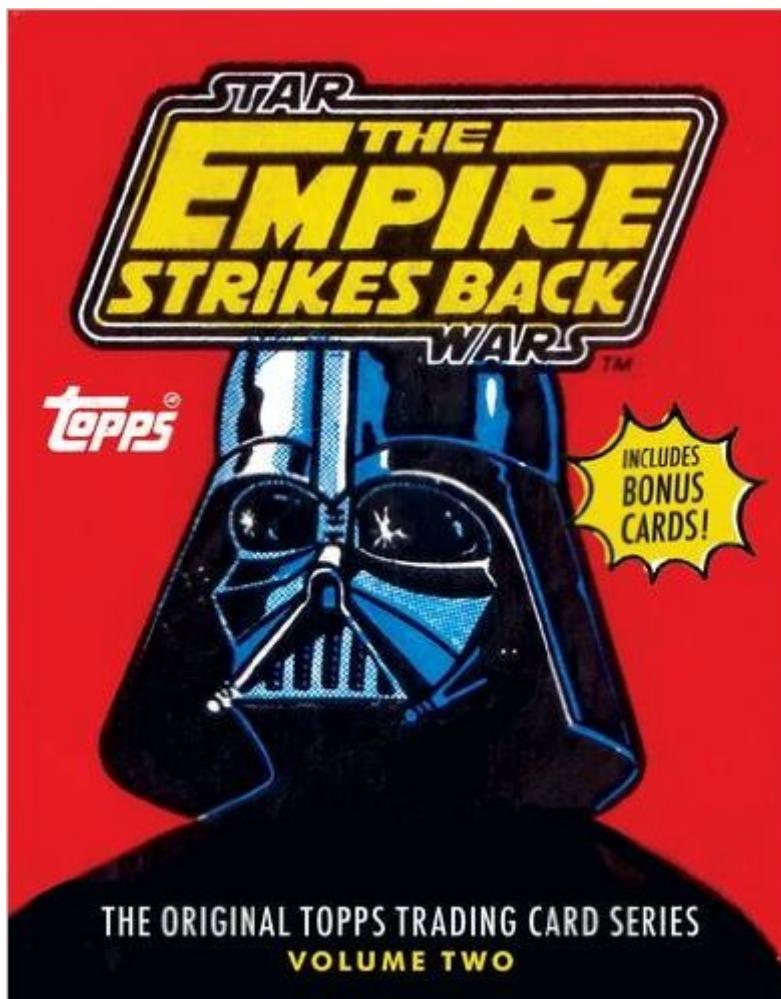


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Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back: The Original Topps Trading Card Series, Volume Two (Topps Star Wars)



Synopsis

In 1980, following the success of Star Wars (1977) and five tie-in trading card series based on the blockbuster film, Topps released three new series of collectible bubble gum cards to coincide with the release of The Empire Strikes Back. Now, for the first time, all 352 cards and 88 stickers are reprinted in a single deluxe volume. Reproducing the fronts and backs of each card, this collection includes character pro-files, story cards, movie facts, quotes, trivia, and puzzles featuring beloved characters and scenes from The Empire Strikes Back. Also included are four bonus trading cards, the Photo Card series, rare promotional images, and an introduction and commentary by Gary Gerani, the original editor of Topps' Star Wars series.  Images courtesy of the Robert V. Conte Collection.  Also available from Topps: Star Wars: Return of the Jedi, Volume Three; Star Wars: Return of the Jedi, Volume Three, The Original Topps Trading Card Series, Volume Two; and Star Wars Galaxy: The Original Topps Trading Card Series.

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Customer Reviews

Amazing full color images of the original cards released for Empire Strikes back. Unlike Volume One however, each card does not get a full page to shine. Most cards have to share with the reverse of the card. Unfortunately, Topps shows that they could have given each card its own page, by doing it for some cards, while shrinking others. Also disappointing is at the end when they reprint the oversized cards. Instead of turning the horizontal oriented cards 90 degrees and showcasing them

like their vertical counterparts, Topps shrinks them down and prints smaller images so the reader doesn't have to turn the book. The trade-off would have been OK Topps, if I had to turn the book to view the image. I would have been viewing a bigger and better quality image. I also didn't see as many notes this time around on the individual cards as I did with Volume One. That is just my perception though, as I haven't sat down and counted them to see if there is an actual difference. Overall, try to see it in person before buying.

For some reason they decided to shrink the size of the landscape-oriented cards and a lot of the detail is lost. In contrast, the portrait-oriented cards are presented slightly larger than actual size (similar to how they appeared in the first volume) and the difference in image quality is striking (and kind of frustrating when you realize how much better the landscape cards COULD have looked). I appreciate that they were cramming the fronts and backs of each card on the same page, so some downsizing was necessary---but there is a LOT of white space bordering these spreads that could have contained more card image. Still recommend the book as a handy means to browse the entire card set, but a big step backwards from the previous volume.

I like this volume better than the first one. I am in favor of having front and back of each featured on each page. I was not happy the backs were left out in the first volume. My biggest complaint of this volume and the first one is the size, it could have been the same as most other hardcovers without any trouble.

I love this series of books, and they are well worth the price. The presentation, layout, and artwork are fantastic. I have been tempted many times to assemble a full set of the Topps series for the Star Wars films, but I think I prefer having these books instead. My only minor nitpick is with the comments under some of the cards. Seems like so much more information could be shared or at least the information could be accurate. However, they are really nice books, and I look forward to completing the set with Return of the Jedi.

Star Wars has now spread its good and evil mythology clear across multiple generations. The release of yet another brand new film featuring familiar old characters has simply catalyzed the spark that has never faded since 1977. And of course merchandising, swathes of it, always goes with successful pop culture endeavors. In the pre-internet, pre-mobile, somewhat pre-VCR, somewhat pre-universally instantaneous gratification world of 1980, movies simply didn't exist on

demand, at least not to the extent that they do today. Anyone wanting to watch scenes from their favorite movies had to possess a tape, clear the living room or one of the televisions in the house and fast forward or quick search relentlessly through squiggly static to reach the desired sequence. And sometimes the tapes decided to break. Not to mention the era's relatively microscopic television screens. A much easier, and by far cheaper, way to relive and re-imagine movies back then was through the highly analog medium of trading cards. Precious images preserved on fragile wafers of treated cardboard could conjure up a slew of memories from the big screen. Collecting them all and wafting through them in sequence could even somewhat recreate the movie itself. Instant partial gratification at best, but gratification nonetheless. And what fervent Star Wars fan in 1980 didn't want to re-live the dramatic sequel to Star Wars over and over until almost every frame was committed to memory? "The Empire Strikes Back," if anything, outdid expectations for a cinematic sequel. Even back then sequels tended to wither pathetically in juxtaposition to their original source films. Not so with Star Wars. Many still consider the second released movie, also known as "Episode V," as one of the finest of the entire series. It had everything: more evil, ickier and scarier monsters, grittier comedy, thunderous battle scenes, a darker overall mood and feel, carbonite, dysfunctional families, and even smooching. Once again, the merchandising mills went into full throttle and Topps stepped up to deliver the cards once again. And once again people flocked to the shiny wax packs containing those same cards along with something else that they claimed was chewing gum. Opinions vary on that last item. Similar to the original theatrical releases, fans of the original, now historical, Star Wars cards have probably eagerly awaited the sequel to the book that reproduces every single card. Volume two has arrived. Once again, the dust jacket feels almost exactly like a wax pack. Once again, under the dust jacket, the famous gum pictures appear on the front and back covers. Once again, an introduction provides the landscape for how the cards were produced and distributed. Gary Gerani, who personally worked on the cards, relates how the Star Wars empire, an accurate description by 1980, allowed him to read an early script of "The Empire Strikes Back." It did obscure some of the most shocking plot revelations, though. He also talked Topps into increasing the number of cards in each series. Apparently, the frustrating problem of far too few production stills didn't plague this series quite as much as the Episode IV cards. They agreed, but he also convinced them to reduce the third series from 132 down to 88 cards. In retrospect, probably a good idea. The book does reproduce every "Empire Strikes Back" card, sticker and puzzle, from the first series' title card to the final card numbered 352, the third series' checklist. Sadly, this time many of the cards appear in greatly reduced size. Possibly due to the increased number of the cards or maybe someone wanted to display the fronts and backs of all

cards together. Whatever the reason, the smaller size does detract somewhat from the presentation. Thankfully, many cards also do appear in full size complete with their full sized backs. Happily, one of the set's most beautiful cards, the gorgeous shot of Yoda captioned "Welcome, Young Luke," does appear full size. As in the first volume, many cards also have captional comments from the author. He admits to making up some of the dialog printed on many cards, including the one just quoted. Overall, this series has a more professional and polished look than its predecessor. Topps also seemed more prepared this time around. As such, no memorable production problems, such as the infamous bawdy C-3PO card from the Star Wars green series, or the often humorous creative repetition of images, occurred. So this volume also lacks some of the hilarious episodes contained in the first volume. It also pales somewhat in the amount of textual commentary. Ultimately, it arguably lacks a little of volume one's fun as well. But it's still plenty fun and it does a great job of presenting the entire run of "Empire Strikes Back" trading cards as well as the presumably rarer "Giant Photocards" series. The cards themselves preserve many unforgettable images from the movie - and some that didn't appear. The rag-tag grizzled bounty hunters, featured on numerous cards, always make for great images. Yoda, especially in his earlier analog "Muppet" incarnation, also provides ample eye candy throughout. "Star File Official Business" cards from series one reveal some interesting tidbits, some of which many would probably now consider inaccurate or misleading. Here we learn that Luke Skywalker is 22, Princess Leia is 20, Han Solo is 30, Chewbacca is a staggering 200, Boba Fett is 43 and Darth Vader just hit 50. Yoda's age says 973. That's pretty precise. Each series more or less follows the movie's story line in chronological order. The second series does trail off towards the end with captions such as "Gifted Performer," "Windswept Chewbacca," "Our Favorite Protocol Droid" and "Dashing Han Solo." Series Three feels more random. Series One and Three also included "Space Paintings" by Frank MacQuarrie. These probably suffer the most in reduced size. "Starcraft" in series two showcases various Star Wars vehicles, including Boba Fett's "Slave I" and the Bespin Cloud Car. Series Three began with action comic renderings of the main characters. Behind the scenes footage also appears in Series Two and Three. Irvin Kershner gets his own card, but George Lucas doesn't seem to appear. The cards' back sides also didn't go to waste. Some relate the story line, others movie facts, some quizzes and some quote memorable lines from the film. A mega-dose of nostalgia awaits in this book for anyone who accumulated these cards in their younger, possibly much younger, years. Others may gain an education on late twentieth century merchandising and marketing techniques. Despite its flaws, in particular the numerous reduced sized cards, the book still has plenty to offer Star Wars or trading card fans. To top it all off, what could be better than even more cards? Identical to Volume One, this

installment also includes bonus cards bundled up tight and bursting with spasmodic anticipation inside the back cover. As if that wasn't enough, an additional volume once again awaits. Topps also produced cards for "Return of the Jedi." Aged fans can now also relive the agonizing wait between installments. Eternal recurrence begins to ring true.

I would have liked more comments about the cards and more insight into how these are cards were produced but as simple pictures of the cards it succeeds.

Great book that gives you a flashback of yesteryear when you were at the 5 and 10 store buying these by the pack!

It was a birthday present to my son which is a hugh Star Wars fan.

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