



Update: Han Solo's Name Is Actually Han Solo Unless it's not

The Star Wars hype cycle is sort of like the Marvel hype cycle combined with the Beyoncé hype cycle multiplied by the level of anticipation that greets a papal conclave. And now that we're getting at the very least one Star Wars movie a year, the franchise's rumor mill is getting an Industrial Revolution-style upgrade. This is why the internet went into overdrive when Disney CEO Bob Iger explained that the forthcoming "young Han Solo" solo film will tweak some important franchise mythology. "[The film] picks up Han Solo when he was 18 years old and takes him through to when he was 24," Iger told an audience at USC's business school. "There were a few things that happened [that were] significant in Han Solo's life, like acquiring a certain vehicle and meeting a certain Wookiee, that will happen in this film. But you'll also discover how he got his name." The last bit caused the uproar: Was Han Solo's name not always Han Solo? What is his real name? We were as curious as anybody; I still like Henry Walton Jones Jr. as an outside favorite.

Speaking at the annual Star Wars Celebration fan event in Orlando—which I am pretty sure is longer than the Passover holiday—Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy tried to set the record straight, but left us with even more questions.

"I'm not sure that that's entirely what Bob meant," Kennedy told MTV. "There's more to Han Solo's name, but it's not that it's not his name. It's obviously his name. It will always be his name."

That is a strong clarification. Unless it's not. What's in a name, anyway? Let's parse.

"I'm not sure that that's entirely what Bob meant."

Impressive work from Kennedy here—no one likes having to correct your boss, especially if that boss is a dark-horse 2020 presidential candidate. The phrasing is delicate, but the meaning is crystal clear: Bob Iger might have said Han Solo isn't Han Solo, but he was dead wrong. Alternately: He was correct, but following the fan uproar in response, Kennedy and the rest of the Lucasfilm squad decided that telling the story of how Han Duo became Han Solo isn't worth the consternation.

"There's more to Han Solo's name ..."

What is the "more" here? Is Han Solo a nickname? Just the Solo part? Was he born Hans Solo? Is the "more" just a European s?

"... but it's not that it's not his name."

Unless he is named Han Solo. This is the "Who's on First" of fan convention interviews. Han Solo, it follows, is named Han Solo, because the "more" is something else? There's something deeper about his name, but it's ... not that his name is not Han Solo? I have a headache, and suddenly have a greater appreciation for the kind of life scenarios that might lead you to land your plane on the wrong runway.

"It's obviously his name."

I'm taking this at face value. Han Solo's name is Han Solo.

"It will always be his name."

That's good, but also obvious: In the films in the Star Wars franchise that include Han Solo, he's named ... Han Solo. We know this, because he appears in those films under the name "Han Solo." Kennedy isn't answering the right question here. The question she's chosen to answer is, "What will Han Solo's name be in the future, at the point on the Star Wars timeline after the four movies that have established his name is already Han Solo?" The question we want to have answered is, "What was Han Solo's name in the period of time featured in this upcoming Young Han movie?" Of course Han Solo "will always be his name": We have that on record, in a bunch of movies!

Which leaves us back at square one. One thing I do know: My name never was Han Solo, and never will be. I hope that's not true for Han Solo.

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