

MOVIE REVIEW

The beloved franchise is still going strong

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"Star Wars: The Last Jedi" can be classified as *the* movie which will split the fanbase. But why is it so polarising? As I left the theatre, shaking from the adrenaline, I found myself caught in a dichotomy between what I loved about the movie and what could have been done better.

Let's get something out of the way. In my opinion, the movie is quintessential Star Wars. During the movie's relatively longer runtime of two and a half hours, I had an odd sense of nostalgia pulling me in to every scene. Emotions I felt only when watching the original trilogy. It is an amazing feat by director Rian Johnson to bring out those emotions in the old fanbase while making something that's completely new and fresh.

The premise of this instalment is fairly straightforward. After sustaining heavy losses, The Resistance is on the run from The First Order who have been systematically wiping out everyone who would dare to stand against them. Rey (Daisy Ridley) seeks out Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) to train as a Jedi and fulfil her destiny.

The opening of the movie is one of the best of this year. Do yourself a favour and do *not* enter the theatre late. You will miss out on some amazing visuals.

Speaking of visuals, the movie offers the classic Star Wars action sequences in spades. Space battles are rendered beautifully as Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) and his ragtag band of rebels deftly

manoeuvre their X-wings and take on The First Order's Tie Fighters. Lightsaber combat enthusiasts have plenty to cheer for in this movie as well. There is also a battle sequence that resembles The Battle of Hoth in a much more realistic way. I say "realistic" because in the original trilogy and the "Clone Wars" trilogy, the combat was quite tame and sensationalised. In "The Last Jedi", battles are far grittier and some of them will have you on the edge of your seat asking "Did that actually just happen?" I can safely say that I do not need to elaborate on the sound work of the movie. Just go to the theatre, relax and enjoy some of the best audio and music out there.

After the opening sequence, the movie tends to lose a lot of its momentum. This is evident from how dragged-on some of the interactions between Rey and Luke Skywalker felt. Luke isn't your typical hero of The Rebellion anymore. He is a broken man who has closed himself off from everyone he loves. Mark Hamill, as usual, is spectacular in this role and he breathes new life into the character by giving us a version of Luke who is not as confident about himself, is shrouded by doubt, and is haunted by his past decisions. This gives us a different insight into the Force rather than the usual fight between light

and dark. In this movie we are given hints on how for true balance to exist within the Force, there must be both light and dark present. This harkens back to the code of the Grey Jedi, even though they are not explicitly mentioned. I speculate we might see some references to this unexplored order in the next film.

Speaking of light and dark, Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) is shown in his most conflicted state ever. He regrets the decision of murdering his father, yet has to go on to prove himself to his master, Snoke (Andy Serkis). The relationship between Snoke and Kylo is one of doubt and anger. Snoke constantly taunts the young apprentice about his lack of resolve and this pushes Kylo Ren to the breaking point, leading him to take extreme measures in the third act of the film.

The late Carrie Fisher also reprises her role of Princess Leia Organa Solo. A more mature and less brash take on the character when compared to the original series as seen in "The Force Awakens", Carrie delivers on all fronts as expected.

The movie tells the story of the main characters and develops them well enough while also throwing in many supporting characters that are generic and not really fleshed out at all. It was

disappointing to see how Finn (John Boyega) interacts with a new character named Rose as their screen time together was merely used as a plot device rather than a meaningful part of the big picture.

There are many plot-twists present all throughout. Some of them had me genuinely shocked while others were filled with plot-holes. Rian Johnson, despite all the good things he has done in the film, plays way too safe with certain characters and elements of the story. This kind of broke the illusion of the gritty Star Wars experience that I initially had. What was left in its place was the wholesome nature of most Disney movies.

The aforementioned flaws are why the fanbase might be divided over the movie and I have no doubt that the internet will be filled with fiery discussions on how certain things might have "ruined" the movie for many.

Regardless of all that is wrong with the movie, the enjoyable aspects of it more than make up for them. It is funny, entertaining, and simply adrenaline rush-inducing. You'd do yourself a huge disservice if you are a Star Wars fan and you do not watch this at the theatres soon. If you're not a Star Wars fan, take some time to watch Episodes 4 to 7, otherwise you will not understand what's going on at all.

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