



Text by Matt Jevon

I was recently given this picture, signed by David Prowse—the original actor who played Darth Vader—by one of my students. It's awesome. Why? Well I am a bit of a Star Wars fan and a lot of a geek anyway, but also, there is a little sub-culture in technical diving, especially cave and rebreather diving, in which divers like to refer to themselves as members of the dark side! It's kind of cool... For us anyway and we like the T-shirts. There are several other sub-cultures in technical diving. For example, I was told once that I was an **ideal candidate for technical diving since I rode a motorcycle, had tattoos and listened to heavy metal music. Guilty as charged.**

But let's look at this seriously for a minute. Why do these things appeal to us? Why do we like to be recognised and to have a group identity? Well, we could fall back on the "that-is-human-nature" argument, and certainly, there are

cogent points to be made for this idea. We could argue that it is down to our socialization; it is considered the norm to be part of a social group with the same values and aspirations. Of course, there are some outliers who will proudly say

they would not want to be part of any group that would have them (thanks Mr Marx). In effect, though, most of these people are not true loners; otherwise, we would never know about them. In reality, proudly not being in a sub-culture is, in

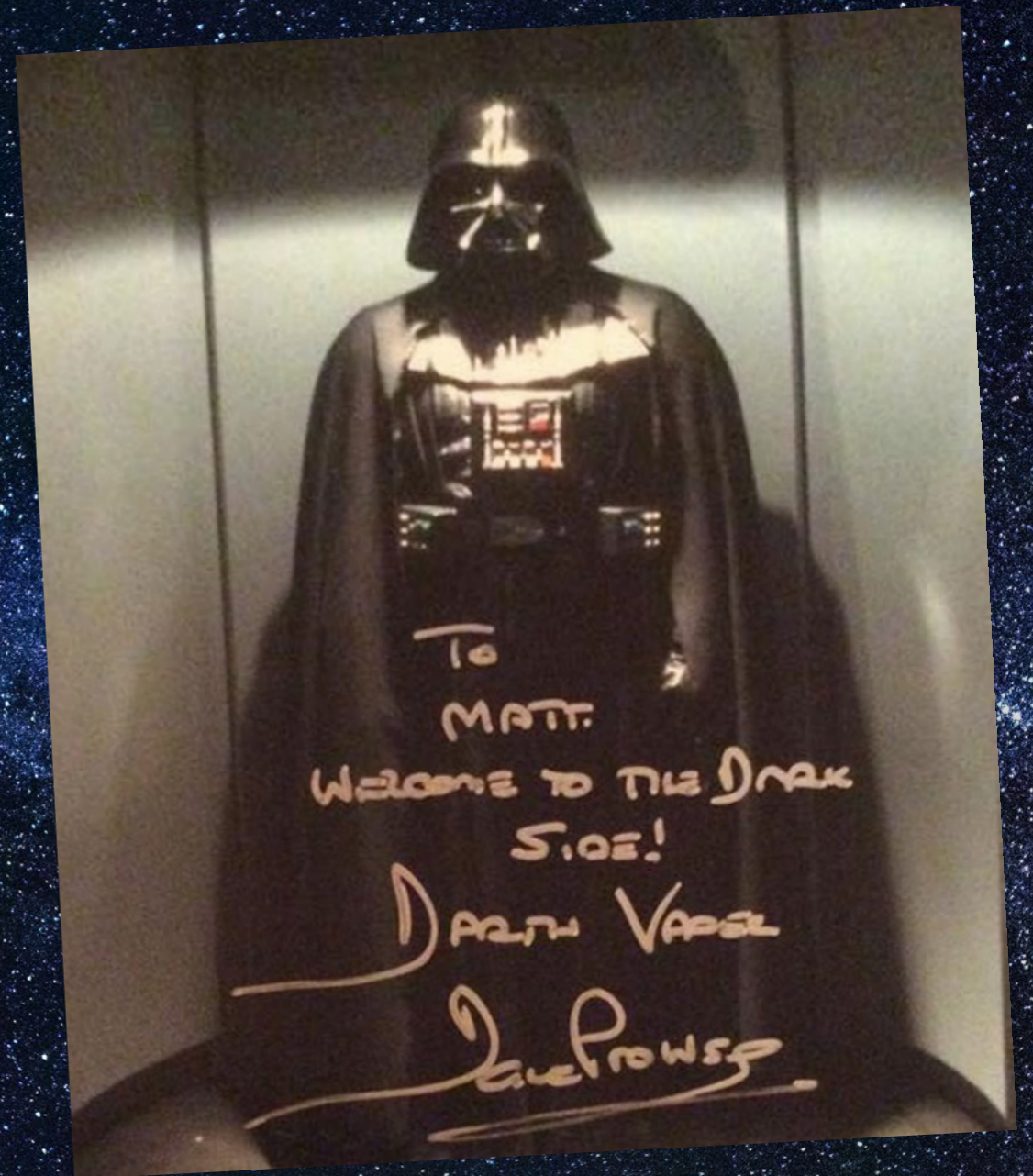
fact, just another sub-culture.

Group identity

Having both our individual and group identity and culture helps normalise our behaviours; it provides expectations of

Peer Pressure

In the Dark Side



BACKGROUND IMAGE: PIXABAY





DIVE PREPARED.

BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS THE FUTURE.



No matter how much you train or how well you plan, accidents can still happen. And there is no crystal ball to predict when you may find yourself facing an emergency. The smart solution is to make sure you and your family are protected against the unforeseen. DAN's **Dive Accident Insurance** exists for those "just in case" moments.

2016 Dive Related Illness/Injuries (Cases / %)

Barotrauma	44%
Decompression Sickness	28%
Marine Envenomation	9%
Other	9%
Motion Sickness	2%
Non-Fatal Drowning	2%
Pulmonary Edema - IPE	2%
Fatality	2%
Arterial Gas Embolism (AGE)	2%

SMALL COST. BIG BENEFIT.
 DAN's **Dive Accident Insurance** benefit provides coverage of up to \$500,000 for medical dive accident expense and pays 100% of eligible expenses. Considering a diving-related injury or illness can set you back thousands of dollars, it pays to be prepared.

DAN.org/JOIN



age bad decisions, driven by a desire to present themselves as acceptable potential group members.

I saw this recently by a diver on a Facebook group. In an attempt to promote this person's own standing, a litany of behaviours were self-reported, which were deviant from good technical diving practices, deviant from standards set by respected agencies in the field, and exceeding limits of training and experience. When challenged, the response was defensive

how we will behave in a group and is very, very powerful. This is where the danger lies. Sometimes the group can carry people with it beyond the point of acceptable behaviour, beyond the boundary of calculated risk, and far more dangerously, can, in the visibility of their achievements to aspirant members of that group, encour-

and demeaning of the commentators. When offered help, it was used as a stick with which to beat the challengers, but, ultimately not taken up.

Strive for understanding

Rather than dismiss criticism out of hand, let's strive for understanding. We witnessed these behav-

iours because the diver wanted to be accepted into a technical diving community, but the diver's values were at odds with the possible communities that diver could join. Perhaps the diver felt he or she needed to boost his or her image and made claims about dives done, which backfired. Instead of gaining respect, the diver gained criticism, and was then caught in a corner with no escape. Perhaps the challenges put to the diver, mine included, put up perceived barriers the diver could not see a way past. Or, perhaps the diver had, indeed, a poor attitude.

For whichever of these reasons, the diver became motivated to prove him or herself to the group by making big claims and assertions. In other more dangerous circumstances—that is, in the water rather than online—that same response could have resulted in injury or death.

Instructors always train divers not to succumb to peer pressure. Any

diver can abort the dive at any time without question or reproach. Do not underestimate the power of the group to demand compliant behaviour, though, as well as the strength of the desire people have to be seen to be a part of that group, if not a leader. Particularly do not underestimate the ability of the group to make a bad decision, which then leads an individual beyond the person's physical, technical and mental abilities.

Dive safe. Oh, and may the Force be with you! ■

Technical trimix and cave diver, Matt Jevon, is a technical and CCR instructor with TDI, IANTD and PADI. He is also the JJ-CCR instructor and dealer for Ireland. Jevon has held accreditations as an interdisciplinary sports scientist, sports psychologist and was a British Olympic registered strength and conditioning coach.

