

On-location: Tatooine

by Jon Bradley Snyder

Rick McCallum and David West Reynolds explore exotic prequel possibilities in Tunisia



Tunisian art director Taieb Jallouli, who worked on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in 1980, led the team to these otherworldly sand formations in an area that was inaccessible until a recent road was built.



High above a chasm, this eerie abandoned city still keeps watch over the remote mountain passes near Algeria.



A *ksar*, or fortified granary, is made up of individual chambers called *ghorfas*. This kind of architecture will be part of the look of Tatooine in the prequels.



This abandoned *ksar* is under consideration for a ruined settlement on Tatooine.

When Lucasfilm producer Rick McCallum needed to do new location scouting in Tunisia last December the first thing he did was contact David West Reynolds. No one had kept records during the location shooting of *Star Wars* in 1976, and many of the remote locations went completely undocumented. Thanks to his April 1995 expedition to Tunisia, Reynolds was now the world's leading authority on the Tatooine location sites. McCallum read the piece in the *Star Wars Insider* three days before leaving on the scout. He then called Reynolds and with characteristic bluntness stated, "We are going to Tunisia to scout locations for the *Star Wars* prequels and we need your help."

A few days after the phone conversation a plane ticket arrived for Reynolds in the mail. Soon he was departing for the city of Tunis to meet up with McCallum, prequel production designer Gavin Bocquet and prequel production supervisor David Brown, all veterans of one of the longest continuous location shoots of all time—the first three seasons of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* (almost three straight years of shooting!). Along with Tunisian art director Taieb Jallouli, who worked on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, they would all pile into a Land Cruiser and, in Reynold's words "range across Tunisia's amazing landscapes for the next week and a half, in search of another planet."

For a moment forget everything you've heard about computer graphics and digital special effects. Discussion of the *Star Wars* prequels can become so weighted down with talk about technological advances in special effects that one

is left with the impression that the new films will be completely generated by a bank of Silicon Graphics work stations. In fact, location shooting will be the cornerstone of the prequels. "George Lucas was keen on using real geography as the basis for images of other worlds," explains Bocquet. "Digital effects may be used to enhance locations, but as with the previous trilogy, the location's strength will be its grounding in reality."

The creative process regarding settings for the new story is quite fluid. McCallum and Bocquet are currently considering sites in India, Iceland and the former Soviet Union. According to Bocquet some photos have already been sent back to Lucasfilm and are being examined for conceptual design. The location work they do now ultimately will aid in the creation of a final shooting script. (That's where Tunisia comes in. Tatooine will play a role in the prequels. New location scouting will ultimately help define that role.)

McCallum was interested in finding as many locations as possible from the original film in addition to scouting sites that had never been seen before. As he led the crew on what seemed like a wild goose chase in the desert, Reynolds began to feel pressure to prove his worth to the expedition. Just when they seemed hopelessly lost in the Sahara, Reynolds came up over a dune and revealed the site of the fiberglass krayt dragon bones he had discovered eight months earlier. "It's just possible," McCallum remarked jokingly at the time, "that you weren't a complete waste of money."

Reynolds went on to lead them to the island of Djerba where they revisited

