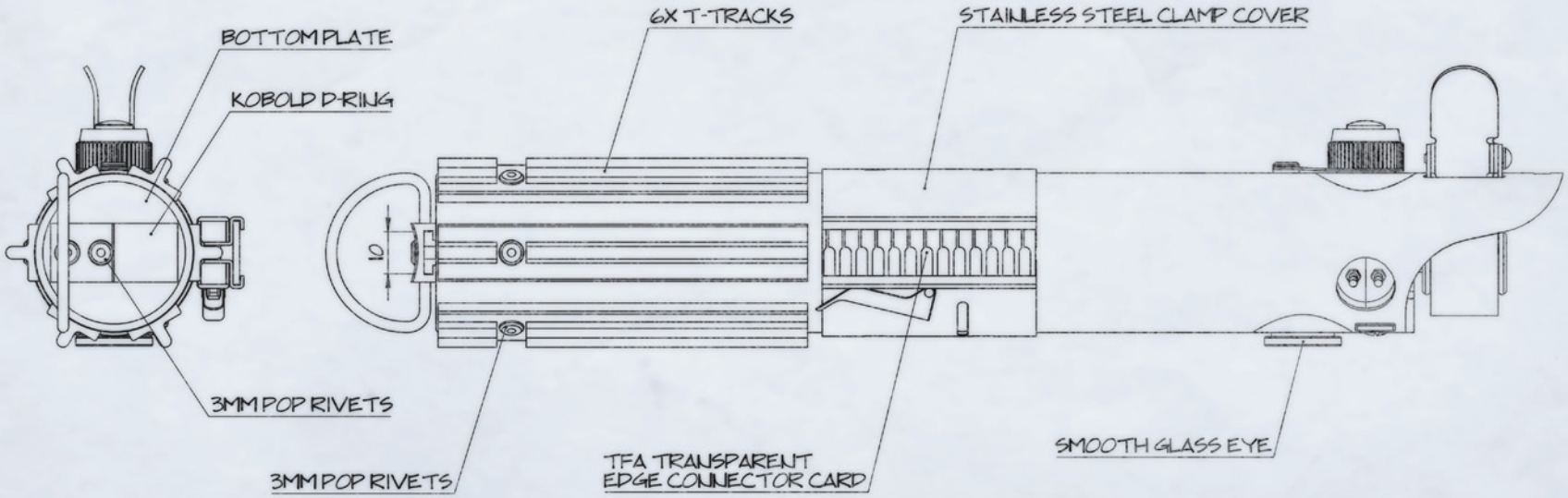




THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
THE FORCE AWAKENS - HERO *(Maz Box/Castle)*

The second TFA hero is known as the “Maz Box” or “Maz Castle” saber, and it is only seen inside Maz’s Castle.

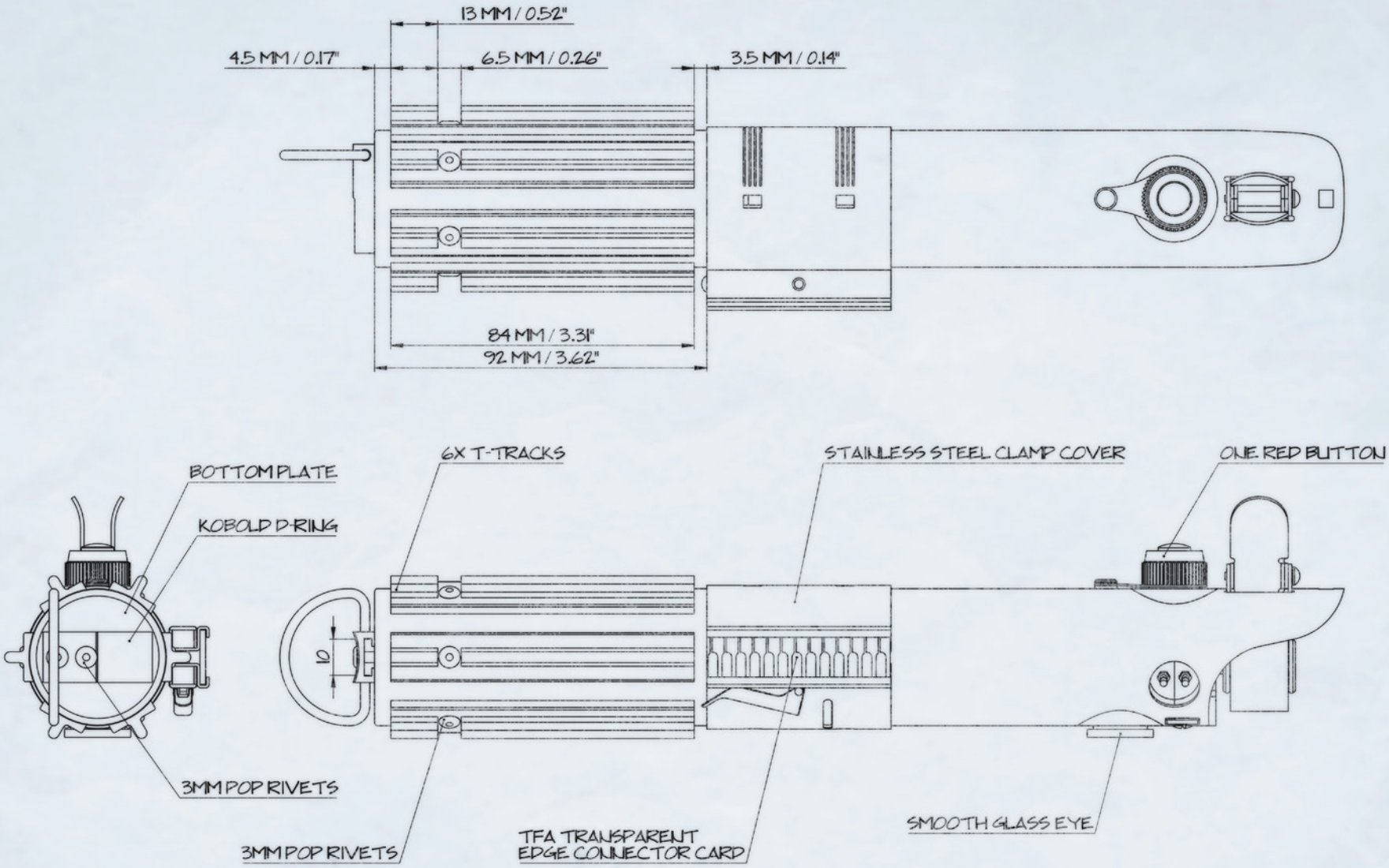
Also based on a vintage, the singular difference is that the grips on this saber float on the lower half, leaving a small gap below the clamp, and up from the bottom of the saber.

The TFA T-Tracks were scratch-made by production, but it is unclear if they are rubber, injected ABS plastic, or 3D printed. The grips themselves have the notches cut to slightly different sizes between the two heroes. While in the box, most other details are obscured, but it is safe to assume they are the same as the other versions.

Grip measurements for the Rey / Finn are 88mm long, the notch being 7.4mm and starting 13mm up from the bottom. The top of the grips are 3.5 mm from the clamp.

For the Maz Box version, the grips are 84mm, with a notch size of 6.5mm, 13mm up from the bottom. The grips float, 2.5mm down from the clamp, 4.5mm up from the base.

Rivets are used to attach the grips, but this is a source of some debate. (See page 65).



TFA GRAFLEX HERO PROP
(MAZ KANATA'S CASTLE)

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THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
THE FORCE AWAKENS - BLADED STUNTS

There were two models of stunt saber used in TFA, and very little about them has come to light. These stunt sabers mark the first time that an official production has employed technology developed by lightsaber enthusiasts.

From the start, the plan was to create dueling sabers that lit up, and cast light— as the electronic saber community knows is now commonplace.

Version one appears to made out of vintage Graflexes with the addition of the LED blade. This one can be spotted on-screen a few times when the angle favors an antenna on the base of the hilt for transmitting XML data for motion tracking. The grips on these are shorter, like the Maz box variant.

Version two was a simple tube housing the same electronics package with a padded fabric covering that was detailed to resemble the Graflex. Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, and Adam Driver have all gone on record saying that the sabers are actually very difficult to duel with. These “soft” stunt sabers maybe have been added later in production as the actors began to complain. This one can be spotted in a few shots as well by looking for an extra thick clamp section

While the soft versions were used for much of the duels in wide shots, it’s safe to assume they did not have the detail needed for close ups and medium shots.

It can be assumed there were multiple versions of all of these stunts.

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
THE LAST JEDI - HERO

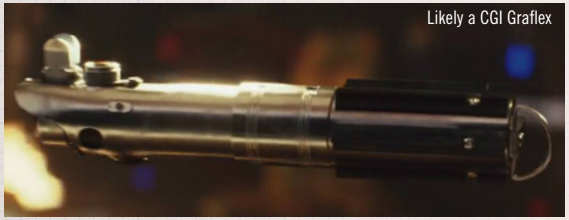
As stated in the overview, the TLJ version of The Skywalker Lightsaber is virtually unchanged from the primary TFA hero. The parts are identical, (see page 19). Official sources claim the hero prop seen here is the same prop used as the primary hero in TFA.

TLJ offers more dedicated shots, close-ups, and inserts of the Skywalker Lightsaber than any other film.

One minor noted difference between scenes-- in some shots, the glass eye seems to be fully screwed in, while in others, it sets out rather far. The overall finish of the saber appears to be much more polished than any other appearance.

It is likely that some shots of the TLJ Graflex are either CG or digitally retouched.

• One physical minor difference between TFA/TLJ-- the end-cap looks to be heavy foil in TLJ.


Likely a CGI Graflex

THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER
THE LAST JEDI - BLADED STUNTS

Much like TFA, the stunt sabers used in TLJ made use of LED dueling blades to cast light and color in-scene. The technology is much the same, though advancements and changes were made in the interest of comfort and safety of the performers and stunt team. There are multiple versions of stunt sabers seen in TLJ that fall into two camps: detailed, and simplified.

For the detailed stunts, the blade and electronics are built into an actual Graflex. On some versions the clamp box is flatter. Most make use of use of lower profile grips for comfort. Sometimes these grips appear to be a single 3D printed piece that slips over the base of the saber, others appear to be rubbery t-track with extra notches.

It is possible that the glass eye on the detailed Graflex-based stunts work as some for of blade retention screw as they often appear to be sticking out.

The detailed stunt sometimes has the XML antenna poking out of the bottom, other times not. It was also mistakenly used in several promotional images.

Version two is a more simple stunt-- a tube designed to hold the blade and electronics with a body that emulates key Graflex details to be seen from a distance, much like what was done all the back in ANH. There are many variations seen on screen, during rehearsals, and likely suit different needs for different shots-- one that can withstand rain effects, one less reflective from green-screen work, etc.

For Luke's over-the-shoulder toss on Ach-To, a painted resin cast stunt was used. It appears to have shorter grips, so it may be cast from the TFA "Maz Box" saber.

There are more instances of the stunts being used in shots meant for hero belt-hangers, (both onscreen and in promo work), than any other SW film.

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER

Original ESB Hero | Photo by The Prop Store

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER OVERVIEW

Almost as iconic as the Skywalker saber, and an even more rare (and more expensive) score to find in the real world, Vader's lightsaber has the most confusing lineage given how many of its variations have been seen by the public.

ANH

Darth Vader's lightsaber was developed by following the logic of the Graflex. If one camera flash had the perfect look—then why wouldn't another? The black and chrome look of the MPP flashgun must have seemed like a perfect fit on first sight. There are TWO known belthangers in ANH.

ESB

There is little information about the amount of props used in production (we can count at least one hero and one bladed stunt). On the upside, the hero is one of the few OT belt-hangers that still exists to this day.

ROTJ

While barely seen on screen, rare promotional images confirm that the belt-hanger in ROTJ was the same used in ESB. What is often considered the hero for ROTJ is actually a bladed stunt only used in two shots of the final film.

R1

Seen even less than in ROTJ, Vader's saber in this film is the most memorable scene from the movie... too bad they used the wrong one.

When the icon of your franchise can be anywhere you can rent a tall dude and put him in a suit. Vader's popularity, and the fact he could appear without needing to hire an original actor, made him the most useful fixture for events, collections, and museum tours. For the lightsabers accompanying the costume, new scratch-built versions were made that in later years, were confused for the screen-used versions

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - HERO *(aka Vader ANH Silver Sidebars)*

The MPP, which was actually a British knock-off of the much more ubiquitous Heiland Synchronar, underwent a nearly identical transformation as the Graflex.

Several of the standard MPP features remain:

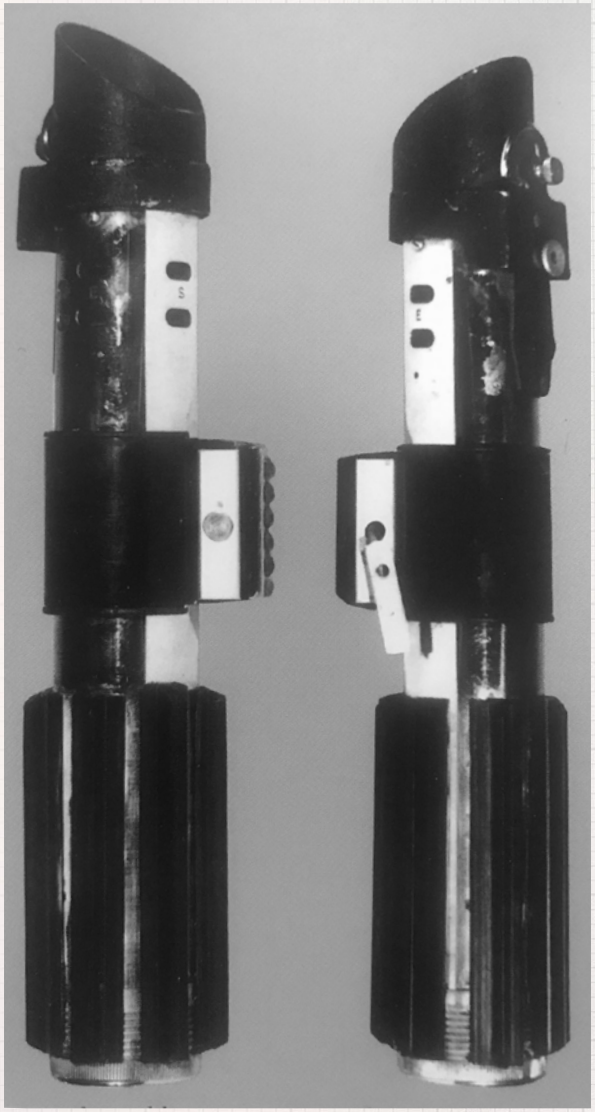
- The angled "shroud" headpiece
- The shroud's knurled lock-down knob
- The clamp, always in the six o'clock position, with silver sidebars
- The bulb-release and flash button assembly

Details that were added:

- A d-ring to the shroud
- An Exactra bubblestrip, shaved to five and 3/4 bubbles
- Seven T-Track grips, identical in size and trim angle to what was used on the Graflex

ANH has TWO hero sabers. They are virtually identical save for the clamp section. They are referred to as either "***black sidebars***" or "***silver sidebars***," referring to the color of the sides of their individual clamp boxes.

On the "Silver Sidebars" version the clamp lever seems to have been broken and is repaired using a nail to jam the lever into place. Looking at the saber, from base to shroud, with the bulb release assembly at twelve o'clock, the clamp box is at six, and the lever at nine. This version is most easily seen in scenes set aboard the Tantive IV.



DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - HERO *(aka Vader ANH Black Bars)*

The clamp lever on the "Black Sidebars" version is undamaged, is at the three o'clock side (opposite of the silver bars) and is generally seen with a twisted angle to it.

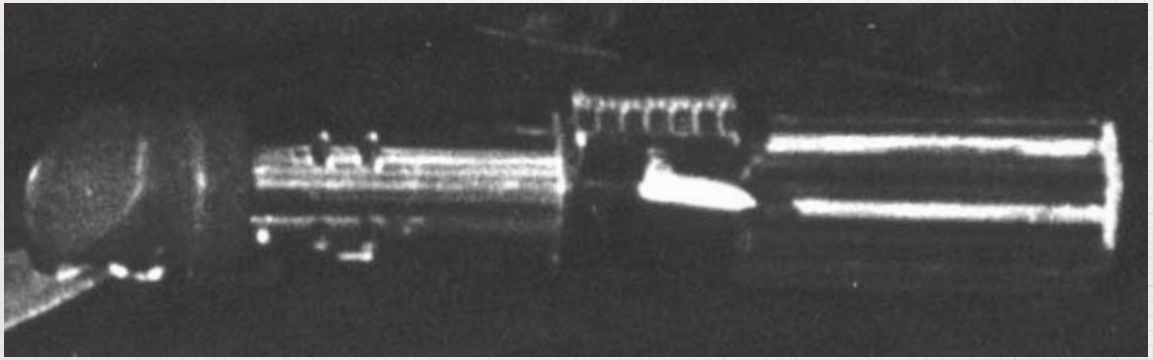
Instead of calculator bubbles, there is a calculator PCB card with number LEDs attached. These were most likely discovered in an Exactra calculator while scavenging bubbles for the other sabers. It's also possible they were under the bubbles, which were lost.

The clamp itself on this version is seated lower on the body, closer to the grips. This version is best spotted in Leia's interrogation scene.

NOTE: MPPs have a large predominate plate with their logo between the shroud and clamp. These plates were removed on every MPP used throughout the saga.

To the dismay of collectors, unlike the Graflex which changed its design very little over the course of decades, the MPP was frequently updated as new models came out. Details that tend to vary:

- The threading of the endcap.
- The finish of the shroud
- The knurling on the shroud lock-knob
- The angle of the clamp sidebars
- The amount of "steps" on the shroud
- The size of the ports



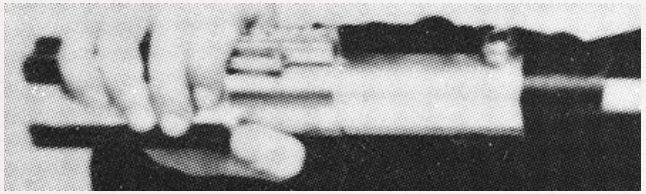
DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - BLADED STUNTS

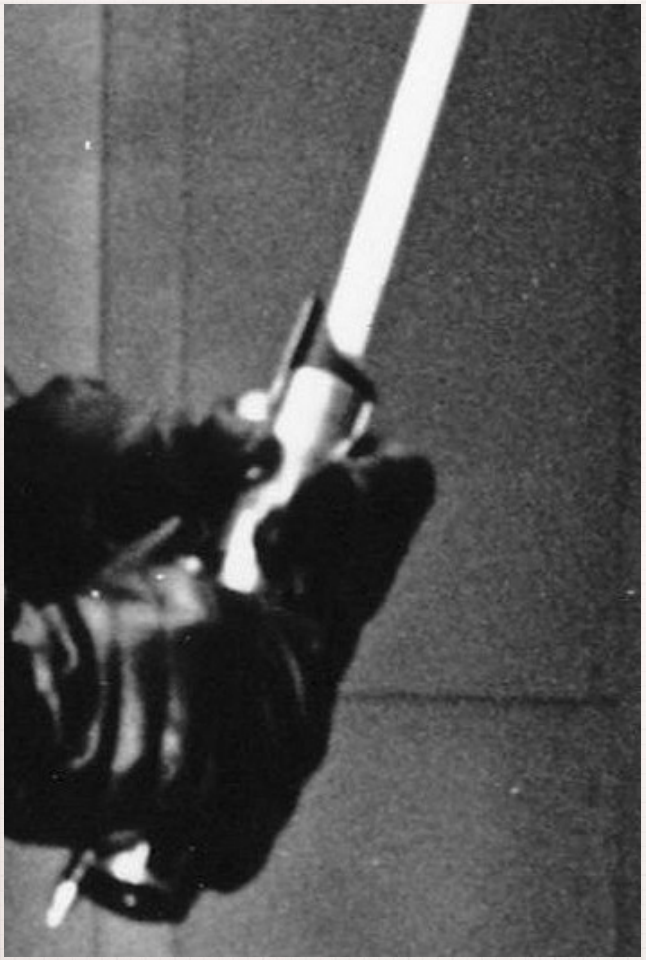
Vader had his own dedicated stunt saber designed for ANH, but for some reason, likely malfunction, it was only used briefly. Most of the duel features Luke's ANH stunt saber altered to look like an MPP.

For Vader's turn, a quick and simple alteration was made—the tip was painted black. This is frequently referred to as the "Luke/Vader shared stunt."

This alteration is likely due to Vader's dedicated stunt saber malfunctioning or otherwise becoming unusable.

Vader's dedicated stunt can be spotted and identified by the square block detail slipped onto the head to make it better resemble the MPP shroud. This saber would have a life beyond ANH as "The Barbican" (see page 61).





DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK / RETURN OF THE JEDI - HERO *(aka Vader ESB)*

Like ANH, the hero was based on the MPP flash unit, retaining the same key parts. The alterations to the prop were the same as the ANH versions, save for the following changes:

- an Exactra PCB under the bubbles.
- 18 gauge wires added to the side ports.
- The clamp lever is missing, though its post and washer remain, holding the clamp together.
- Six non-angled grips that run from clamp to base.

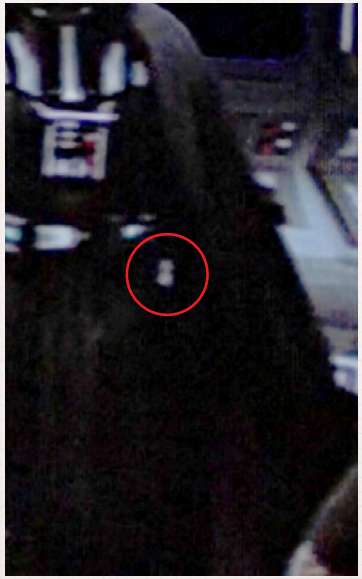
NOTE: As it exists today, the grips have the same 2mm screws as seen on the Dagobah/Ranch Graflex. Here, they are at the top and bottom, on opposing corners. These were not present during filming.

As for the varying MPP details, here are stock differences between the ESB model and ANH versions:

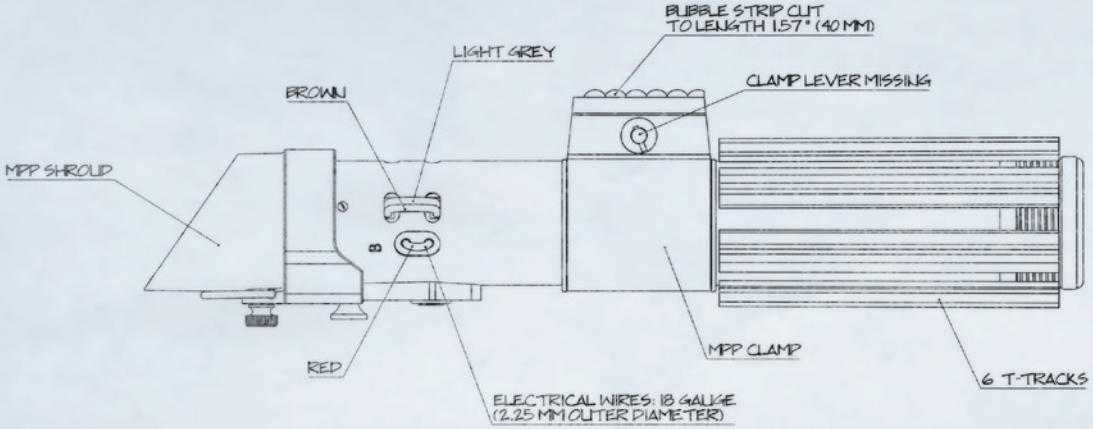
- 3 engraved lines on endcap.
- larger "B" port.
- flat screws on bulb release.
- shroud itself is thick-walled steel.
- the knurling on the clamp knob is diamond shaped.
- the interior clamp walls are narrow and angled in.

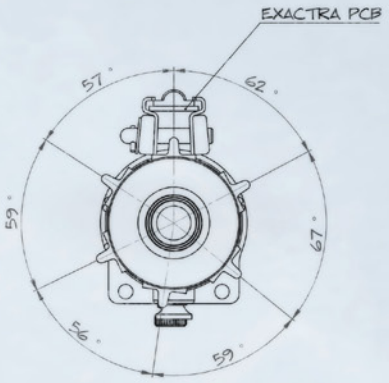
While this saber is also used as the belt-hanger in ROTJ, it is only briefly seen on screen. It can be easily identified in ROTJ promo materials.

Image Courtesy of The Prop Store

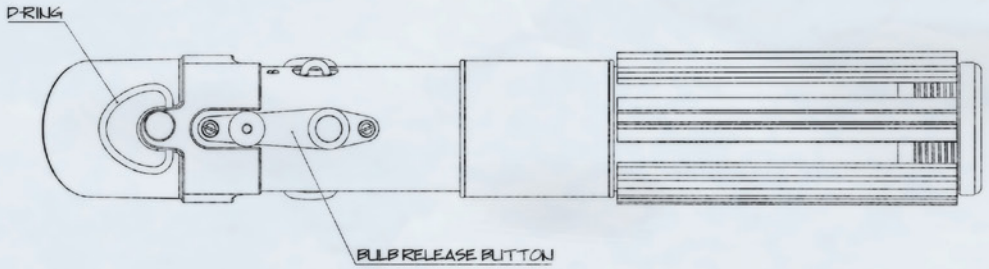


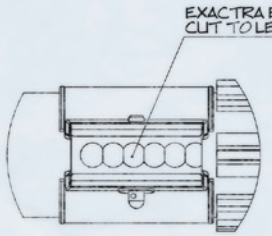
Blueprint by Roy Gilsing | wannawanga.com

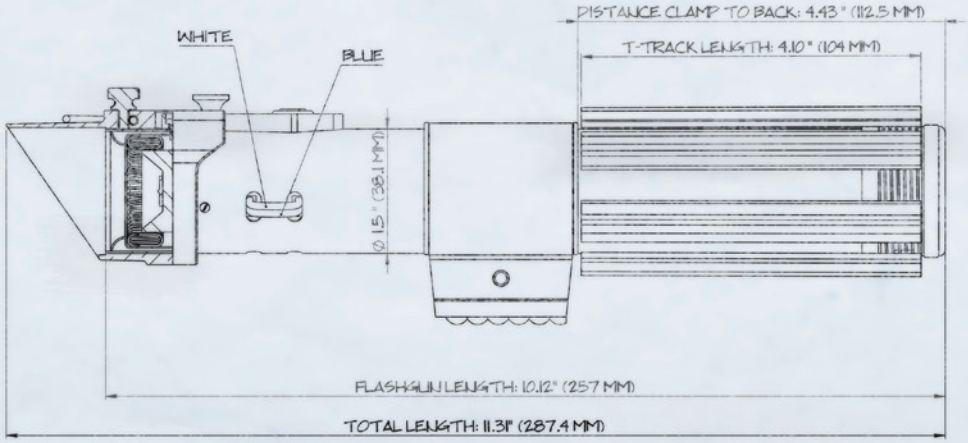




T-TRACK POSITIONS IN THE BACK VIEW







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32

20 CENTURY FOX LTD.							PROD. N°
THE STAR WARS							E76/1
SET DARTH VADER ESB LIGHTSABER							SET. N°
DETAILS MPP FLASHGUN BASED							SCALE 1/1
DRAWN R.G.	Carps		Metal X	Concl X			DRG. N° JR
DATE 23-2-77	Paint		SFX X				
	Plaster						

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - BLADED STUNT

Like the Graflex stunt, knowing that the internal motor rig was no longer needed, the stunt sabers for Vader were built by mounting the dueling rod directly into an MPP.

While Vader's hand blocks everything below the shroud, it is likely similar to the Graflex in that most of the detail is there with some additional protection for the user's hands and the Allen head screws for locking the blade in place.

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
RETURN OF THE JEDI - BLADED STUNT *(aka MoM or "Hero" or DV6)*

The Vader lightsaber most commonly associated with ROTJ is the "MoM" saber. That stands for "Magic of Myth" which is the name of a museum tour, and subsequent book, of a Star Wars prop and wardrobe collection. The same saber was also seen in the Lucasfilm Archive book that was put out in the 90s. With that level of exposure, this saber became incorrectly referred to as the HERO Vader saber, or simply, the "Vader ROTJ" and more recently as the "DV6."

Long story short, many people have said that toward the end of ROTJ's production, props began to wander off. People thought that SW was over and wanted a piece. When the resurgence of Star Wars hit in the 90s, this saber was one of the few left in the Lucasfilm prop archives.

It became the basis for toys and video games moving forward, as recently as Battlefront using it as their model. Near as I can tell though, this saber is actually only seen during the final shots that lead up to the end of the duel.

This prop is a recycled Luke stunt from ESB (see page 15) that has been refreshed with new parts to more resemble an MPP. Details that can be matched to the ESB stunt:

- The ESB Graflex Kobold D-ring assembly is still on the bottom.

- Several 1/2" Allen head cap screws are drilled into the body in exactly the same places seen in photos of Luke's stunt sabers.

- Holes peeking out from under the grips potentially line up with where ESB grip mounts would have gone.

The obvious changes:

- The body is buffed and/or chromed to resemble the finish of the MPP.

- the tip has been painted black.

- In place of the bulb release assembly there is a double ball catch 50mm cupboard door latch.

- Seven angled 3 5/8" T-Tracks serve as a grip, glued on.

The new parts that were added remain scrap-box greeblie mysteries:

- A drum style D-Ring mounted in the bunny ear slot.

- What is possibly a tire valve in the lamp socket.

- The "clamp" box is a complete unknown.

- The shroud could be a variant Heiland or MPP shroud, but is more likely a found piece, or something machined for the saber.

When Vader throws his lightsaber at Luke, the prop is a rubber copy of this variant, and the wrong end is rotoscoped.

As a touring saber, the dueling rod assembly is still inside, though the rod has been cut to a stub.

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
RETURN OF THE JEDI - BLADED STUNT *(MPP)*

For most of the duel it is very hard to make out any detail, but in the early portions of the fight, the thicker, angled end and lock knob of an MPP shroud is unmistakable.

Most assume that this is simply the re-use of the same stunt used for ESB (seen on page 31).

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
RETURN OF THE JEDI - STUNT *(Severed Hand)*

The most clearly seen Vader saber in ROTJ was a one-off stunt used for a single shot (seen at the right) of Vader losing his hand.

According to the Profiles in History: Hollywood 40 auction information, Stuart Freeborn made at least four of these one-off sabers from random parts to roughly resemble Vader's saber. Bob Burns possessed the one seen here on the bottom right, which went to auction.

The lore suggests that Vader's hand being severed was considered a practical make-up effect since it involved recreating a living thing, making the gag the responsibility of Freeborn, who did all the prosthetics for the film.

That said, the one that actually makes the cut to being on-screen is clearly a dressed-up resin cast of the Vader ANH stunt / "Barbican" lightsaber, (see pages 28 and 61).

As an existing piece, this copy would have been made by the prop team, not Freeborn.

Photo bottom right is one of Freeborn's.

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
ROGUE ONE - HERO

Rogue One offered up the interesting premise of presenting Darth Vader as he appeared in ANH, but with modern costume advancements and FX work.

The end result was a mixed bag. While his appearance and actions in the film are a hit with most fans, the actual costume was a misfire with several continuity and material errors.

Sadly, the lightsaber hung on Vader's belt was also a misfire. Instead of being one of the ANH versions, which would have been correct, the prop team looked to the current day images of the ESB hero and chose to emulate that model.

The end result is a "clean" and un-weathered version of the ESB/ROTJ hero, all the same features, (save for a brass shroud knob), none of the damage and aging. On the positive, the saber is not scratch-made, or a replica, but is an actual MPP acquired by Lucasfilm during the same quest to acquire Graflexes for TFA.

The stunt version of this lightsaber is unseen due to the darkness of the scene where it is used, so there is no clear evidence of what was used-- though one can assume the technique was similar to TFA which was developed shortly before Rogue One.

OBI-WAN KENOBI'S LIGHTSABER

Original parts Obi-Wan hero build and photo by RPF member Serenity

OBI-WAN KENOBI'S LIGHTSABER OVERVIEW

Where Luke and Vader's sabers turned to vintage photo gear, Obi-wan Kenobi's weapon was the result of having just the right junk at hand. Roger Christian has said that a lot of the production design, on Tatooine especially, came from the acquisition of airline and military scrap. At the time, it was very cheap and they bought it in bulk.

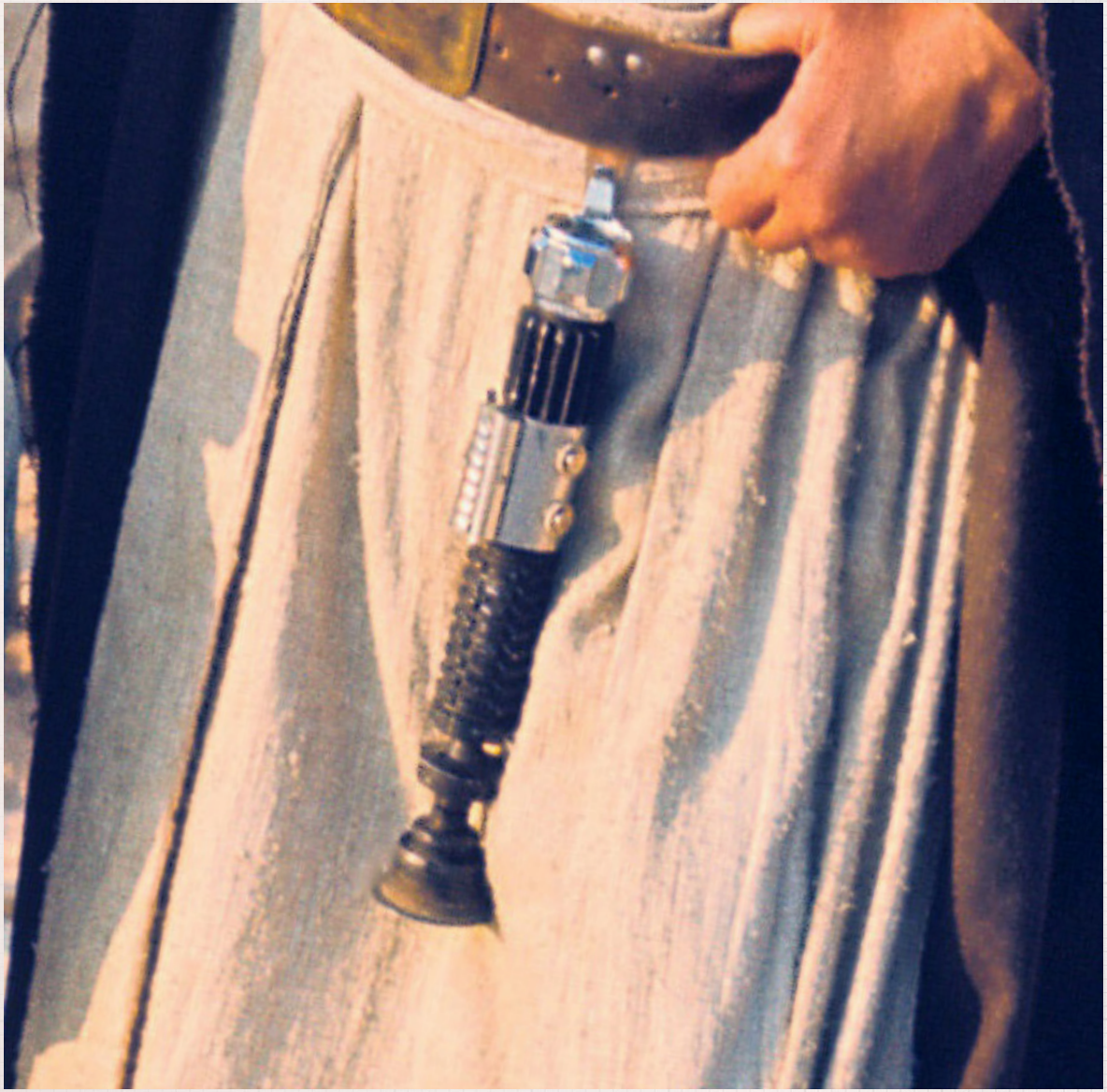
Jet engines were taken apart to build blasters, droids, snub fighters and through some sheer luck, it would seem that a handful of parts with similar diameter came together perfectly to form what was for a long time, the most mysterious saber of the saga.

With only a handful of images and diagrams to work from, the exact construction of Obi-Wan's saber was a mystery until 2005. Created from an assortment of scrap, and disassembled and recycled after ANH was done shooting, it was near impossible to get any new or closer looks at the prop outside of the occasion BTS image popping up from a crew member's personal collection.

A few parts were obvious— such as the Graflex clamp, or faucet knob pommel (though the exact make and model took time to pin down). Popular theories from the early speculation days included machine gun and motorcycle parts. Slowly the image became clear.

Other Star Wars props that used parts from the same source lead to discoveries. For example, IG-88's head was known to be part of an old jet engine— when said engine was found and disassembled by a fan, somebody recognized Obi-Wan's emitter amongst the pieces.

Today, all parts have finally been identified. Some of them are common, others are incredibly rare. Thankfully for fans, reproduction parts crafted from originals have lead to recreations that are at least 95-98% accurate.



OBI-WAN KENOBI'S LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - HERO

It is unknown how many heroes were exactly made for ANH, thought it would seem that there are three different states of the prop, their differences mostly cosmetic. Each of the Obi-Wan hero sabers are made from the same assembly of parts. From top to bottom:

• The "Emitter" is a balance pipe from a Rolls Royce Derwent 8/9 jet engine, essentially part of a fuel pressure regulation system. The emitter is more specifically the "female" segment the assembly.

• The "Grenade" section is titularly named for the central grip, a 1916 No. 3 WWI Mk1 British Rifle Rod grenade; essentially a very crude and early RPG-style weapon.

• A Graflex clamp and Exactra bubblestrip, virtually identical to the set-up used on the Graflex.

• Two transistors (exact type unknown) backed with washers are mounted into the side of the clamp, at the nine o'clock position to the clamp box's twelve.

• The "booster" or "gear" section is the business end of a Browning ANM2 (.303 Mk II) fighter plane machine gun. Specifically, the section between the barrel and the flash suppressor.

• The "pommel" is a chromed British sink knob, (aka a "handwheel" in UK vernacular), a "Starlight" model made by Armitage Shanks.

• A d-ring in a drilled hole in the pommel cube that lay on the opposite side as the transistors.

• Though not seen clearly onscreen, chrome tape was used to cover the clamp band on at least two of the known versions.

Given the similar diameter of the parts, and the fact most of them are open through the center, it is assumed that a simple rod with nuts was used to hold it together. Most reproductions make use of an inner core inside the clamp, the original likely did something similar.

The three different states are easy to spot. It is possible there were three different heroes, but more likely that changes and repairs were made to the prop along the way through production.

- On Tattooine, the endcap of the pommel is missing and the grenade is flipped.

- On the Death Star, the inside of the emitter is black, which is different from the cone-adapter seen inside the emitter of the Tattooine version.

- The "Chronicles" saber, named for the book it appeared in, (pic at right). There were very minimal differences not seen on film. Namely, a missing washer from the top most transistor, a few extra set screws, and small cotter pins between the clamp and booster. Chrome tape was applied, then worn down, over the clamp band.

OBI-WAN KENOBI'S LIGHTSABER
A NEW HOPE - BLADED STUNTS *(aka Shared Stunts)*

Like the Luke/Vader shared stunt, the dueling saber for ANH was scratch built to better facilitate the motorized practical effect. A wooden replica was made of the hero, which was then cast. Seam lines indicate the pommel may have been made in sections to avoid the need for milling from scratch.

Either way, the end result was a metal stunt saber what held the shape of the hero, but had none of the surface details. The booster was smooth, for example. The neck was painted to match the brass of the hero "windvane" section, while the grenade was matte black to better block off the light used for the early saber effect. A graflex clamp was added to complete the look.

There are at least two known stunt versions, discernible by the fact that one has a clamp lever that was replaced with a longer version, the origin of which is still unknown. The clamp sidebar opposite the clamp looks to have broken, leaving only the actual block nut. This model was marginally more exact in its construction, with fewer uneven spaces between the "grenade rings" than its brother.

These stunt sabers actually have a lineage that takes them through the entire saga. After serving Obi-Wan in ANH, they were stripped of their motors and wires. They were on-set and part of the shop during the filming of ESB. BTS images clearly show them being used in rehearsal by David Prowse and Mark Hamil.

Irving Kershner was also armed with one to help direct and block scenes so he wouldn't need to take one that was dedicated to an actor or stunt performer.

One even makes an appearance as a Rebel's "tool" in the background of Echo Base.

Both would be pressed into service for ROTJ as well for Luke, hence the "shared stunt" nickname.

NOTE: A possible third stunt Obi-Wan saber was used in his death scene. Clearly not the hero due to the lack of detail, (and best seen in BTS videos), it is unclear if this was special to the vanishing gag, or if it was one of the normal stunts with the motor assembly and wires removed.

V2 Reproduction designed by RPF member Anakin Starkiller • Paint, detail finishing, modifications and photo by RPF member Inigou

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER OVERVIEW

The lineage of Luke's second saber is the most rich and storied behind the scenes, with ties to the production of each of the OT films.

Onscreen, it was different from what we'd seen before—in color, sound, and action. While the prop itself had been around since ANH, at the time it drew attention to itself for being very different.

Much like Darth Vader's lightsaber in Return of the Jedi, this saber has a wide variety of variants and what is considered the "hero" is actually only used in one shot.

ROTJ

For a singular narrative saber, this model has the most numerous real-world stand ins.

On the first day of shooting in the UK, production focused on the ultimately deleted sandstorm scene. The Graflex was on hand for Luke's saber-- and obviously, that wouldn't work for continuity. While some sources say there was a plan for Luke to have a unique saber, what went down on the first day of shooting implies otherwise.

In quick need of a prop, somebody grabbed one of the ANH Obi-Wan stunt sabers. At some point the holes were plugged, the emitter was taped in place, and a clamp card was added. Maybe right then and there, maybe back when they were used as rehearsal duelers for ESB, maybe some combination of that. This is turned over to be Luke's belt-hanger hero, ultimately becoming known as the V2 (as it's existence wasn't recognized until much after the official hero).

Knowing they needed stunt versions, the prop team went to the second Obi-Wan stunt. It has a very Obi-Wan style paint job, a "nipple" in the emitter, and an ESB style clamp card at this stage. Resin copies were made. It got a dueling rod and became the stunt for the Throne Room scenes. Eventually, this prop gets the nickname of "Luke/Ben shared stunt 2" and later, the "V3."

As things are prepped in California they knew there will be extensive stunt work, and made use of the resin V3s. One of which is given a flat-top and used for the second unit R2 launcher gag.

Needing a short-bladed stunt, a new metal saber was made based on the resin dimensions. The upper neck is missing the groove, and the color scheme is similar to how the resin models are painted, which evolved from the faux Obi-Wan paint scheme. This metal short-bladed stunt becomes known as the YUMA.

When the California leg of shooting starts, the V2 has come along as the belt-hanger because it is probably paired with Luke's costume with the wardrobe department. The V3 never makes it to California and is replaced by the Yuma for the sail barge scenes.

After photography wraps, they decide to do some insert shots to better sell that Luke has made his own lightsaber. The metal Yuma is cleaned up and repainted and the control box is given more detail. This saber is shot as an insert for the ISYHCANL scene. For the cave build, the box is modified to have the sliding card and blinking lights. This is how the prop remains after production is complete, and is now known as the HERO.

TFA

During the preproduction of TFA, it was unknown how much Luke would be in the film, and what his appearance would look like in terms of costumes or props. Early drafts had his role integral, while the finished movie reduced his role drastically.

To that, the prop team scratch-built a lightsaber for Luke to have on hand. Ultimately it was not used, and the only glimpse of it comes from a BTS video that was bonus content solely for people buying the Target release of the film.

TLJ

Making its final appearance in the saga, Luke's lightsaber appears in flashback form in TLJ.

Again, the official ROTJ cave-build/ISYHCANL version is used as the inspiration, but the details seem to be based off of replicas of the this saber.

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
RETURN OF THE JEDI - HERO *(aka ISYHCANL and Cave Build)*

Like the Darth Vader MoM stunt, this version was the one chosen to "officially" represent Luke's lightsaber, despite barely being seen in the film.

Technically there are two versions of this saber, but the differences are minor. There is the "cave-build" and the "ISYHCANL" short for "I See You Have Constructed A New Lightsaber."

The cave-build is the version first seen in the Archives book and was subsequently used as the basis for resin copies given to exhibitions, and as the basis for most toys and official replicas. Oddly, this version is never actually seen onscreen on ROTJ.

In a scene cut from the film, and only revealed with the Blue Ray release of the OT, Luke is seen finishing construction of his lightsaber. As part of the action, the clamp card slides on rails to reveal inner workings. This is the only place this variant appears.

Seemingly identical in almost every way, the ISYHCANL appears in just a single shot of the final film: when the titular line is spoken, and we see the saber in Vader's hands. Not the full scene, but simply that one insert shot of Vader turning the saber in his hands.

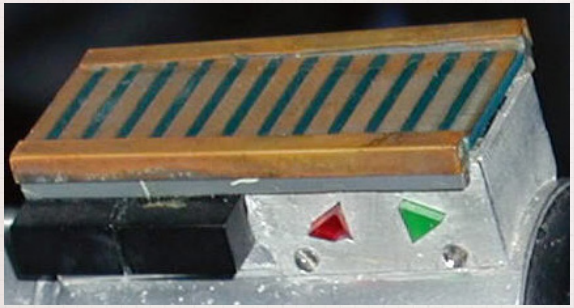
Both of these shots were done as pick-ups, well after principle photography had wrapped. Given that these scenes were ultra close-ups, somebody decided that if this indeed was a NEW lightsaber, then that usual worn Star Wars look wouldn't do. We can see the two bottom rings are of similar size, then above them, a third ring that is thicker. These features match between both versions of this saber. They also match up to the "Yuma" (see page 46), leading us to assume that particular saber was cleaned up for these special inserts close-ups.

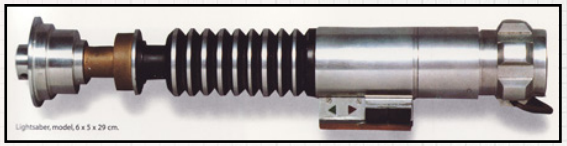
The control box is the only thing different between the two scenes. Both were scratch-made and contain a blue and metallic PCB card. Two buttons and light-up arrow indicators stand in for a clamp lever.

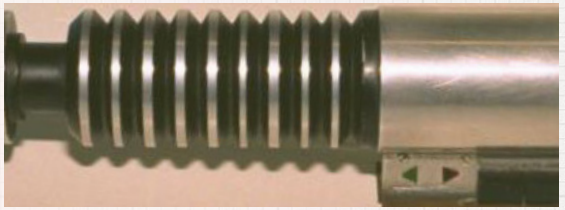
The ISYHCANL either has flush rails, or is simply detailed to look as if rails are present. Some say it is simply copper tape holding the card onto the box.

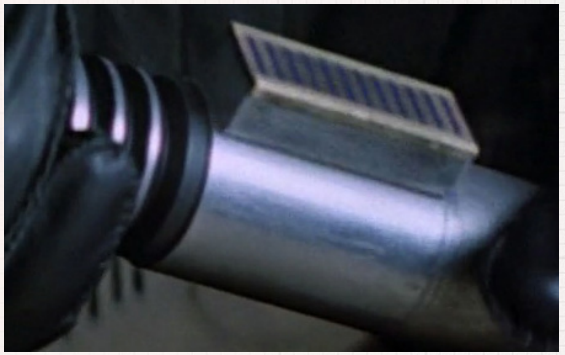
The cave-build has rails that extend beyond the box for the card to slide on, and a small plate that houses the arrows which is attached with tiny set screws.

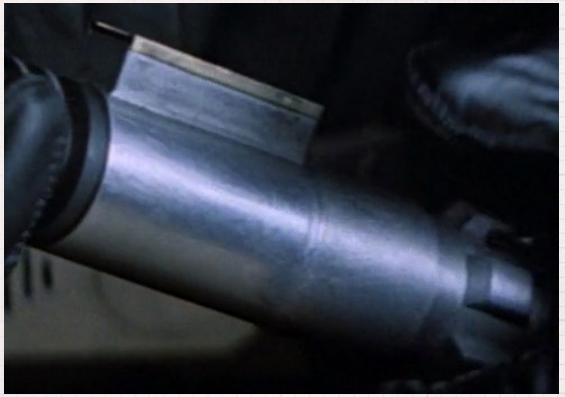
Since the ISYHCANL version of the box has never been seen outside its close-up shot, it's safe to assume that scene was done first, then the box was replaced for the cave-build sequence.











LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
RETURN OF THE JEDI - V2

While not officially recognized as the hero lightsaber for Luke, this saber is what is used as the belt-hanger for the entire film, as well as several dedicated close up shots.

The V2 is actually the same physical prop as one of the Obi-Wan stunt sabers, (see page 39). It can be identified by it's Graflex clamp with the long lever and missing sidebar.

Additional details that were added:

- A PCB clamp card of unknown origin

- A "mystery chunk" of metal screwed into the port that was initially meant for the practical motor wires in ANH

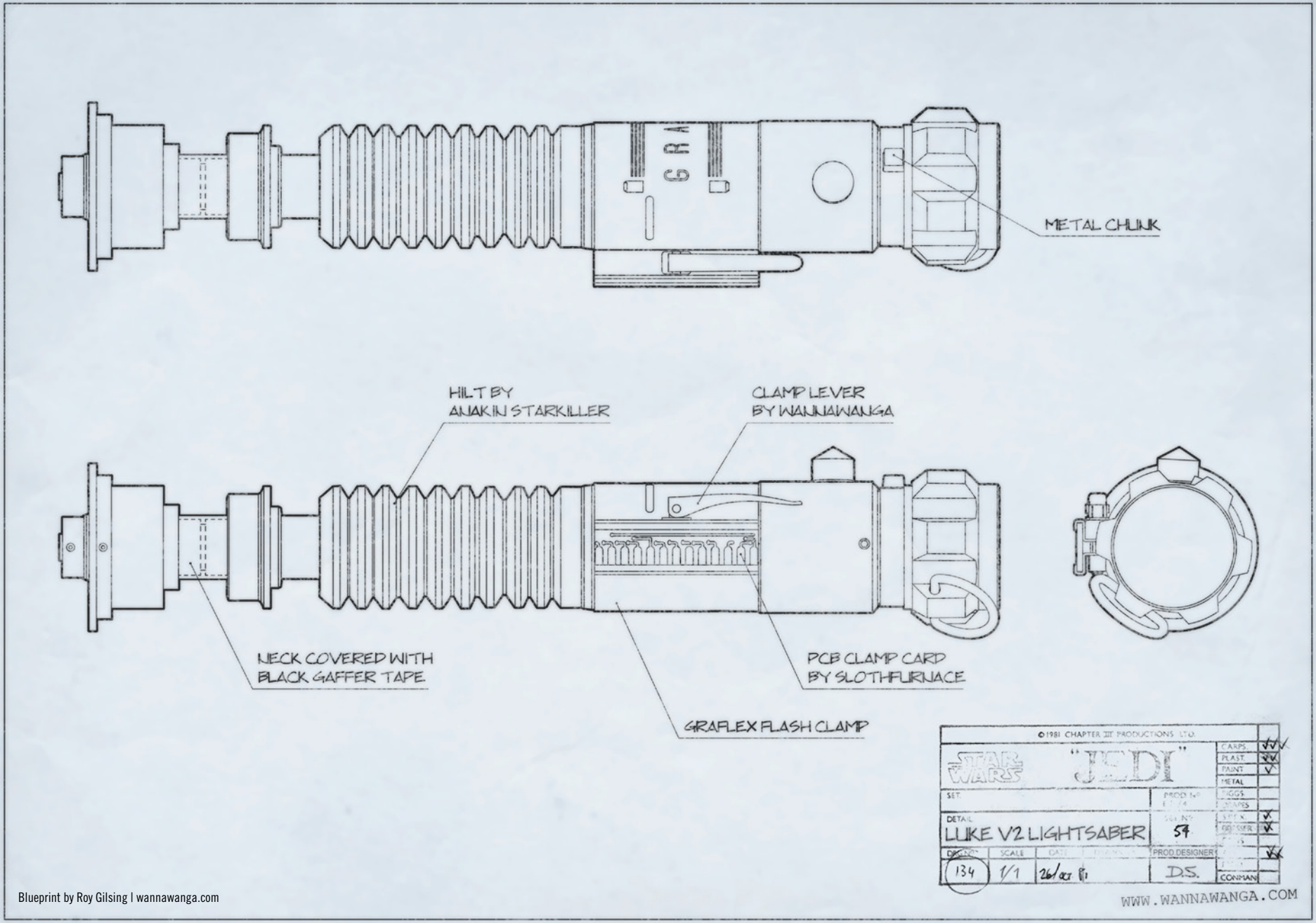
- A cone-shaped knurled retainer nut from a Michell Transcriptor turntable

- A D-ring on a pommel cube, which may or may not have been part of the prop in ANH

The chunk and knob seem to have been added during its first use in the sandstorm scene of ROTJ. BTS images indicate the Graflex was also on hand, and given the obvious continuity error, the V2 became a last minute substitution.

Initially, as a stunt prop, the entire emitter spun with the dueling rod, that feature was eliminated here with a piece of black gaffer tape around the neck.

Despite not being the official hero, this saber can be clearly seen multiple times: when Luke catches his saber on the skiff, when The Emperor takes it, then again when it sits next to him on the throne, when Luke lifts it into frame for ignition as he is about to cut down the speeder bike, and pretty much any decent medium shot where it hangs on Luke's belt.



Blueprint by Roy Gilsing | wannawanga.com

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
RETURN OF THE JEDI - BLADED STUNT *(aka Shared Stunt or the V3)*

Obi-Wan's second stunt saber served the same purpose for Luke in ROTJ— it was used in his duel with Darth Vader as an actual dueling stunt saber. Like the V2, it was refurbished, but was completely repainted, most noticeably with the intense copper colored neck.

This saber was the more roughly made of the two Obi-Wan stunts, as evidenced by the additional uneven rings on the grenade section. It's unique features include:

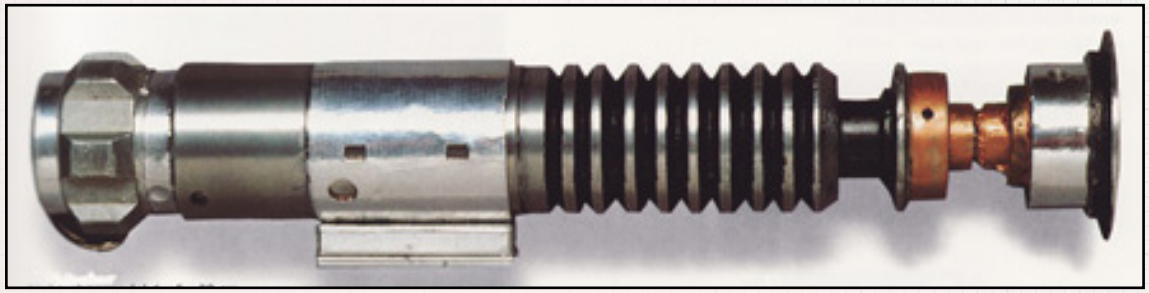
• A Graflex clamp with stock lever; foil tape surrounds the clamp; there are three circular holes on either side of the clamp, and on the opposite of the box and a large scuff in the foil; the clamp itself is upside down compared to the hero Obi-Wan or Graflex-based sabers.

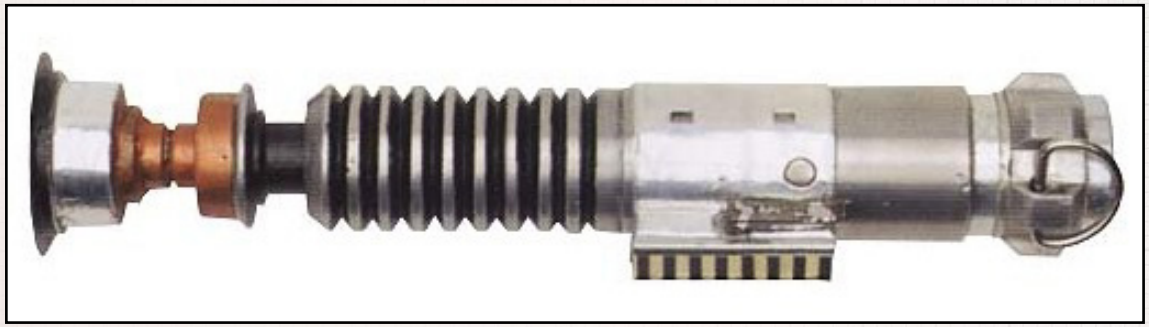
• The clamp card is an ESB Graflex style card onscreen-- barely seen in only one shot-- however the V3 resin copies mimic this card.

• A different clamp card with even metallic and matte sections (similar to the PCB on the hero) is more often associated with the V3 despite it being added after production due to numerous archival images that have been made public and museum tours.

It was repainted again during its tour days, this time the entire body was recolored.

The V3 is the prop that went on a trip to space aboard the Space Shuttle.





LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
ROTJ - SHORT BLADED STUNT *(aka Yuma)*

For the sail barge sequence, a set of resin stunt sabers were used given all the heavy stunt work and acrobatics, (like Luke throwing himself into the side of the sail barge). One of these resin stunts was also fired from R2, (though it was the V2 when Luke caught it.)

Resin Yumas (and V3s) have been spotted in archive videos and in exhibition displays and were all painted to match the V3.

For Luke facing off against Jabba's henchmen, a short bladed stunt was required. A new metal stunt was made based off the resin stunts, using their measurements as a guide.

The metal Yuma has the following details:

• Copper paint on the upper neck, whereas the resins are black at this location.

• A triangular shaped pommel ring.

• A simple control box emulating the Graflex clamp, attached with two screws; no clamp card is present, a dummy lever is on the right side of the box.

The metal Yuma is held by Mark Hamil in the iconic ROTJ promo image of Luke on the sail barge, and in post-production was cleaned up, repainted, and used for the two hero insert shots (see page 42).

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
THE LAST JEDI - HERO *(aka the Creepy Uncle)*

While based on the ROTJ hero, the details of the TLJ version are not taken from the original prop, but a recreation. Given the thickness of the edges of the rings on the grenade section, many believe the body was inspired from the Prodigal Son replica, a Master Replicas LE, or an eFX Reveal saber.

It has been determined by frame by frame comparison that there is a fair amount of retouching of this saber, specifically, the buttons on the control box change size and shape.

This could be due to Luke's hand being a CG element that required compositing out the real hand, or it could be due to the fact a resin saber with poor detail was used and it required clean-up (resin prop can be seen on page 62.)

Onscreen, the details that differ from the ROTJ hero include:

- The tri-ring lies on a pommel cube at 9 o'clock to the box's 12 when looking at the base (roughly speaking as the cubes are not aligned exactly with the box)

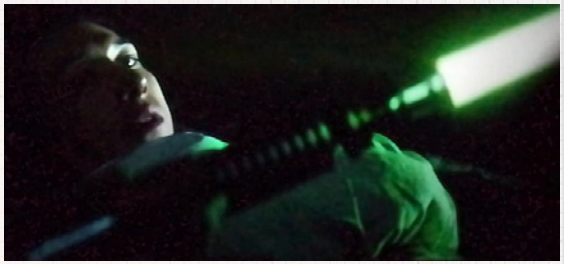
- An emitter that matches the TFA BTS version, which itself was inspired by the Obi-Wan ANH hero

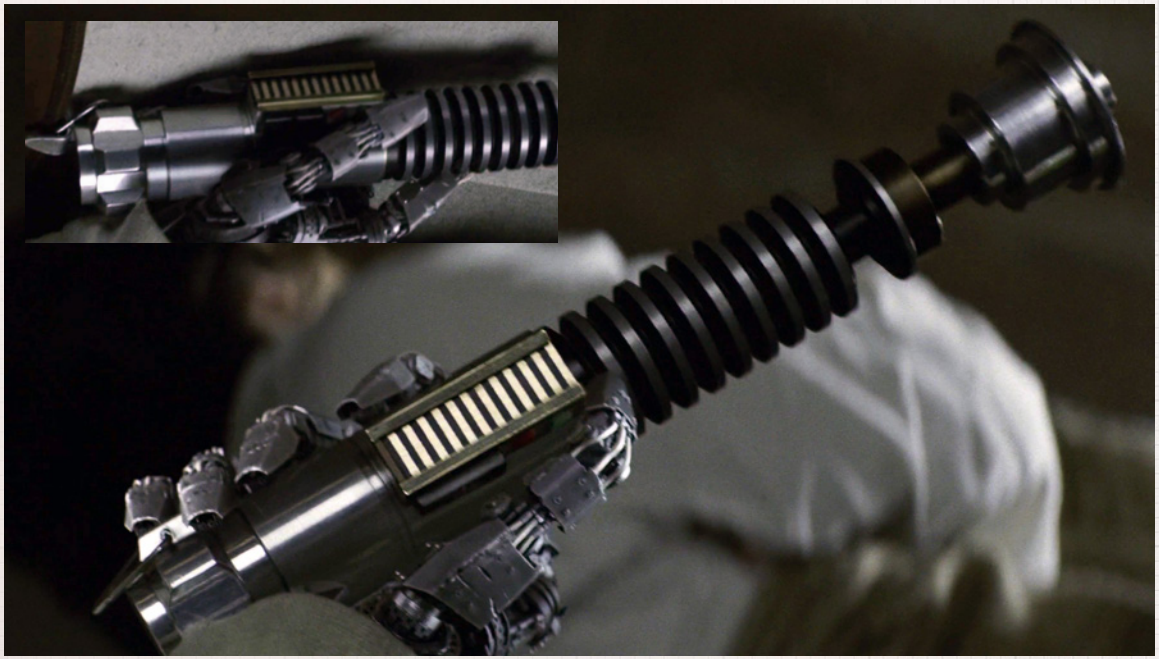
- The PCB card appears more gold and reflective, with the bottom bar dulled (note the thinner dark bar at the end)

- Thinner box rails that sit flush with the box body, ISYH-CANL style)

- Due to retouching, the buttons change shot to shot; in one angle they are a single lower profile button; in another, they appear as classically seen in ROTJ, in a third there is a reflection/artifact that makes them look different-sized.

Note: Like all ST scratch-built sabers, the FX stunt versions are likely the same as the belt hangers, or identical, though it is not known if this scene used one or not.





THE PREQUEL TRILOGY LIGHTSABERS

OVERVIEW

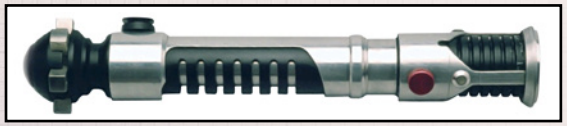
Unlike the Original Trilogy, where most props were made my assembling real world and found objects together, mostly props in the Prequel Trilogy were custom designed and scratch-made to better reflect the vision of this being a more regal, artisan focused era.

While the exact methods of construction changed and improved for each film, they still followed the same basic process from start to finish: each of them was designed by the art department, hero versions were created via various machining methods, molded copies of the heroes were then made to serve as stunt sabers, both soft, and bladed. Given that very few real-world parts were used, this section functions more as an overview of the props as a whole instead of focusing on individual saber designs.

OBI-WAN / QUI-GON / DARTH MAUL LIGHTSABERS THE PHANTOM MENACE - HEROES

Two real-world items were used on virtually all of the TPM lightsaber designs: red knurled thumbscrews, and Covertec wheels to function as a belt hanger system. Beyond that, all other parts are fabricated.

Here are the trio of lead-character sabers seen in the film: Qui-Gon's, Obi-Wan's, and Darth Maul's.



While not seen in the film, Even Piell's lightsaber seems to be created with the OT aesthetic of using a camera flash as a base. It uses a MiniCam Jr flash as is, with four thin resin grips, and an ESB style PCB added to the clamp.

The origin of this saber is unclear, but it is most likely a fan creation adopted by Lucasfilm, probably created in conjunction with the Yoda lightsaber (see next entry.)

YODA'S LIGHTSABER THE PHANTOM MENACE - HERO

Another lightsaber constructed following the ideals of the OT lightsabers is the one used by Yoda. While it only appeared onscreen as a CG model, it was based on a physical prop made for the Phantom Menace Visual Dictionary. (See page 63 for details).

Yoda's saber is made from the following parts:

- A Praco flashgun (Bolsey and Service make very similar models that can also be used).

- The "clamp box" is an oil sump pan from a 1/12 scale Monogram 1967 Corvette.

- The emitter is a 1/16 Lamborghini Countache front wheel from a Japanese model kit.

- A 4-40 PEM nut near the emitter shroud.

- Custom made resin grips.

JEDI LIGHTSABERS TPM / AOTC / ROTS - HEROES

Virtually every other lightsaber in The Phantom Menace is based on the same basic components, slightly mixed and matched with unique minor surface details. They are barely glimpsed on film, if at all. Most appear in promotional materials-- specifically, the Visual Dictionary.

Many of them were re-used for the same Jedi they were assigned to when seen fighting in AOTC and ROTS. Every "clan saber" as dubbed by the Eu to explain their similarity, is one of these four sabers, with slight cosmetic differences in color or part arrangement.

STUNT SABERS in TPM were made by making resin copies around a central threaded rod. The dueling blades were simply screwed onto the hilts.

ANAKIN SKYWALKER'S LIGHTSABER
ATTACK OF THE CLONES - HERO

For Anakin Skywalker's first lightsaber, inspiration was taken from the design of Darth Vader's weapon-- foreshadowing the future I suppose.

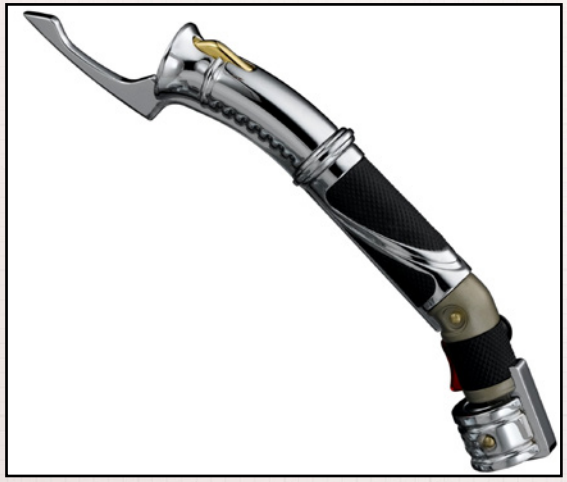
This lightsaber visually looks like a "light" version of Vader's, replacing the prominent black shroud with a chrome one. It took its proportions and measurements from an early Vader replica by Icons, and therefor indirectly from the MPP. As with all Prequel sabers, it was scratch made.

MACE WINDU'S LIGHTSABER
ATTACK OF THE CLONES - HERO

To match his growing role in the trilogy, Mace Windu was given a more unique saber, to set him apart from the generic clan saber he was shown with in TPM promo material. The design is one of the most artistic of the PT.

COUNT DOOKU'S LIGHTSABER
ATTACK OF THE CLONES - HERO

Perhaps the most unique lightsaber design set to film, Count Dooku's saber took it's inspiration from a scimitar or katana, presenting a curved body.



JEDI ARMY LIGHTSABERS
ATTACK OF THE CLONES

The remainder of the lightsabers in AOTC are seen during the arena action sequence. Many of the Jedi appearing here are the same characters from the council in TPM, and as such, use the same mix and match clan sabers.

Some Jedi are pure CG, and have lightsabers with no physical counterpart. The lightsabers are also not consistent scene to scene. Anakin and Obi-Wan are tossed generic clan sabers, and when Anakin wields them both we can see he has a clan saber in one hand (different than the one he just got), and Obi-Wan's in the other (which was already lost) with a green blade.

Obviously, there was not much in the way of saber quality control going on.

STUNT SABERS in AOTC were made using the same process as TPM, making resin copies around a central threaded rod. The dueling blades were screwed onto the hilts.

HERO LIGHTSABERS
REVENGE OF THE SITH

The third movie of the prequel saga was tasked with bridging the two trilogies in as many ways as possible. One such connection was to show the lightsabers in possession of Anakin/Vader and Obi-Wan in ANH as they were 20 years previous. While narratively the same as the sabers seen in Episode 4, the props were significantly different from their previous appearances.

As per the PT work flow, real world parts were NOT used in their construction, though the original sabers at least served as inspiration for their looks... sort of...

Anakin Skywalker's Lightsaber (aka the skinnyflex)
For some odd reason, the Ranch Saber (see page 58) served as the inspiration for the lightsaber used by Anakin as opposed to the ANH or ESB versions.

In addition to the skinnier design, the clamp card was an original design, a d-ring was absent with a covertec wheel being used as the belt attachment device (located on the hilt), the button color was more metallic and gold, and the glass eye was replaced with a similarly colored recessed button.

A few alternate designs with a flipped clamp have been spotted in some scenes.

Darth Vader's Lightsaber
Like the Ranch Saber, this variant was inexplicably not based on any hero from the OT, but from the "Barbican" saber (see page 61). While only seen in ROTS promotional materials, like the "skinny flex" it was a narrow and idealized, the Barbican's greeblies became original parts with no real world origin. It had a covertec knob, and an original patterned clamp card.

Obi-Wan Kenobi's Lightsaber
While based on the ANH hero, Obi-Wan's saber follows the same design cues as the other two-- an original designed clamp card, idealized greeblies, and a much shinier, skinnier design.

Darth Sidious / Palpatine's Lightsaber
The first "short" handle design lightsaber seen, (violating the rule Lucas himself established for the OT that lightsabers be two-handed), this saber was given to Palpatine after his fight scene was shot, added mainly as insert shots. In wide shots you can see him using Anakin's

STUNT SABERS for ROTS switched from resin to rubber as it is more forgiving to a performer's hand, and because the ability to faux-chrome rubber was a new process at the time.

This allowed the props to be softer, but yet look more metallic-- in both cases, a step up from what painted resin would offer up. The chromed rubber hilts were cast around the carbon fiber dueling rods, making for the most sturdy dueling sabers up to that point.

There was significant use of CG stunt doubles in ROTS, so CG models of many of the sabers were created. This is most apparent when the all-CG General Grevious was given four lightsabers he had supposedly taken from Jedi he killed, and yet among those sabers were CG version of the skinnyflex, and Obi-Wan's saber... which Obi-Wan was also holding while fighting Grevious. Again-- no saber quality control in the PT.

THE SEQUEL TRILOGY LIGHTSABERS

Kylo Ren Lightsaber model and Render by AlxFX @ DeviantArt.com

OVERVIEW

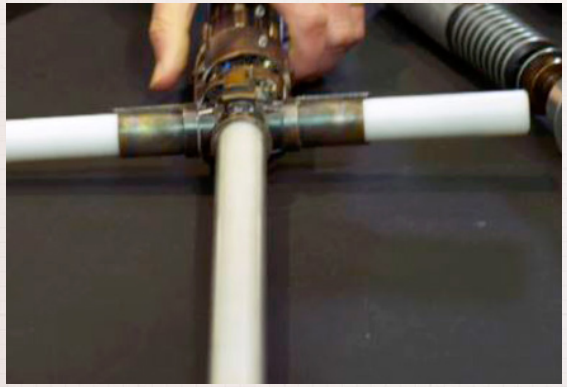
With two of its planned three movies in the can, lightsabers are on the rare side in the ST. Therefore, this section will be thin, especially given that two of the sabers seen in the movie are legacy props included in their respective chapters.

That means this chapter pretty much belongs to Kylo Ren... for now...

KYLO REN'S LIGHTSABER
THE FORCE AWAKENS - HERO/STUNT

As with the PT, the original lightsaber designs for The Force Awakens were scratch built. Using a combination of machining techniques and 3D printing this allowed for the hero and the stunt to be virtually identical, built out of the same material.

Expertly weathered and painted, love it or hate it, Kylo Ren's lightsaber is one of the most unique in the saga.

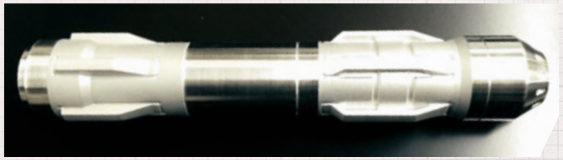


RANDO PADAWAN LIGHTSABER
THE FORCE AWAKENS - CONCEPT

Included here because, frankly, I needed to fill out the page and offer up something than just the Kylo Ren show.

This lightsaber was apparently physically made, and on-set for the Knights of Ren scene in TFA, supposedly belonging to the young Jedi that Kylo Ren kills in front of Rey. It can almost be seen in Kylo's hand in the Knights of Ren group shot, (though some believe that is Luke's saber in his hand).

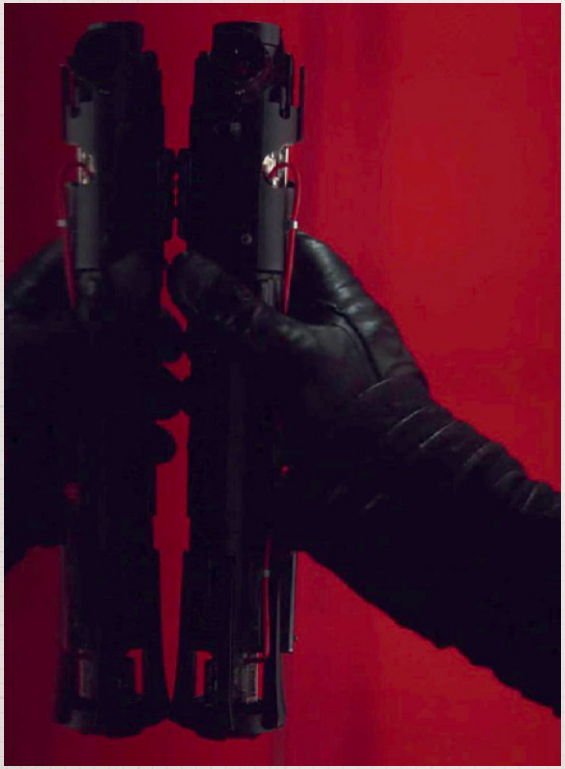
It appears to have a central body that is turned on a lathe, with 3D printed detail work that slide over the body.



KYLO REN'S LIGHTSABER
THE LAST JEDI - HERO /STUNT

Much like the Graflex, the proximity of the production between TFA and TLJ has granted us the magical phenomena of prop continuity between films. For the most part, Kylo Ren's saber in TLJ is identical to how it was seen in TFA-- with one minor exception.

While physically the same, the worn and weathered black finish from TFA is replaced in TLJ by a matte black paint job. The difference is both subtle, and obvious.

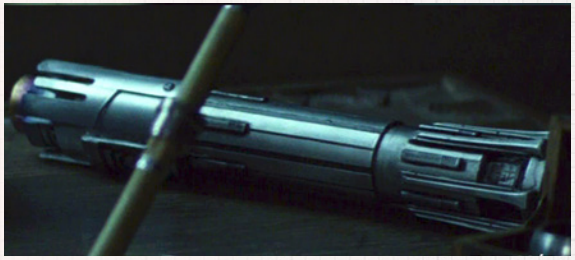


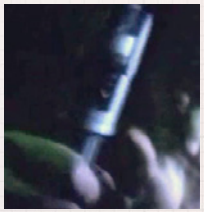
BEN SOLO'S LIGHTSABER
THE LAST JEDI - HERO /STUNT

When faced with Creepy Uncle and his wrath, young Ben Solo has no choice but to defend himself... and then murder a bunch of kids. (Must be a dark side initiation thing).

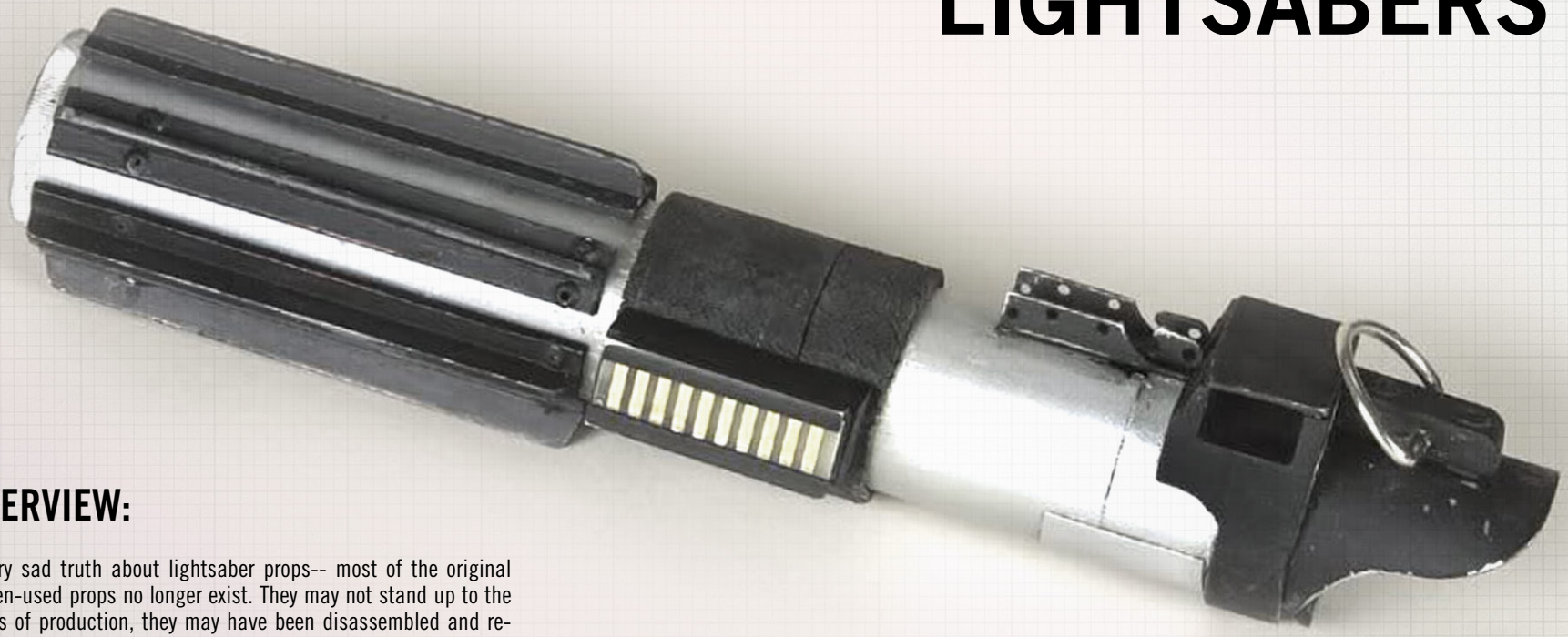
Seen ever so briefly, Ben Solo's lightsaber is actually the same one he uses as Kylo Ren-- just without the modifications. The side vents that make the cross guard are absent, as is the red wire, and black paint.

So a stripped down, silver finished Kylo variant.





APOCRYPHAL LIGHTSABERS



OVERVIEW:

A very sad truth about lightsaber props-- most of the original screen-used props no longer exist. They may not stand up to the rigors of production, they may have been disassembled and returned to prop houses in their original form, they may have been stolen off set, they may have been given away, or find their ways to private collections.

Whatever the reason, the Lucasfilm archives are relatively thin on lightsaber props. That said, often times, for promotional purposes, a lightsaber is needed. In the stead of the original props, often times a copy made well after production has wrapped is passed off to the world as the real thing.

This happens often enough that frequently these sabers are billed as screen-used and sold at auction for insane prices.

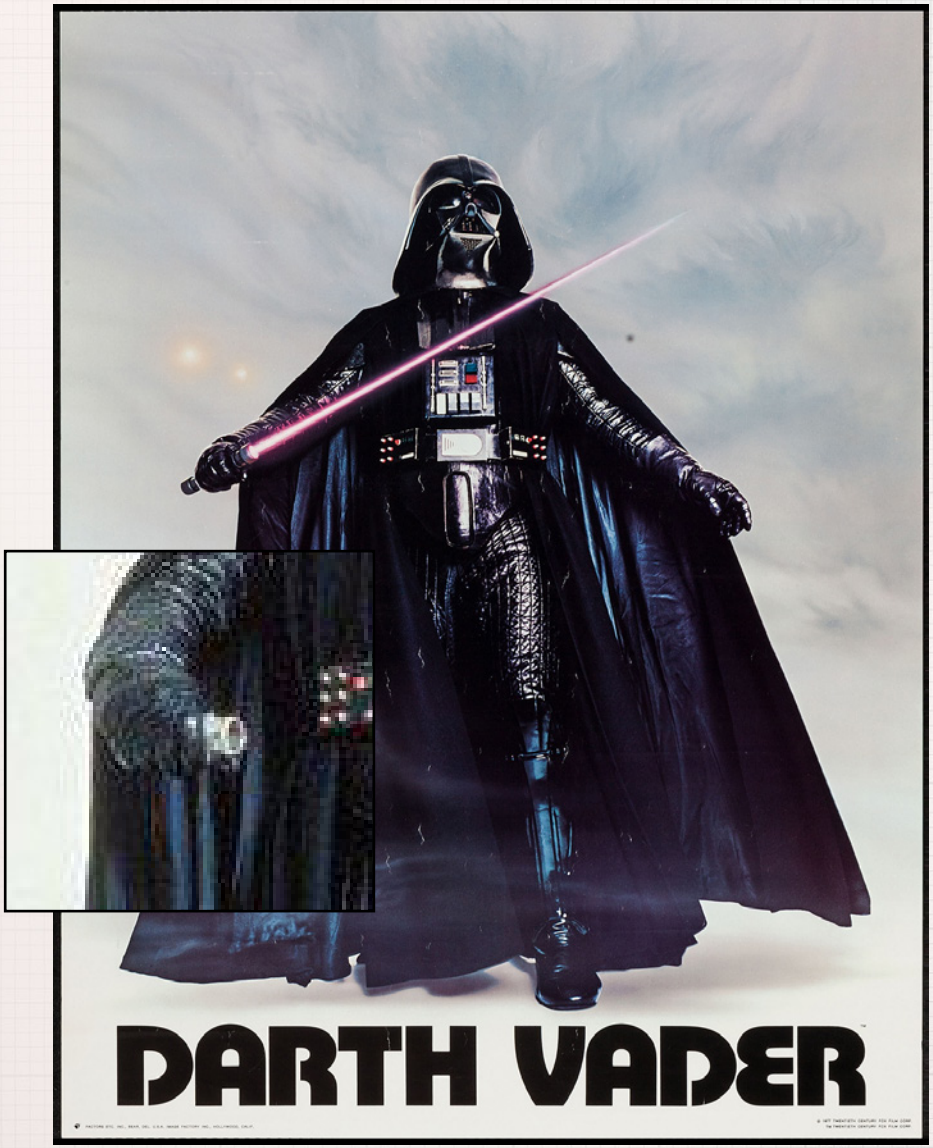
The Don Bies created “Strobonar Hybrid” saber made for museum display.

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER
PROMOTIONAL KOBOLD

This odd looking saber for a Japanese promotional image is actually an airbrushed addition, painted over a smaller Kobold flash. The Kobolds were used as droid callers in the saga, and had their brackets removed to be used in D-ring assemblies for the Graflex.

This image, taken after ANH was shot, adds evidence to the fact that the ANH props were restored and returned, leaving them to have to improvise. It's my personal theory that being tweaked for this shoot, the Kobold likely would have been given seven grips, as the ANH sabers were. To me, that makes it a likely candidate as the lower half of hand-gag Graflex stunt on page 17.

No proof of course…



THE SKYWALKER LIGHTSABER HOLIDAY SPECIAL - HERO

While not technically in canon, or even good taste, the Holiday Special is a thing that we can all agree exists. Included here because it's part of the bigger prop story, this lightsaber is based on a Graflite, the predominant model of flash made by Graflex into the 60s (where as the original was used in the 30's and 40s).

It employs T-Track for a grip, but the remainder of the parts are unknown. The important part of the story here, is that this illustrates why props tend to change, and why specifically this lightsaber has different incarnations.

ANH was in a lot of ways a one-off. The studio expected it to fail, and the budget was actually fairly small for a picture of it scope. Much of the props used for the movie came from prop houses and had to be returned. Luke's lightsaber was stripped of its parts and returned as a camera flash to the rental house.

The Lucasfilm archives, and the idea of them retaining their own materials, did not happen until the production of Raiders of the Lost Ark and Empire Strikes Back. This is why the Holiday Special production had to recreate some of the props— and this is also why no other props or later images of the ANH saber have ever come to light. They simply no longer exist.

Fan build and photo by RPF member Lichtbringer

THE RANCH SABER

On display at Skywalker Ranch and billed as one of the heroes from ESB, this Graflex was built from leftover ESB parts to serve as Luke's lightsaber in ROTJ before the obvious continuity error was addressed.

It's unclear what details were added for that purpose and what was added for later display, but it now appears as a unique variant that has been closely studied. It's features include:

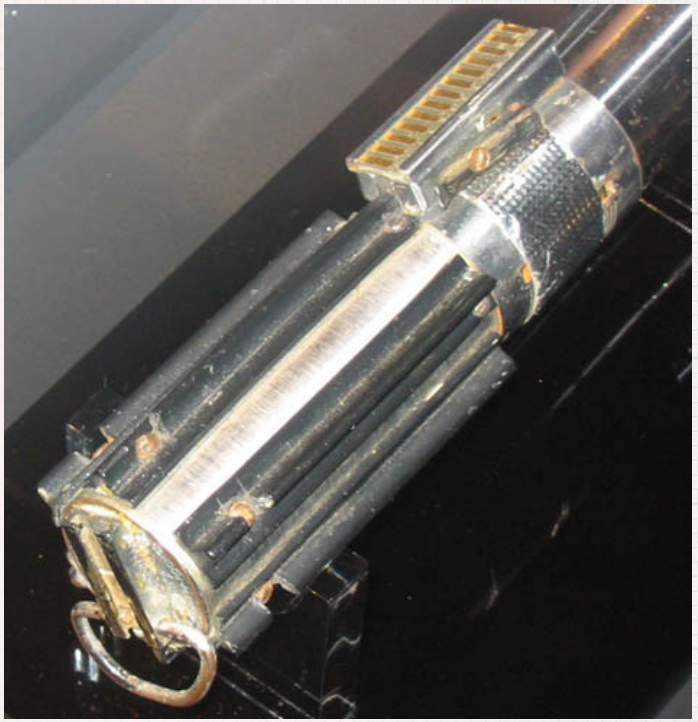
- A red button in its original position.
- Lamp socket that is left empty.
- A brass screw that pins down the clamp lever.
- The clamp is surrounded by a 1" strip of reflective textured fishing lure tape.
- The Kobold D-ring assembly is upside down, and mounted with brass screws instead of rivets.

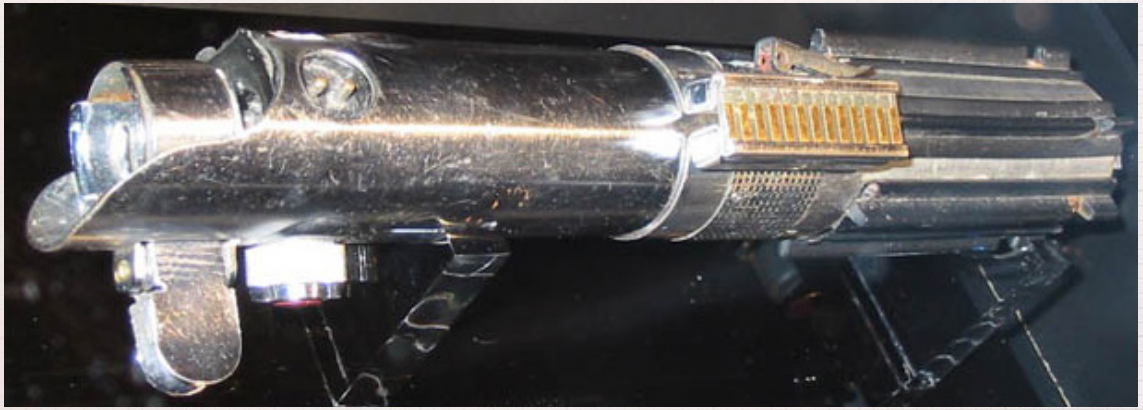
The very specific warping and shape of the grips on this saber can be matched to the grips of the Dagobah belt hanger hero. The upper half does not match up with the Dagobah saber when examining the weathering and damage.

This saber has more recently been part of various museum/show tours appearing both in a display with other sabers, as well as on a costume mock-up of Luke's Bespin outfit.

In the Archives there are resin copies of this saber, made for the R2 launching gag in ROTJ.

NOTE: This saber served as the inspiration for the "skinny flex," the lightsaber used by Anakin in Revenge of the Sith. (see page 51)





GARY KURTZ LIGHTSABERS

Having shown up in a couple auctions, ANH and ESB producer Gary Kurtz has parted with some lightsabers from his personal collection. While billed as being used in the film, evidence points to the fact that they were never seen onscreen.

It is also hard to know just how many sabers Kurtz has auctioned off-- the auctions seem to come up every handful of years, but it is unclear if it is the same items, or similar ones. There are a few discerning details to be gleaned that will allow you to laugh at whomever spends a few hundred grand on something they think is legit, but is not. (Looking at you, Paul Allen).

Kurt's Graflex offerings are clearly not used onscreen. Billed as ESB sabers, the arrangement of parts tend to be mishmash of the ESB and ANH versions. (An ANH style upper, but an ESB style lower half). It has also been revealed that the grips were added for the purpose of the auction.

It is generally assumed that while these sabers may have been with the prop department for production, they were likely used for spare parts (one of them was missing its buttons) and not actually converted to full sabers or used for filming.

Kurtz has also auctioned off a Vader lightsaber from ROTJ. Kurtz was not a part of ROTJ. The most likely scenario is that it was built post ROTJ along with several other post-movie variants (as it closely resembles them, see next page) and made its way to Kurtz somehow.

The most likely theory, is that Kurtz asked Don Bies to deck out his Graflexes for auction, and at the same time he bought, or was given, one of the Bies Vader builds, (see next page). DON'T BID ON THESE!

LETTER OF AUTHENTICITY

This is to confirm that the Luke Skywalker lightsabre you have purchased is from my film archive. The piece was preserved as I have always tried to keep a small selection of production pieces and paperwork from each film I have produced, including Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back.

Now the archive is being catalogued and inventoried so that it can be properly preserved for future generations, and it has become apparent that there are several items which I have duplicates of. It is one of these pieces that you have obtained.

I have no hesitation in authenticating that this is an original prop from my personal archive.

Signed:

Gary Kurtz

DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABER PROMOTIONAL VARIANTS

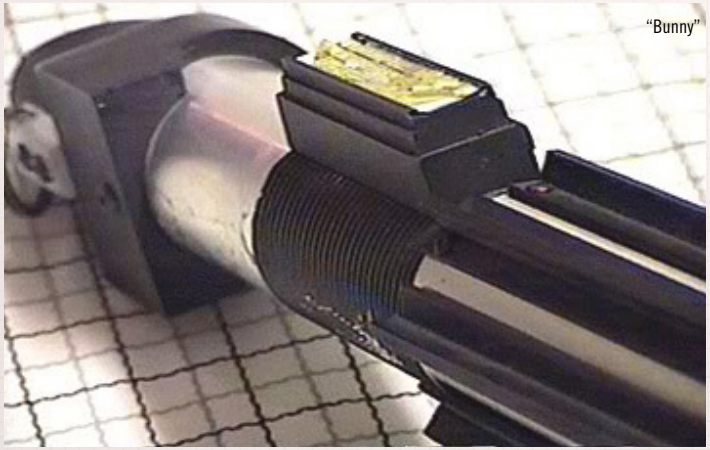
When the icon for your franchise happens to be an actual character, one in a mask no less, it means that Darth Vader got around. Events, promotions, appearances-- Darth Vader has always been the face of the franchise. To that-- several suits commissioned by Lucasfilm have been sent out over the years to actors in local markets to make appearances as Vader. With multiple suits/actors out there through the 90s, each of them needed lightsaber. With the sever shortage of Vader lightsabers post ROTJ, propmaster, and Star Wars collector, Don Bies was hired by Lucasfilm to create new Vader sabers.

Don worked with what was available based on what images Lucasfilm could offer up. The details are approximated with scrap parts. It is unknown how many of these Vader variants were made, but three in particular stand out.

First, the "Strobonar Hybrid." A Strobonar is a flashgun from the 60s made by Heiland. Bies stripped the strobonar down and used many of its parts to recreate Vader's lightsaber, giving it a PCB card. (Vader generally always had bubbles on his saber).

Second, the "Bunny" saber. In a 90s era Superbowl commercial, the Energizer Bunny faced off against Darth Vader, only for the Sith Lord's saber to die out as its generic batteries failed. Also crafted by Bies, it was built on the body of a Maglite to provide Vader with an endcap he could unscrew to inspect the batteries. At the end of the commercial, Vader drops and kicks the saber— which was done via a resin stunt cast.

Strobonar Hybrid


"Bunny"

"Bunny"

TOURING / DISPLAY VARIANTS

There have been multiple museum displays and touring shows that cover Star Wars props and costumes. Both are generally stocked with lightsabers. As mentioned at the top of this section, faced with a shortage of lightsabers, Lucasfilm often resulted to offering up less-than-hero sabers or copies in a pinch.

For example, the Barbican museum in the UK received the slightly refreshed ANH Vader stunt saber.

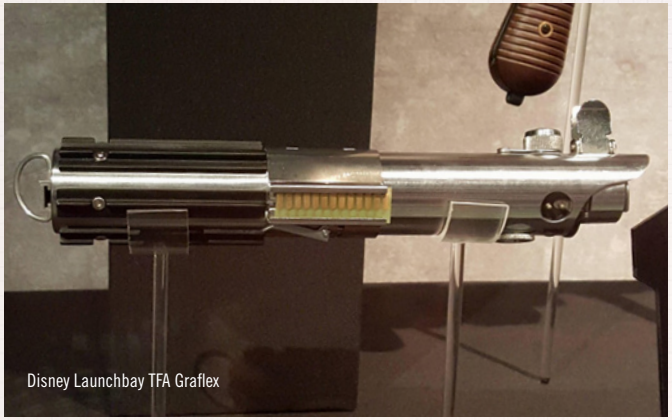
The "Barbican" is frequently mistaken for a hero saber as it makes use of an MPP clamp and ESB style PCB clamp card. This version was also chosen as the basis for Vader's saber in Revenge of the Sith. (see page 51)

The MoM version of the Luke ROTJ hero is actually just a resin copy-- possibly even one of the resin Yumas with an updated control box.

Star Wars has a long history of replicas and scratch-builds being used in promotional tours and museums and billed as "the real thing." These are just a few, so don't be fooled! Case in point, Disney's Launchbay (a Star Wars experience) revealed the first look at the TFA Graflex.

The TFA prop team made the sabers specifically for promotional usage. And while you'd think that means the details matched what was onscreen, they do not. (Knurled eye, hex screws on grips).

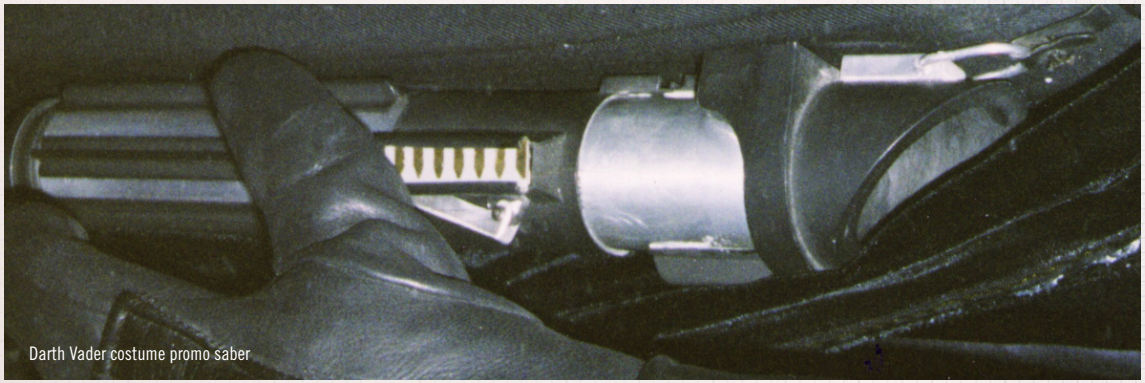
For costume exhibits, dummy sabers are also often included to accompany the wardrobe on display. Once again, scratch-made promo sabers or replicas are often used.


Disney Launchbay TFA Graflex

"Barbican"

"Barbican"

Resin ISYHCANL / MOM


Darth Vader costume promo saber

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
THE FORCE AWAKENS - BTS *(aka TFA BTS)*

Based on an early script and concepts, Luke's lightsaber was recreated for TFA. As it never appeared onscreen, its consider apocryphal and unofficial, though it does present itself as an idealized Luke ROTJ Hero with these details:

• A body style based on the ISYHCANL hero, with even rings.

• A control box based on the better-known cave-build version-- with larger triangle indicators.

• The emitter is all-new, a combination of Obi-Wan's ANH lightsaber and Luke's V2.

• The tri-ring is in the pommel cube at 3 o'clock to the box's 12 when looking at the base

• The clamp card is obscured

LUKE SKYWALKER'S JEDI LIGHTSABER
THE LAST JEDI - BTS *(aka "white glove")*

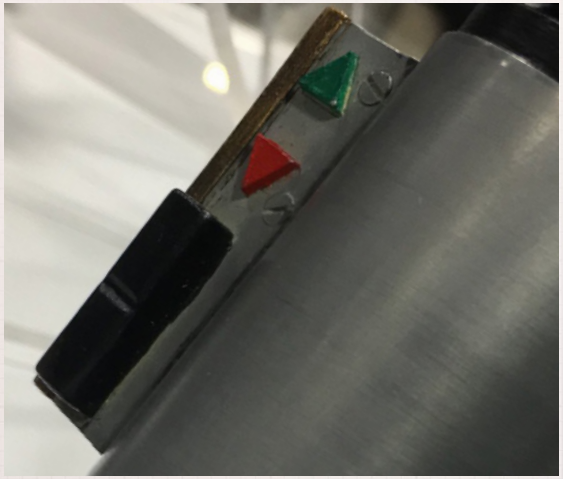
Presented in a featurette The Star Wars show, this saber was presented alongside other props from TLJ. There is much debate and confusion on what this particular saber's relationship is to what we see onscreen. (See page 47 for the TLJ hero version.)

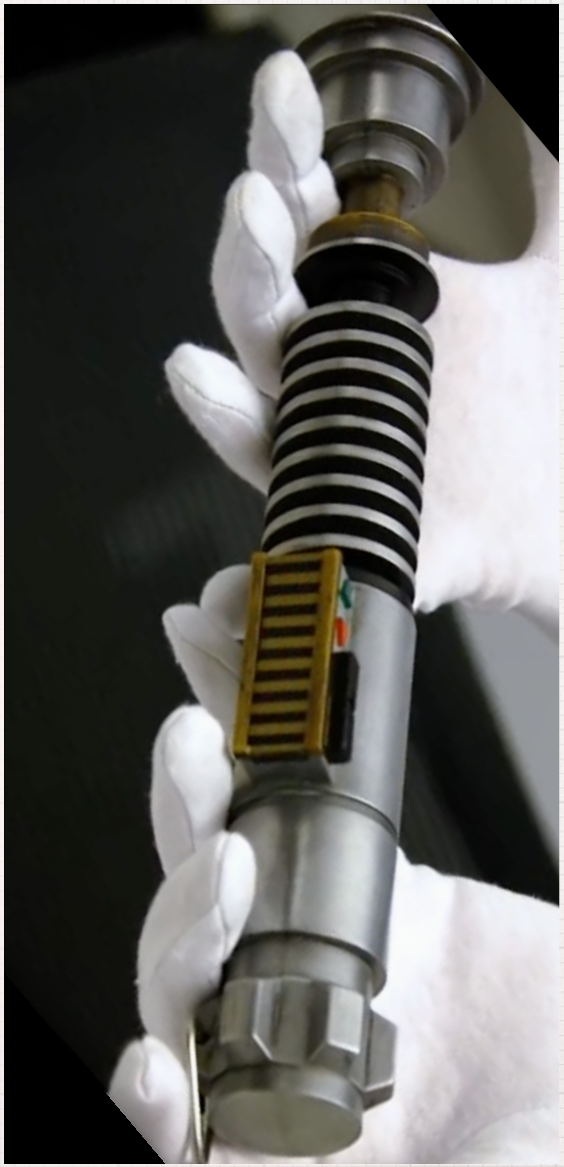
While it has key features unique to the TLJ, (the thicker rings and pommel cube shape), others, namely the control box, are different. There is no blade plug/retension system. Finally, this saber is clearly a painted resin cast.

There are two possibilities--

One, this is a stunt version cast from the hero for use in a rumored cut scene where Luke fights the Knights of Ren, or simply for museum display.

Two, this is the saber used onscreen, but it was retouched to appear metallic and had its box altered.





VISUAL DICTIONARY LIGHTSABERS

With every new movie, and sometimes just for the hell of it, Lucasfilm will release another edition of "The Visual Dictionary." Generally they are in-universe encyclopedias of costumes, props, ships, etc. of everything in the release it is timed to.

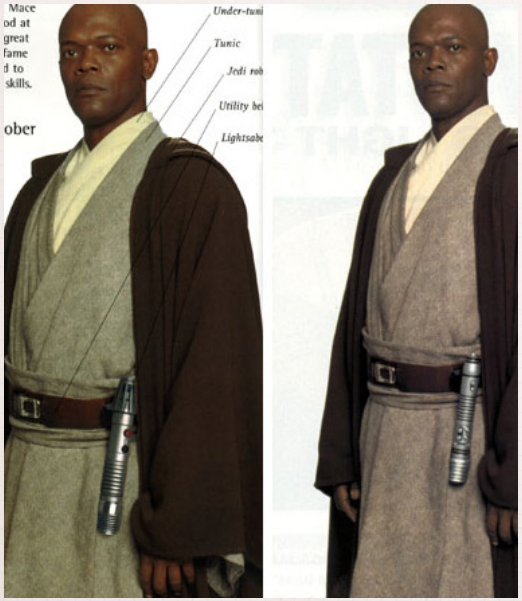
These guides often have access to the archives, and images are provided of props, and actors in costumes. So you'd think these could be one of the best resources for prop enthusiasts... right? Not so much.

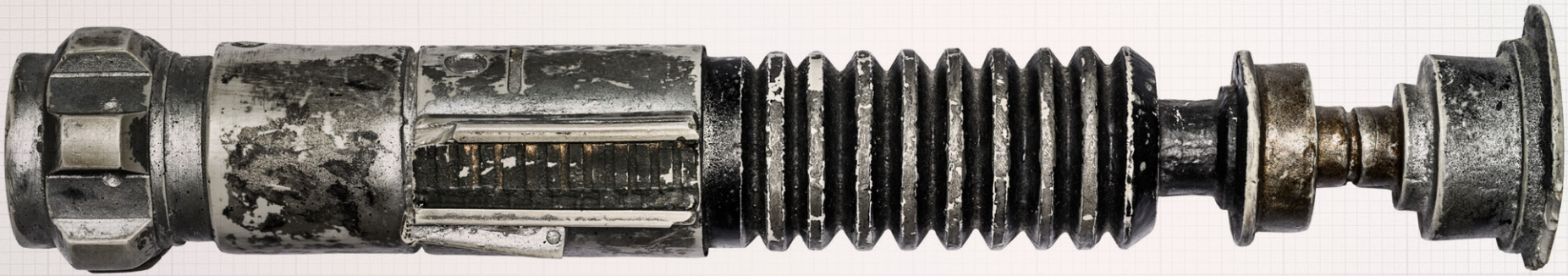
Here's what actually happens-- these books need to be ready for release when the movie premieres. That means they have to be created while the movies are in production. That means that the must rely on the production to supply them with images. Sometimes that goes smoothly, sometimes it does not. Sometimes certain props are not available, or the images themselves might be of an early version of the prop. Lucasfilm is notorious for having little quality control over correct prop representation in promotional images.

In the case of the OT, the guides were made in the 90s, and while access to the archives was there, a lot of the original props were simply gone. It fell to people like Don Bies to re-create them. Yoda's lightsaber was made by the MR founders as a one-off while creating things for the VD-- but Lucas ended up liking it and became canonized in the book.

Sometimes official copies from Icons or Master Replicas are used in place of the actual props. Much like the touring display sabers, you can look to these sabers for reference and basic design-- but never trust them for detail work.

This page has a few examples of incorrectly represented lightsabers from the pages of Visual Dictionaries.





APPENDIX

Luke Skywalker ROTJ pre-V3 resin cast lightsaber designed by Norman Harrison and Norank Engineering at Elstree Film Studios. Photograph found by D48thRonin in a March 2017 issue of Wired Magazine; high-res image found by Ridire Firean.

RIVETS VS SCREWS: FIGHT!!!

The method of how the T-Track grips on the ESB and TFA Graflex-based sabers are attached has been an ongoing debate for many, many years.

Here's a bit of history over the debate.

The first attempts to truly offer up a decent look of the Graflex came from Shane Johnson's SW Tech Journal (1993). Before that, the common myth going around AOL message boards was that Luke's lightsaber was a Graflex flash with windshield wiper blades for grips. Given that this was the VHS era, you couldn't actually tell the differences between the ANH and ESB versions outside of the glass eye being replaced by a second button. That was all we knew.

Using archive images and a fan-made replica made with 90s era knowledge, Johnson drew his blueprint and used rivets in the grip design. This seemed logical given that one of the few things clear onscreen in ESB is that the Kobold d-ring assembly uses rivets. You could see something was holding the grips down, and it certainly looked like little silver rivets.

The first Visual Dictionary in 1998 followed his lead, with our pal Don Bies making the first "official" fan replica. He used rivets.

Between these two sources, so to followed the first round of official replicas-- all of them using rivets. This cemented the idea into the minds of many to the point that when watching the film, all we could see were rivets.

But then Star Wars finally came to DVD and HD and later Blue Ray. With the ability to pause and pull HD screengrabs, the idea of screws gained momentum. The Ranch Saber gave us evidence that maybe the Dagobah saber used screws-- but little by little, the tide has turned. While there are hold outs for ESB rivets, the majority of the community has shifted into the screws camp.

As noted in the ESB section, we only see silver grip fasteners while on Hoth. Everywhere else, they are black. The popular theory is that in the cold of the Hoth scenes, the adhesive for the T-Track gave way and the grips would not stay on. To quickly solve this problem, they were more permanently screwed down, because again, they didn't think anyone would ever see such a detail. The silver vs black question could be painted silver screws, oxidized silver screws, or different color screws on different props.

Basic prop team logic says you make your fix as quick as possible. Self-tapping machine screws go in a lot faster than drilling out holes then popping in rivets.

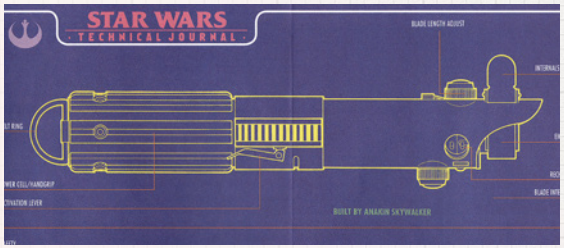
Verdict: ESB uses screws. They are usually black, though in exterior Hoth scenes, they are silver.

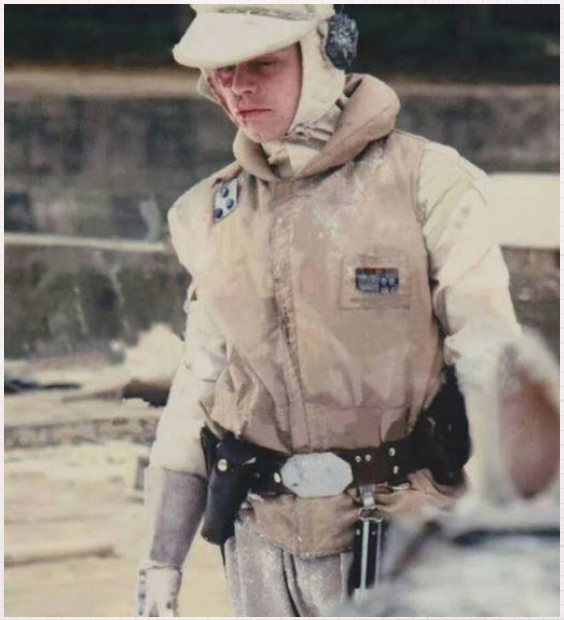
The predominant notion that rivets were used was so cemented into prop culture for so long, that the TFA prop team felt that rivets were the most obvious choice. The confusion returned when the Launchbay and Visual Dictionary both appeared to be using some sort of Hex or Torx screws on the grips. (This isn't contested, they actually do).

This programmed the notion into many minds that this was also what was used onscreen. The details are so tiny onscreen that it is hard to be definitive at times. But at the end of the day, there are a few shots, namely the one used on page 17, that make it clear to most that traditional pop rivets are used for the onscreen versions. Like with the ESB debate, there are a small number of holdouts.

Verdict: TFA uses pop rivets.

Now enjoy these images that confuse the issue--





CLAMP CARD GUIDE

• All ANH lightsabers use the magnification bubble strip from an Exactra 19 or 20 calculator, the Graflex and Obi-Wan's use the full 7 bubble strip, Vader's is trimmed to 5 and 3/4 bubbles.

• The ESB Graflex-based sabers make use of the edge connector of a circuit board in their clamps, the part of a PCB that slots onto the motherboard.

Many say it's either an HP-44 Bus Type circuit board or an Otis Elevator PCB, but neither has ever been 100% confirmed. PCBs are frequently similar and come from a variety of sources, so it's possible even the screen-used versions vary from individual prop to prop.

The most common elements of the PCB are: THICK gold bands, sometimes rounded, sometimes rectangular in shape; THIN traces that extend from the bands, sometimes from the center, sometimes at the edge. The bands are generally gold/copper, and the traces are tin. Depending on wear and tear, the tin may look either gold or silver

The Vader Barbican variant has thin traces, save for one at the end, which is thick. Since multiple cards could have been cut from multiple boards for multiple duplicate props, thicker bands are possible.

• Vader's ANH/"Black bars" saber uses an alternate Exactra calculator PCB with larger LEDs.

• Vader's ESB/ROTJ hero (and possibly the silver bars ANH) also uses the more standard Exactra PCB in conjunction with the bubbles.

• Luke's V2's PCB remains a mystery

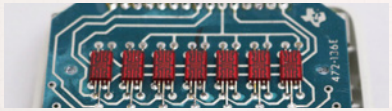
• Luke's V3 uses an ESB era card onscreen, but was replaced for museum tours.

• The production team for TFA made theirs from scratch based on what you see when you Google "HP-44 PCB"

Note: Exactra boards vary in color and design even within the same model run; the bubbles themselves tend to vary in translucence and "window" size making it hard to exactly determine what was used onscreen.

Standard ANH Exactra Bubbles

Vader ANH/ V2 "Black Bars"



Vader ESB/ROTJ HERO

Vader "Barbican"

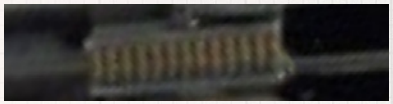
Ranch Saber

Rey TFA/TLJ

Luke ESB / Hoth

Luke ESB / Dagobah

Luke ESB / Bespin

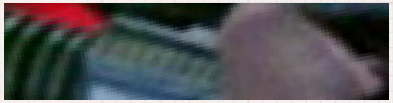


Luke ROTJ / V2

ROTJ / Hero (cave-build)

ROTJ / ISYHCANL

ROTJ / V3 (onscreen)



ROTJ / V3 (post ROTJ)

Luke TLJ

THE GRAFLEX 3 CELL FLASH

While not the rarest, or the most expensive of the real-world parts used in lightsaber builds, The Graflex is easily the most sought after.

It is unknown exactly where and when the source of identifying the part originated-- I myself read it from Shane Johnson on an AOL message board not long after the Tech Journal came out. As a photo-major in college I frequented photo-swap meets and within a month, had one in hand for mere dollars. Today I would be so lucky. The word is out.

There have been official replicas of the various versions of the Skywalker Lightsaber-- Icons, Master Replicas, Hasbro, Mattel, and The Prop Shop have all had their shot. There's also been nearly a dozen different unofficial fan recreations from sources such as Larbel, Parks, Korbanth, Roman's Empire, The Graflex Shop, 89 Sabers, Graflex Reborn and Biskit to name a few-- with more on the way.

Identifying a legit vintage Graflex and matching it to what was used onscreen has become a near full time job for admins of Graflex FB groups.

The RPF's Scottjua wrote a comprehensive guide to what to look for, it can be found HERE. If you want to determine if you're looking at a vintage or a replica, use this source.

If you can confirm you have a vintage, there are still a few details that vary to keep in mind if you want to spend the cash to make it into a lightsaber. First, all Graflex based sabers used a 3-Cell unit. The Graflex can come in 2, 3, 4, and even 5 cell versions. There's even a slave unit (sometimes called a sync or side-light) that is nothing more than the bulb holder.

The evolution over the decades of the Graflex was not a simple new model year with everything being upgraded. Parts were improved along the way, making for many variations of individual units. Here's the basic components, how they changed over time, and what was seen onscreen.

THE BODY - the upper and lower halves and the clamp were mostly unchanged. The earliest version, while having the shape we are familiar with, also has a set of grooved lines around the top, and the button was mounted on a length of thin metal, making it resemble a telegraph-- which is what this version is nicknamed. This model was not used to create any lightsaber props, but was used to create a concept blaster for Boba Fett.

The next version of the body was virtually unchanged for the rest of the multi-decade run. The primary difference was the thickness of the lip around the base, and the stamp on the base, which indicates the era it was made. While lip thickness seems to vary widely over the years, the stamps come in three forms:

- The Early Folmer Graflex, (stamped with "Made by the Folmer Graflex Corp. Rochester New York USA.")

- The Folmer Graflex with Patent, (stamped with "Made by the Folmer Graflex Corp. Rochester NY USA. Pat No. 2310165")

- The Graflex Inc. Patent, (stamped with "Manufactured by Graflex, Inc. Rochester NY USA. Pat No. 2310165")

THE BUTTON - the earliest version has a knurled strip, the button itself grows as the years pass. The strip position changes slightly through time. Somewhere in the Folmer Graflex with Patent era, the buttons got a major change-- the knurling shifted from being a strip, to covering the entire diameter of the knob, top to bottom. This style continued to the Graflex Inc. Patent model. The exact height of the button, the bezel, the step shape and the flatness of its top has variations over both styles of button.

THE GLASS EYE in its earliest form wasn't an eye at all-- but a cable port. As a lamp there are three basic versions: a deep bezel with a flat top lip, found mostly on Early Folmers and Patent Folmers; a thicker lipped shallow bezel found on later Patent Folmers; and one with a rounded top and polished surface found on the Graflex Inc. Patents.

SYNC PINS come in two variations, smooth, and tipped. Older Graflexes have smooth pins, while the newer models have the tipped.

For what is used onscreen-- here are the most basic details:

In ANH, the glass eye looks to be the deep bezel version, while the button is the full knurled style. A strip-knurled knob is used on the shared stunt.

In ESB, the Wampa cave saber is clearly an early Folmer; all buttons used on every saber are the full-knurled style; early Folmer strip-knurled buttons can be spotted on stunt sabers

In TFA, the endcap obscures the copyright info. The primary saber has either a late Folmer or Graflex Inc. eye; the official display versions made by the TFA prop team seem to be Graflex Inc. models.

In TLJ, Gralfex Inc. models are used seemingly exclusively.

...all that said, all the tiny button shape variations and glass eye alternates are constantly being found, inspected, and compared to what is onscreen, and are easily swappable.

Refer to the link above to see detailed images that get down to some very specific versions of which parts appear in which scenes if you are a stickler for the tiniest of details.

REAL WORLD PART SOURCES

The Graflex in its first life...

...and the MPP in its.

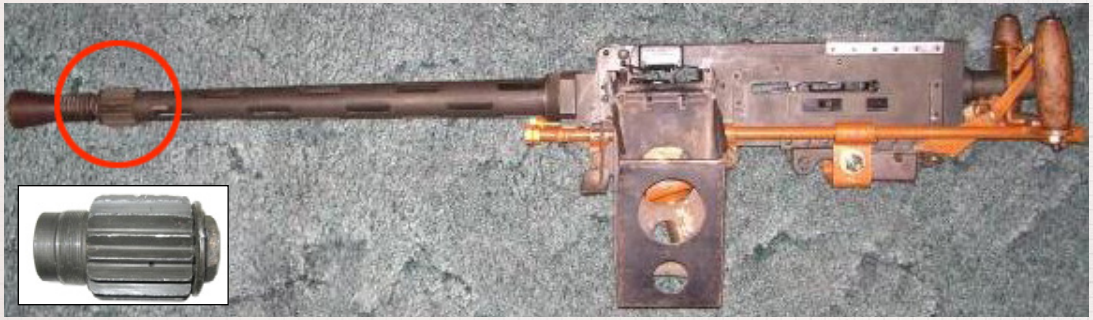
Was Obi-Wan HOT or COLD?

Obi-Wan's emitter and IG-88's head hiding inside an old jet engine, which demonstrates how random, and lucky the design of this lightsaber was to come together so perfectly for the film.

The Exactra 19 and 20. Bubbles and PCBs!

Rifle Rod Grenade. Not a sketchy weapon *at all. Yeesh!*

Vintage T-Track found by Kal Kamel in Malaysia



Obi-Wan's "booster/gear" at home on an aircraft machine gun

IMAGE GALLERY

A wooden buck and the cast it may have birthed, likely early steps in the creation of the Shared Stunt sabers.

Two buttons on Dagobah!

The pre-Barbican ANH Vader stunt in ROTJ rehearsals

The Vader MOM Stunt and the V3 in action

The ANH Shared Stunt in ESB rehearsal

RPF founder Brandon Alinger reunites Mark Hamil with the V2 after 34 years apart

Shooting the ISYHCANL insert shot

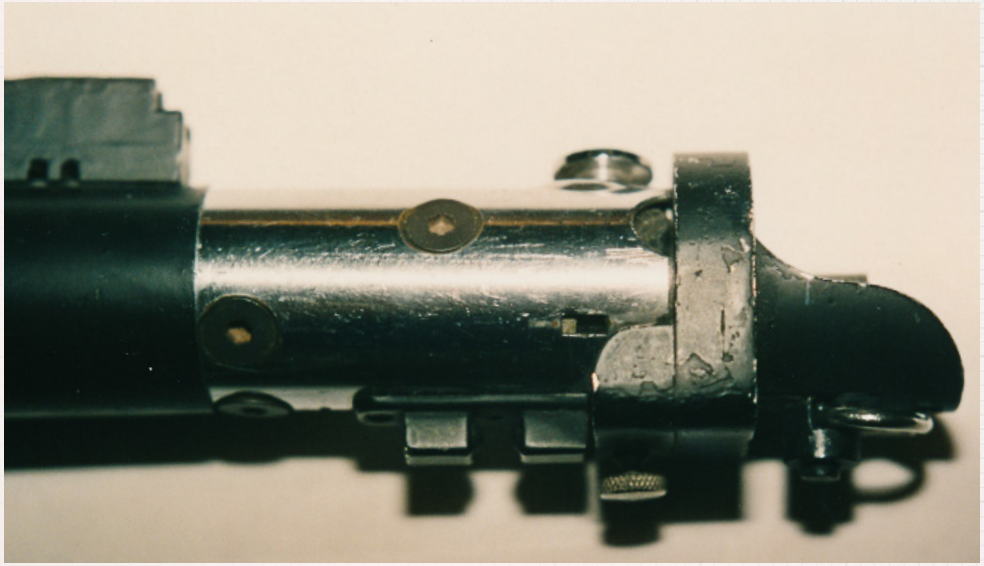
A rebel extra uses a Shared Stunt as some sort of tool

Kirschner using a Shared Stunt to choreograph and block the ESB duel

Vader inspires Al Williamson to screw up. (This is a funny joke. I swear.)

Roger Christian revisits his creations

This image suggests that the ANH may be a Folmer due to the glass eye shape



This began its life as Luke's ESB bladed stunt, only to become a Vader stunt in ROTJ, was seen in the Archives book and dubbed as the "hero ROTJ saber, aka the MoM saber.

R2D2 and a V3 resin stunt

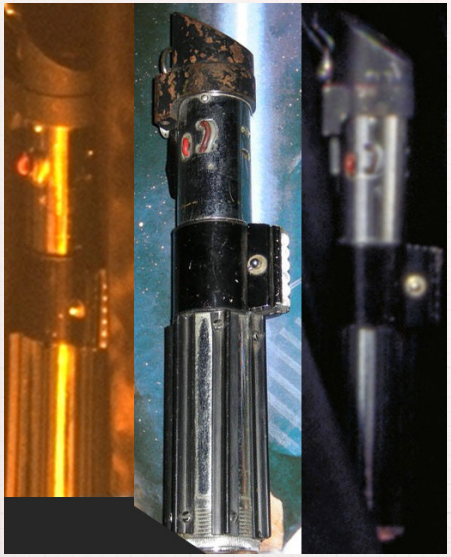
Bob Anderson rehearsing with a Shared Stunt

A resin V3, doing stunt work

The Last Graflex

The Kobold flash, also used as droid callers

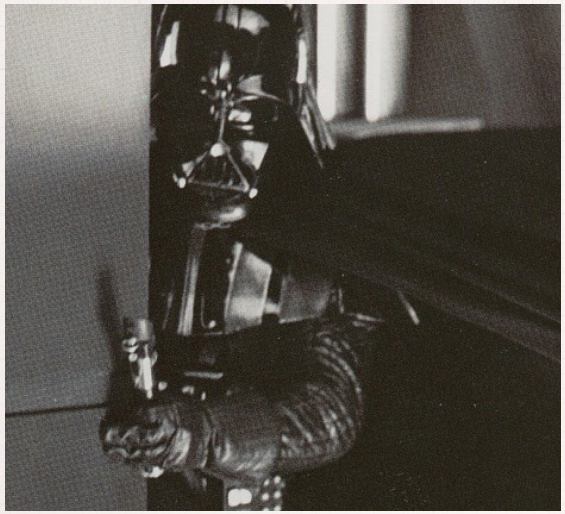
ESB rehearsal. Hamil with an ANH stunt, Prowse with ab Obi-Wan Shared Stunt



Screenshot confirmation of the Vader ESB Hero

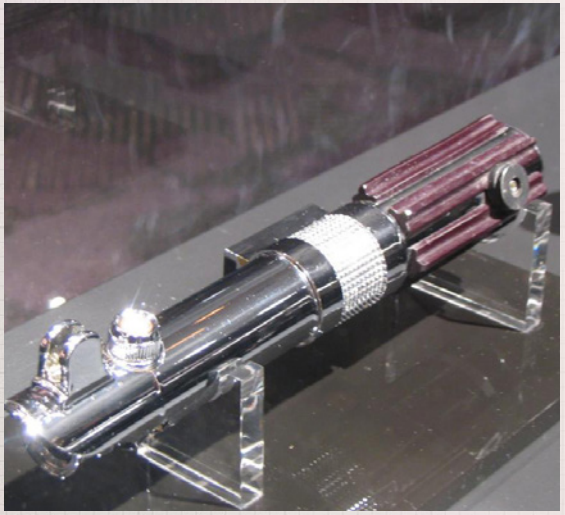
V2 in the before time

Minutes later, a Shared Stunt got a HUGE promotion.



The Darth Vader ESB hero.

Profile of the V2 lever. Still a mystery part.



Chromed rubber skinnyflex, looking like hot garbage.

From the TFA trailer, our first reveal of the fact that the Graflex was returning... and that it was different... again...

Luke's ROTJ stunt double with the pre-Barbican stunt saber.

Shared stunt / V2 in an ESB BTS video

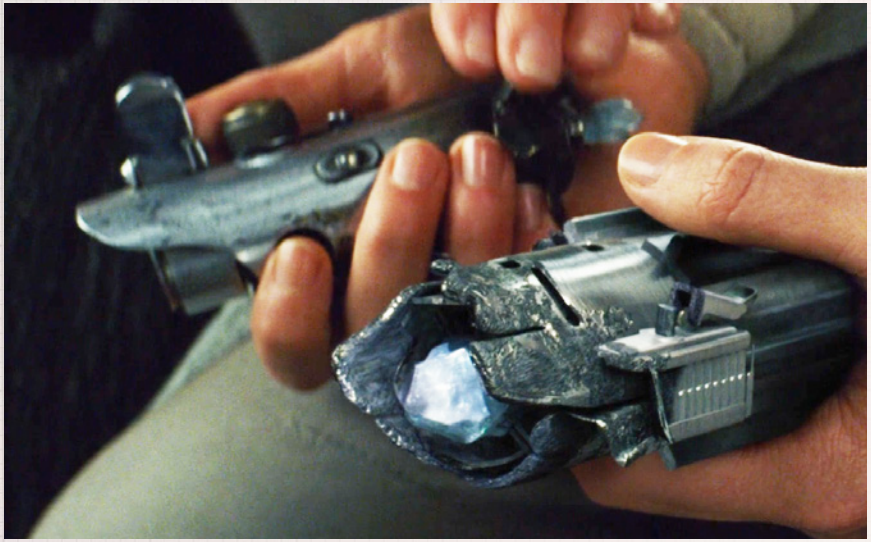
No screws, no rivets, no grips!

The V3 being used on set as a stunt in ESB, likely for blocking purposes.

V2 or V3?

V2 on Endor

Palpy doesn't know a V2 from a Grafler... n00b.



The Broke-Flex... Not a 2.0 as many theorized... but still a mystery, likely digitally retouched.

The TLJ resin Graflex stunt right before Luke chucks it over his shoulder.

A particularly messy detailed TLJ Graflex stunt with extra notched grips and a peeling PCB. Some apparatus lays atop the grips, possibly part of a rig to float the saber into Kylo's hand.

Included for baddassery's sake.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While I am credited with "writing" this document, it must be said that I am the originator of VERY LITTLE of the information in this bible. I have only done minuscule amounts of research like tracking down the ranch saber texture tape.

With this guide, I am merely recapitulating all known lightsaber info into one place for easy reference. All of the details, measurements, parts identification, and more, is due to the diligent and never-ending work of the members of the RPF.

I've culled from countless threads where pieces have been discovered, measured, investigated, and replicated by a wide variety of members. Their hard work is what is being presented here. While I am reticent to give names, because I'll no doubt forget somebody important, there are a few people who do stand out for having done hours upon hours of real investigation and research and were willing to talk with me to fill in gaps or supply images: **James Kenobi 1138, thd9791, Veektohr, PoopaPapaPalps, Kurtyboy, Halliwax, Anubis Guard, Kal Kamel, ms80444, Serenity, Drew Baker, Adam Wells, D48thRonin, Ridire Firean, Fusion, JoeK3rr,** and **Parfaitelumiere.**

Most of all-- a special thanks to **Teecrooz, ScottJua, Gino,** and **Chaim / Sym-Cha.** True lightsaber archivists with great collections of images that provide immeasurable insight, and in some cases, first-hand accounts of the actual props. Any image in this bible that is not a screencap very likely came from one of them.

And I should thank Lucasfilm, and George Lucas himself for all of this even if I'm still mad about the Prequels.

Much of the information here is thanks to the work being done by **Roy Gilsing** (wannawanga.com), **Anakin "Dan" Starkiller**, and **Roman Gomez** (romanprops.com) to faithfully recreate hard to locate parts and saber components. Their work is intrinsically tied to investigating the origin of the sabers, as well as determining how to recreate them.

Though it hasn't been updated since the web ran on nothing other than HTML and duct tape, partsofsw.com was, and remains, the starting point for so many saber collectors/builders out there. Much of the core information and terminology we know comes from there; even if much of it is now out of date. That site essentially did what this guide does—cull all the available information into one place… but **Chris Trevas** and **Chris Reiff** had to do it by slogging through AOL threads, Geocities pages, sorta-legal archivers access, and incredibly low res images.

Also, saving me a lot of time, the graflexbank.com by **Brage Borgsø** has gathered as much info on the Graflex sabers as possible, and much of his work is shared here.

Finally, none of this would be possible without **Brandon Alinger** who both founded theRPF.com and provided first-hand information about particular lightsaber props.

In an attempt to be thorough while eliminating speculation, unless noted otherwise, all images seen are from screen grabs, promotional material, or verified photos of the actual props. All photos are credited to their owners. It's the internet, photos get passed around, if your image is used here and you get no credit, please let me know.

Finally, while I strive for this to be accurate, some things are still a mystery. Much of this information relies on evidence-based educated guess-work. From time to time, discoveries are made and what is considered confirmed often turns out not to be.

CONCLUSION

Information fluctuates. Facts change when new evidence arrives. Just as the first draft of this book was finished, new images of the V2 showed up in a video.

Currently, this book is the most up to date assembly of data on the lightsabers props of the saga.

But parts still remain a mystery— what kind of transistors were those on the Obi-Wan hero? What is the control box on the Vader MOM?

Is it possible that in some cases, propmasters actually managed to make indistinguishable copies and will we learn that there were a dozen hero sabers in ESB and we just didn't know it?

Who knows! As new info reaches the community, I'll do my best to keep this guide updated

Thanks for reading!
Seth M. Sherwood

ABOUT ME

Star Wars fan since age 4. Graphic Designer for 15 years. Professional screenwriter with an imdb page and movies you can actually see for about 5 years. I also never learned to type, and am generally operating on either 13 or 4 hours of sleep-- nothing in between. I live in Los Angeles, and my Zen hobby is making custom lightsabers with an OT aesthetic.

I am NOT the travel writer for the NYT and he REALLY hates getting my fanmail and death threats about Star Wars and Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

CHANGELOG

All future revisions and archived versions of this bible will be noted here.

Version .5: January 2017
- Beta copy

Version 1: January 2017
- typos and grammatical errors revised
- additional V2 images added
- shared stunt / V3 information revised
- Luke ROTJ "hero" Archives image added

Version 2: February 2017
- typos and grammatical errors revised
- V2 and V3 info updated and revised
- PCB card details updated and revised
- Obi-Wan hero page updated and revised
- DV ESB Hero page updated and revised
- Luke ESB stunt page updated and revised
- new gallery images added
- dedicated Revenge of the Sith page added

Version 3: December 2017
- typos and grammatical errors revised
- overview sections added
- all ESB Graflex sabers revised
- Vader Rogue One page added
- TLJ Graflex information added
- Luke Hero TFA/TLJ sections added
- Prequel sabers section added (under protest)
- Sequel sabers section added
- Apocryphal sabers section added
- glossary added
- Yuma section revised
- gallery expanded
- T-Track information revised
- reveal saber page added

Version 3.5: January 2018
- typos and grammatical errors revised
- revisions made after notes from Brandon Alinger

Version 3.75: May 2018
- typos and grammatical errors revised
- revisions made on all TLJ material
- additional gallery images added
- reveal saber entry removed