

*** Spoiler Warning: If you have not seen the newer Star Wars films or TV series, there may be [major] spoilers here! ***

Disney's Star Wars Films, Rated: An Essay/Reflective List by T.D. Smith

For Star Wars Day

5/4/2020

"May the 4th Be with You!"

- 1) **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story:**¹ **A+ Rating, or 5 bags of popcorn, 5 cups of soda, and a tiny little x-wing going "pew-pew" in hopes of blowing up that awful Death Star one day.**

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story is a superb piece of cinema and one of the best *Star Wars* Films that has ever been done in the franchise. Intriguingly it has a strong female lead and genuinely, deservedly so. The film pulls off having Jyn Erso as the main character without being overly girl-power about it and without imbecilic supporting male characters. She is exactly what the audience and Rogue One Squadron need: a strong, rough-around-the-edges hero/heroine who has overcome great difficulty and adversity and can lead with resolve and gumption. The movie does not insist upon her because she is female, and she does not insist upon herself. She is simply a strong female member of the *Star Wars* universe trying to get by in a messed up galactic scenario, who is called upon to rise above and beyond normal expectations, helping the Alliance to Restore the Republic gain the all-important Death Star plans; her story sets up the entire plot of the beloved original 1977 *Star Wars*. It is a work that incorporates true feminism, in that the female lead is legitimately depicted as being equal and as fully capable of the tasks required for achieving the Rebels' goal as her male counterparts. She has skills, smarts, and assets to contribute to the success of her team that do not involve merely the allure of her feminine physique as in other films and franchises. Jyn is depicted this way as if it is the norm, which is how it should be. Also, she neither has nor does she need a romantic interest to complete her character or her arc.

The film incorporates novel technology in its use of CGI deep-fake software to digitally resurrect characters like villain Grand Moff Tarkin, whose likeness, the famed Peter Cushing, is long since deceased, and it does so nearly seamlessly. It is believable and realistic enough that it does not distract the viewer or seem off-putting and creepy. It was a surprise to see him and sent a shiver down this fan's back. This is merely a prelude to the final scene of the movie, wherein we see a digitally revived Princess Leia, who only appears for a brief, yet triumphant moment, to close out the film. The studio's last-minute addition of this tiny treat just at the end creates a huge payoff for the entire film, and vindicates its fallen heroes, with fans of the series knowing the heroes in the original film to come will make more than good on what they started. It also really works and fits well within the film's greater context, helping to weave it seamlessly into the overall narrative of the greater series of films, and is a wonderful homage to the (at the time of the film's release) recently deceased Carrie Fisher, done so in a tasteful, respectful way, which makes this all the more monumental of an achievement on Disney's part.

¹ While I acknowledge that it was not the first of Disney's *Star Wars* films, I think it is the best, so I have decided to start with it.

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This Disney installment is true to *Star Wars* as a genre or set of films with its own rules, canon, and culture within its galaxy, filled with plenty of action. The plot is logically structured so that it is consistent, continuity is conserved, and actions on the part of characters make sense as characters who live in the *Star Wars* universe. It is nostalgic and draws upon fans' fancies, without overdoing it, while still managing to tell a creative, genuinely new, fresh story within the franchise. The Vader scenes are amazing, action-packed, and feed directly into the fans' desires, without totally derailing the film or disrupting the plot. They fit.

Rogue One also takes risks where other films in the franchise, of both Disney and Lucas inception, fail to do so. The movie kills off all of its protagonists, something that has never been done before in a *Star Wars* film, and which for a franchise with the word "Wars" as part of it, has lulled fans into the expectation that the main characters without whom there would be no plot, do not die. All of them die in the movie, and the movie has done such a good job of making us care about them, that we really feel it. It hurts and defies expectation. This departure from typical form really works and is written, directed, and acted quite well. *Revenge of the Sith* was the last movie to kill off major players and beloved characters (mostly Jedi) but seemed a bit melodramatic, perhaps because fans knew good and well it was a necessary event and waited for so many years to see it. That kind of anticipation makes delivering an enormous, thrilling payoff incredibly difficult, and the prequel films were simply not created with that being one of Lucas' goals. If *Rogue One* with its risk-taking became the kind of departure from the original format that Disney moves forward with (other than its obvious lack of an opening crawl, another element that marked this movie as new and different and worked out for it) well, this fan would be okay with that.

My overall rating for this *Star Wars* film is A+ and I daresay most would agree with me. It is a genuinely decent piece of cinema, a well-told story, and a good *Star Wars* film that adds to the body of stories and films, fitting nicely into continuity, canon, and simultaneously being creative and new. It goes to show that with vision, effort, and critical investment in storytelling, *Star Wars* can do incredibly well at being a standalone film/story, something that the original film, *Star Wars*, that eventually had the subtitle *Episode IV: A New Hope* added to it, did quite well. With its incorporation and preservation of and fanservice to the old, while still pulling off a authentically new tale with new characters, which is done well and is qualitatively good, *Rogue One* is the film wherein the Force is most balanced, and therefore I believe it to be the best film Disney has made since they acquired the franchise.

2) **The Force Awakens: C**

The Force Awakens was the first movie in the *Star Wars* franchise in nearly 10 years, as well as the first one to ever officially, canonically continue the story following the adventures of Luke, Leia, Han, Chewie, Artoo, Threepio, and the whole Rebel Alliance gang. The fact that the stakes would be incredibly high, as would fan expectations, is attested to by the voluminous, expansive collection of media, including novels, comic books, and video games known as the Expanded Universe branch of the *Star Wars* universe, that told multitudes of non-canon tales continuing the Skywalker saga after the events of *Return of the Jedi*, Vader and Palpatine's downfalls, and the collapse of the Empire. Fans always wanted more and to know what

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happened next to Luke and company. Did Luke re-form the Jedi Order? Did Leia and Han get married? Have children? Were those children disciples of Luke who also became Jedi? In Luke's new Jedi order, did they strictly follow the Old Jedi way, and take vows of celibacy, or were they allowed to marry and have children? Did the Empire simply crumble and surrender, or did the war go on for a while? A plethora of other questions were asked, explored, and answered over the years in the Expanded Universe materials. Fans were excited to see what *The Force Awakens* had to offer, and how it addressed these questions. They were admittedly nervous when the entire Expanded Universe was labelled "Legends" when Disney bought the franchise. Just how much of those "Legends" would Disney draw from, bringing them into the canon in a creative, new way? How much would they discard?

As it turned out, the inaugural installment of Disney's sequel to the original *Star Wars* trilogy threw out nearly all the Expanded Universe lore, with only loose vestiges present, choosing to move forward in a different direction entirely. In doing so, *The Force Awakens* did several things well and several things not so well. Rather than answer any of the aforementioned questions about the Skywalker family and their whereabouts directly, choosing rather to avert unsatisfactory, upsetting answers, Disney simply avoided most of them altogether.

Some questions, such as "Did Luke re-band the Jedi Order?" and "Did Leia and Han marry?" are answered with a "yes, but something went wrong later." What that something was is either hinted at, or alluded to indirectly as an event or series of events that happened sometime during the 30 year gap between the previous installment of the Skywalker story chronically, *Return of the Jedi*, and now, without any elaborate, specific details discussed. Moving forward in this manner, with the preexisting ones still lingering in fans' minds, the film goes on to raise even more questions. This is something that is nearly embodied by one of its protagonists, and central character, Rey.

Undeniably, in details that are impossible not to notice, Rey is quite similar to Luke. She is an orphan who grows up on a desert planet, without her true parents. She even wears a desert-looking tunic like that which Luke Skywalker wore on Tatooine. She is apparently deeply connected to the goings-on of the Skywalker family in some untold way, being naturally adept as a pilot and the Force, much like Luke. Luke's father's lightsaber (which we are not told how it was retrieved from the depths of Bespin after Luke lost it and a limb in a fight with Vader in the original trilogy) calls out to her. She is a remarkable fighter, having grown up alone and having to defend her very life, who has only to concentrate on the living Force to enhance her already inherent warrior capabilities. In fact, not only is she innately capable of using the Force, she is a remarkably fast learner throughout the film, reaching seemingly Anakin/Luke heights in terms of power and ability by the end of the film, with very little to no training whatsoever. The big question throughout the film becomes: who is she?

A new character, a quasi-Yoda who is a short, orange, alien woman who can (kind of) use the Force, Maz Kanata, directly asks Han Solo this question at one point. Keeping with the not answering questions motif of the film, the camera immediately cuts away when he begins to answer her. More questions like these arise throughout the film such as who is this very Emperor Palpatine-esque Supreme Leader Snoke? Why is Rey so powerful, and is she a

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Skywalker, or Solo? What happened to Ben Solo, Han and Leia's super powerful would-be-Darth-Vader son, that made him turn evil? None of these questions are directly answered in the film. The question of whether Luke restarted the Jedi is answered with a "yes, sort of, but then Ben turned evil and killed them all, just like his grandfather, and Luke quit." This is an alarming and deeply disturbing answer. Luke quit? Like quit being a Jedi and went far away to hide? Why? What happened, and why was that his reaction? And where did he disappear to?

The film uses the question "where is Luke?" as its central plot device. The overarching conflict is between the First Order, which is essentially the Empire, being its remnant, and the Resistance, who are comprised of the old Rebel Alliance members who are still alive and younger additions. From the opening crawl onward, where's Luke is at the center. We are told both parties are fighting to gain a map that allegedly leads to the last known location of Luke, which he hid, or something (that part is not entirely clear.) It uses this carrot on a string quite well, as it is what the audience of fans wants to know, and the character they really want to see. In that way, the film wields its central plot device quite effectively, keeping fans in suspense and anticipation of seeing Luke.

This finally pays off at the very end when, the conflict temporarily stalled between the First Order and Resistance, Rey uses decipher the map and travels aboard the Millennium Falcon alongside Chewie and R2 to a remote island-planet and finds Luke. We see him, in full Jedi attire, standing on a cliff overlooking the sea, a look of complete distress on his face, and then the curtain falls. This brief glimpse of the main hero of the entire franchise was enough to make any fan "ooh" and "ahh," and guaranteed their return to pay for and watch the next installment. Overall, though, while obviously setting things up for Act Two of the trilogy, it was a bit lackluster to not even hear Luke speak or have any kind of action sequence in the film at all.

As a whole, the film squeaks by on fanservice and gratuitous references to the original trilogy to keep fans engaged, at some points ridiculously so. An example would be Anakin/Luke's lightsaber, inexplicably, magically back from the depths of Bespin. Or the Millennium Falcon flying all about still, with all its glory and internal malfunctions, which just so happens to still contain a functioning holo-chess set, as well as Luke's lightsaber training probe, which bounces on camera from some darkened corner of the Falcon suddenly, and an unknowing Finn confusedly casts aside.

Alarmingly, for all intents and purposes, the Resistance and First Order are just the Empire and Rebels from the originals, re-wrapped and locked in the same destructive conflict in what has been another 30 years. The Empire still has white-armor-clad Storm Troopers that look near exactly the same as they did in the originals (although the helmets have a sleeker design). They also still insist upon creating a huge death star, this time the size of a planet, indeed actually *being* a planet. While the First Order succeeds in wiping out most of the New Republic government planets, they do not get to use their weapon to intimidate and control anyone further, because predictably the Rebels intervene soon after to immediately blow it up. An obvious nod to the original, but also absurd; has the Empire not moved past this costly, mostly ineffective strategy in 30 years? It is a bit unsatisfying and unoriginal that over 30 years later the same conflict between the same two bodies is going on, and the baddies are using the exact same tactics. Maybe even more depressing is the inference that the good guys have not become

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any better at fighting them. Could Disney not have drawn from the Yuuzhan-Vong part of the EU or something for ideas about new, different conflicts?

In a cosmic sense, the whole movie has an “aftertaste” so to speak, or a feeling upon reflection after you’ve watched it, of being wildly illogical and unnecessary, especially after watching *Rogue One* a year later by comparison. Rey is incredibly powerful, and inexplicably so. (At least Luke had to train!) This and other illogical elements are ignorable if one keeps their mind focused on the “here and now and the living Force,” as Qui-Gon once said, and just enjoys watching another *Star Wars* film, the first one to greet fans in almost a decade. However, the film dodges questions at every opportunity, while raising newer, stronger ones all the while, and answering very few, if any of them. Its culmination in “here he is: The End” as the answer to the question of where is Skywalker, all the while distracting the viewer with nostalgia and action, is indicative of a film planned to take few risks, relaunch *Star Wars*, and pass the buck to the next director for its sequel. It was frustrating to this writer to hear other fans describe this new installment in the *Star Wars* franchise as simply being a remake of the original film, perhaps because if I search my feelings I know it to be true. Its plot structure and elements admittedly parallel *A New Hope* almost identically. It might also be difficult to hear because Disney was clearly trying to take things in a different direction from Lucas, harkening back to the originals’ form. They did so to spare their films from the negative criticisms the prequel films, which I loved, encountered, which generally went along the lines of “Ew, they’re just too different from the originals.”

3) The Last Jedi²: D, or “Okayest”

I read online, I cannot remember if it was in a comment or review, where someone called *The Last Jedi* the “okayest” of the *Star Wars* films. This movie is demonized by fans who hated it as the worst of the films and sequels. I would agree with the person who dubbed it the franchise’s “okayest” film, because to me, none of the films of the franchise are all that bad. *The Last Jedi* has been drug through the mud since its release, being totally dissed online by numerous fans. However, while its pacing is odd, it tends to drag on, being the longest film in the franchise, and some of its plot choices are questionable at best, I believe *The Last Jedi* is actually okay. It is the “okayest” film of the entire franchise if you look at it from the perspective that it is a necessary step and a logical progression from its predecessor and all its disorder, illogicalness, and unanswered questions it raised. It is definitely okay when you look at it in the context of being smack dab in the middle of a trilogy that has not been planned out much or at least haphazardly, trying to follow an “adlibbing” method of creating a plot structure for a trilogy. Compound that with the fact that the writer and director had an enormous amount of pressure to perform something new, with certain mandates from the studio, as well as synthesizing that somehow with fan expectations, and answering all of *The Force Awakens*’ questions, and it might even be okayer.

² From this point on, I call the First Order the Empire, and the Resistance the Rebel Alliance interchangeably, to artistically demonstrate how they are too similar/really the same thing/have not changed/are unoriginal.

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The movie itself takes on strong overtones of extreme feminism from its outset, bearing an overall theme of “men are dumb, testosterone fueled animals, while females are strong/superior.” This is demonstrated by nearly every strong male character in the film being portrayed as clumsy, impulsive, stupid, or even angry/overly aggressive. The strong male characters who are not depicted so are either killed off or are bad guys. Just look at the 2 sides of the overall conflict of the film. There are some female Imperial officers, but not any strong ones with specific, speaking parts per se. All the heroic females belong to the Rebels’ side.

Some of the more noteworthy male characters of the franchise are killed off in *The Last Jedi* off-camera, like the venerable Admiral Ackbar, who gets sucked out into space and perishes after a TIE-fighter led hull breach of the Rebel command ship. He is merely mentioned among the casualties, while General Leia, who can apparently use the Force to survive in and fly through space now, spares herself the same fate. Finn rushes toward the Death Star cannon toward the end of the film to sacrifice himself in a mad adrenaline-fueled rush, only to be stopped by Rose, who tells him there’s a better way. Chewbacca, another male warrior, is seen killing, preparing, and roasting a Porg on Ach-To island to eat, and is looked at sadly by living Porgs, who won’t leave him alone until he stops eaten their dead kin, and he welcomes them onto the Falcon as friends. (This might not be the best example, as it is mainly intended as comic relief, but it nevertheless comic relief that fits well within a movie where the strong males are shunned for their aggressive tendencies.) The most noteworthy treatment of a male character in this manner is Luke Skywalker’s story arc in this film.

Luke is the great hero of the entire *Star Wars* franchise. The original *Star Wars* trilogy culminates with him single-handedly taking on the dreaded Darth Vader AND Emperor Palpatine, resisting the allure of the Dark Side’s power and fully embracing the peaceful, monastic tenants of the Jedi way. Additionally, during his quest he went above and beyond it to save his father’s soul rather than kill him, like his Jedi mentors Yoda and Obi-Wan expected of him. This brought balance and peace to the Force and galaxy, respectively, whilst consequently effectively ending an oppressive totalitarian regime. In *The Last Jedi*, rather than the honored hero and wise old Jedi teacher, Luke is depicted as a cowardly loser who gave up on being a Jedi, abandoning the righteous battle against evil as well as the members of the Rebel Alliance who were like family to him. Not to mention the dream and calling of rebuilding the Jedi Order which he went to painstaking lengths to save and restart in the original films and time thereafter.

This aspect makes the film seem quite absurd. Not only is Luke’s behavior disappointing, but downright distracting, feeling rather out of place in the Star Wars universe. This is a point where Disney could have borrowed more liberally from the Expanded Universe’s multitude of comics, novels, and video game source material for guidance, rather than adlibbing what Skywalker had been doing and why he was not present for the first film. *The Force Awakens* straight up tells us through Han Solo that Luke walked away, abandoning it all. Perhaps Han was mistaken, misunderstanding Luke’s actions. The incident did, after all involve Han’s son, which would bring difficult, complex feelings to the situation for Han. Maybe Luke left to get some ancient item, or to keep to himself to learn some ancient power, a spiritual ability, that only the most ancient Jedi had known, and had been lost, on Ach-To, and it just *seemed* like he abandoned all hope and left. This would have been preferable and sensible compared to the plot we got in *Last Jedi*.

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The movie does have its moments, and those are excellent. The battle between the teamed-up Rey and Kylo Ren against the First Order Praetorian Guard is enthralling, action-packed, and a different kind of battle than we have seen in *Star Wars* in the past, more akin to the kind of thing we saw in the *Clone Wars* tv show. This marks the first time we have ever seen the classic *Star Wars* good-guy-in-light-ropes-wielding-blue-blade team up with bad-guy-in-black-ropes-wielding-red-blade temporarily team up and fight a third party together on camera in a feature-length film. The Force merging Kylo and Rey's lives, allowing them to communicate face to face with another from remote distances is interesting. It is also very *Star Wars* in that it is a new take on a way we witnessed Luke and Vader communicating in the original trilogy. It was never said for sure whether they could literally see each other; now we know that perhaps they did. Some other things the film does well are the sudden trickery of Kylo and his slaughtering of Snoke, which is truly unexpected and arguably the biggest, most surprising twist of the trilogy up to that point, if a bit off-puttingly out of place in the middle of a trilogy. Luke's use of the Force to project his spirit across the galaxy is a powerful and novel Force ability we have never seen before, and is cool to see, even if it's causing him to die after using it ultimately detracts from its coolness.

The Last Jedi is loaded with visual *Star Wars* symbology, references, and clues, like all the movies are. It still sends shivers down my spine to watch the Luke vs. Kylo Ren confrontation. In it we see Luke appear, now clad in his Jedi Robes again, wielding what we later realize is a Force-generated image of his Father's lightsaber, which he previously would not accept from Rey, casting it away. He activates it now, symbolizing his return to the fight, and ultimate, complete, and total re-embrace of the Force and the Jedi, and their commitment to protecting the weak and innocent. His battle with Kylo begins with him being blasted by an entire armada of AT-AT Imperial Walkers, only to walk away from this after the dust cloud settles, without so much as a scratch on him. Luke defiantly makes this fact obvious to Kylo, by smirking and gesturing like he's wiping a bit of dust off his shoulder. In Kylo's ensuing rage against him, Luke whoops his nephew without ever making one blow against him, or allowing one lightsaber blade to connect against another, all without ever even setting foot on the same PLANET as him. This moment is both totally badass, while at the same time fully encompassing the passivity of the Jedi. Once again, Luke is finally a walking embodiment of the Jedi Way in its simplest, purest ideals.

For all its good parts, the film has many failures. It fails to meet audience expectations coming from *The Force Awakens*, particularly in its feeble attempts to answer some of its questions, such as who Rey and Snoke are. We get no answer as to Snoke's origins or any explanation as to his importance or history. The explanation of Rey's origin, that her parents were drunks who abandoned her and she is truly Rey, nobody from nowhere (again creating a bigger question than it answers, of why, then, is she so powerful that she barely needs to train?) is anti-climactic and a letdown, being highly unsatisfactory and falling flat on its face. The question of why Kylo Ren turned evil is also answered but not entirely satisfying, either. He was just an angry boy who distrusted his master and was lured away by a dark-side-using baddie and by the time his master found out it was too late and a misunderstanding between them caused the giant rift that unleashed the turned apprentice's dark power and rage, and he destroyed the Jedi Order. Hmm... I have seen that move before and it is called *Revenge of the Sith*.

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Narratively, the entire secret plot of Poe to send Rose and Finn to the Casino planet is pointless, and this is painfully obvious. They accomplish nothing there, except ultimately getting their allies' true plan discovered by the Empire. It is bad writing and storytelling, and if I were working in the studio as anyone with authority, I would have made them fix it. The characters need a real reason to go there. There is no compelling reason to do so, except to make Poe look bad and impulsive, and to give those characters something to do. If Lando had turned out to be the Master Codebreaker, then at least for the audience bringing him into the trilogy would have been reason enough for Finn and Rose's little venture. Going somewhere for a reason that makes little sense seems to be a motif in the Disney *Star Wars* sequel trilogy, as Luke evidently had no real reason for choosing the most ancient Jedi destination as his vacation spot, except that it is hard to find. If Luke is trying to go somewhere remote to forget the Jedi and being a Jedi, and cut himself off from the Force, why does he choose to go to the most Jedi and Force filled place in the galaxy? Wouldn't all the Jedi relics and ancient dwellings, and living inside one constantly remind him of the painful thing he wants so desperately to forget?

As aforementioned, Luke could have had a real reason to hide, or feign hiding there temporarily, like some sort of secret device belonging to the most ancient Jedi, or an ancient shrine that was a hub for the Force and helped him focus more purely on Ach-To. Maybe there was an ancient Force ability he was training to achieve, to hone his power and wisdom in order to train someone else eventually (a reveal that Force-projecting was his aim all along, and subsequently not being killed by using it would have been perfect!) He could have been lying in wait for Rey to arrive, sharpening his own abilities so that when the time came he could teach her and they could take on Kylo and Snoke (or perhaps even Palpatine!) together, instead of just running away because he was sad. Perhaps he could have had a Force vision right after Kylo Ren left him, telling him Rey would come to him and he needed to find secret lost knowledge on Ach-To in the meantime. Maybe he could have acted like he did not want to train her to test her, like Yoda did him once upon a time. It's a simple explanation that would have worked better and been truer to *Star Wars* and Luke's character. The Rebel Alliance doesn't have to like that he's left. Leia doesn't have to understand it. Han does not need to be happy about it. It's the Force guiding him and the Jedi way, which transcends the ebb and flow of daily galactic goings on and civilian life as people typically experience and understand it. It's mystical, it's magical, and it's much more consistent with *Star Wars* than what we got in its place. I think Disney either overthought Luke in their version or just flat out misunderstood *Star Wars* and what it and Luke Skywalker mean to fans.

In this rendition, as previously stated, the female leaders are heralded, portrayed as the wiser and more reasonable, logical, cool-headed ones in command. I am all in favor of this and think female leadership and strong female characters are an awesome idea. In fact, they are much needed. This film, however, tends to go over the top in terms of its not only showing female leadership, good, bad, or otherwise, but also insisting that female leadership is superior to male leadership, and that the males in the film are foolish. If this is the case, and one the aims of the film, which it boldly asserts by way of the examples I have cited above, then it really begs the question of why it does such a miserable job of proving that those characters' leadership is, in fact, superior. The film presents the leadership in this fashion but does not pull it off convincingly. At all.

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First, if Leia and the women leaders of the Rebels in this film are superior to the men, then why do they have no real plan? Their plan consisted of secretly absconding to an abandoned base on a salt planet, hoping the Imperials don't notice and pass by, then radioing for help, hoping someone comes with a ship containing fuel and supplies, which we learn later in the film would not have happened. They would have been stranded there for good. They apparently had no backup plan, no alternative ideas up their sleeve, no fleet, weapon, or truly unexpected double-crossing of the evil General Hux and his forces awaiting them at the end of the low-speed space chase they led him on. This is a truly baffling plot component of the movie.

If Leia had foreseen and used her Skywalker intuition and attunement to the Force to decipher Hux's strategy and circumvented it using her own wit, that would have been truly brilliant, a General Leia Organa Solo Skywalker moment for the ages, and something I would love to have seen! Instead, we got a random woman named Holdo who no one had heard of before ramming their last battleship at hyperspeed into Snoke's destroyer, after a discovered rebel fleet is nearly entirely killed, all thanks to dumb old Poe's misinformed, misplaced, haphazard heroics. Which also begs the question of why Leia or Holdo did not just tell Poe about their plan from the start to prevent him from rushing off and doing something so destructive and dumb? It isn't like their plan is super intricate, time-sensitive, or needs to be covered up.

Poe is also supposed to be Leia's protégé, someone she is going to essentially leave the alliance in the hands of after she's gone. It literally makes no sense at all not to make him privy to that vital information and is super poor leadership. I have heard many fans voice concerns that Disney has radical feminist agenda they are pushing in these films. If this is the case, they are doing a poor job of it, because it seems that female leadership and strong women in these roles are in fact being lampooned by their writers, with such illogical actions, erratic behavior, and clumsy mistakes on their part in the films. Any person, male, female, liberal, conservative, feminist, chauvinist, or otherwise ought to be puzzled at best or sincerely, deeply troubled at worst by the insistence that this is feminism and an example of good, strong female leadership. They should be truly concerned that people working for Disney studios apparently believe *The Last Jedi's* peddling of this nonsense as if it were such really is a good way to portray women in leadership roles.

In summary, there were many missed opportunities for greatness, wonderful moments that were immediately nullified by questionable choices, and numerous mismanaged elements of *The Last Jedi*. It often feels like the conclusion of a trilogy when one watches it, what with the death of a major player such as Luke Skywalker, and a primary antagonist such as Snoke. The title, *The Last Jedi*, seems like a fitting one for a final installment of a trilogy, and veritably could have been what they designated its sequel, instead of titling it *Rise of Skywalker*. Despite itself and its shortcomings, *Last Jedi's* whacky, haphazard storytelling, and weird, whimsical characterizations on multiple dimensions, it still manages to do some things right. The film is original, truly standing out within the franchise, (even if some fans may say that is a bad thing!) having some very *Star Wars-y* scenes and features to it. Cinematographically it is stunning, with sweeping, beautiful on-location scenes captured within its 2-hour, 32-minute runtime, such as the magnificent Skellig Michael, Ireland. People are still talking about the film even now and likely will be for a long while, and that is why I give it the rating of okayest of all the films.

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4) **The Rise of Skywalker: B+**

I would call *Rise of Skywalker* an overall fun ride, a beautiful mess full of retcon³ and nostalgia. Much of what happened in *TLJ*,⁴ including its ending, leaves us with the question, (a veritable motif of this trilogy!) okay, what now? Luke Skywalker is dead. Admiral Ackbar is dead. Han Solo is dead. Kylo Ren seems irredeemable after his confrontation with Luke, with hell-bent commitment to delving as deep into darkness as one can possibly go. He seems set to be the trilogy's primary villain at this stage, after the apparent one, Snoke, was killed suddenly and quite unexpectedly in the middle of the trilogy. The Rebel Alliance is down to its bare bones and the galaxy seems either too scared of the Empire to aid them and rise up or suffering from adrenal fatigue. We gained a sense of this from Casino-world in *TLJ*, where the wealthy aristocrats seemed not to have a care in the galaxy for the war raging on, or whether truth and justice won over oppression and totalitarianism. Perhaps the galaxy's average citizen is tired of the ordeal that has raged on for the better part of a century in the galaxy now, content to side with whatever faction holds up the longest, if it will just satisfy getting on with their lives.

To answer the villain question, Palpatine, yes, Emperor Sheev Palpatine himself, is randomly resurrected, magically coming back into the playing field with no explanation as to how this happened whatsoever. This is both hilariously bad and yet so entertaining and interesting that I could not look away. Oddly, this whole thing kind of works. Ian McDiarmid plays a convincing and diabolical villain, always excelling at being the evil emperor. He does not fall short here. Palpatine tells Kylo Ren at the outset of the movie that he "made Snoke" and then the camera pans over and we see a bunch of what are presumably Snoke clones floating in a tank. Then the issue is abruptly dropped and never brought up again. Which also kind of works, because fans will remember that Emperor Palpatine once ordered a clone army and orchestrated a massive war between the Republic, which he was head of, and a confederation of separatists he himself created from the shadows under an alias. He did this all for the purpose of distracting the public from his gradually taking over and reinventing the galactic government into an empire controlled solely by him. Palpatine has always been devilish and scheming some nefarious, intricate plan, often involving clones. This fact may even offer a subconscious answer to the question of where and how the heck he has returned in the back of the viewer's mind.

After this opening act, the film moves forward and a bunch of loose hanging threads from the trilogy are pulled, twisted, and tied off equally as haphazardly and poorly as they were spun by Disney's studio committee in charge of *Star Wars* from the beginning. Retcon abounds, as well. We learn that Rey is actually Palpatine's granddaughter (somehow) which apparently answers why she is so naturally powerful. Kylo Ren was not lying to her in *TLJ*, just mistaken, telling her the information he knew, which was only part of a larger picture regarding her parentage. Rey also struggles with the dark side's temptations to a degree, which bridges the film to *TLJ* and a scene where she goes directly to the dark side during a meditation exercise with Luke, who is terrified of her lack of resistance to it coupled with her incredible strength.

³ Retcon, for those who do not know, is an abbreviated form of "retroactive continuity" and appears in the Oxford Dictionary as meaning creating a new event or events in a subsequent installment of a work of fiction that imposes a new or different interpretation of events in that works previous installments.

⁴ TLJ = *The Last Jedi*

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Kylo Ren eventually returns to the light, once again becoming Ben Solo, as all good Skywalker family members who have gone bad tend to do in the end, joining Rey in the final fight against the dark side and Palpatine. Another missed opportunity occurs at this junction, in my opinion. Leading into the final battle, we witness Ben making a considerable effort to get to Rey to help her. She and Ben communicate telepathically through the Force, befuddling the Knights of Ren, who have now become guards outside of Palpatine's secret lair. Rey passes the Skywalker family lightsaber to Ben through the Force, keeping Leia's heretofore unknown lightsaber in hands, and pulling a surprise switcheroo on the baddies, whom Ben quickly dispatches. Ben then descends into the dark lair without an elevator, manually climbing down the shaft's cable to join Rey. An angry Palpatine then immediately swipes him away into the darkness, where he stays until immediately after Rey has defeated her grandfather for good all by herself. This was a wasted opportunity for Rey and Ben to finally unite. It would have been even better if they had crossed Luke and Leia's lightsabers together and both defeated Palpatine. Instead, Ben is knocked off camera into the dark, leaving Rey to fend for herself again, his attempts to aid her proving futile and bringing no payoff to the audience for his struggle to get to her whatsoever.

If *TLJ* raises more questions than it answered, then *Rise of Skywalker* continues the trend *TLJ* shares with the entire trilogy, doing more than plenty of that, too. How the hell did Palpatine survive the second Death Star's explosion? How did he get to his lair on Exogol? Who are all his followers working in the shadows there and worshipping him, how did they get there and where did they come from? Where did Palpatine get all the resources to build his Star Destroyer armada, and how did he wire the money that would have been required without anyone noticing? Why is the wreckage of the second Death Star in the middle of the ocean on another Endor moon, and not the Ewok's forest one? Why are its innards singed and charred, but the inner walls and chambers, including the Emperor's throne room, still intact enough to walk around in and be able to tell what they are and where one is inside? Why does using powerful Force abilities drain the life force of its users, when this has not been the case in previous films? If the Force is mystic and all encompassing, shouldn't the life force to heal someone or something come from it and not the one channeling it, and therefore not have the effect of harming the channeler? What has Lando been doing this entire time, did he ever leave that planet and do other things, or has he been there the entire time after he and Luke's search went cold? If so, why? Why did Lando never contact Leia, Han, Chewie, or the Rebels ever again? Why exactly did Palpatine engineer the Death Star so that his dagger could lead Vader and other who had it to the other wayfinder so that they could get to Exogol if need be? Why use wayfinders at all? Why not just leave Vader or whoever an encrypted message or something telling how to get to Exogol, coordinates, etc.? Who are the Knights of Ren exactly, what is Kylo's involvement with them, why don't they talk, and why are we supposed to care about them? These and more questions are raised but never definitively answered in the film⁵.

The pacing is off again for *Rise of Skywalker*, picking up and slowing down several times, particularly obvious when it screeches to a halt at the conclusion of Act Two after Rey and Kylo Ren's confrontation at sea atop the wreckage of the second Death Star. Rey and Ren have several such

⁵ Although I am aware that the Visual Dictionary companion piece and subsequent novels and comics provide some insights.

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lightsaber clashing conflicts leading up to this, meeting face to face two other times prior without anything really coming of it. Consequently, by their third and final encounter it becomes a tad melodramatic and I was glad to see someone finally stab someone else instead of just waving their light sticks around and running away, even though I know I was meant to feel shock. Continuing another trend of the trilogy, the movie takes few big risks, killing off none of the high-stakes characters⁶, only fake-killing Chewie, followed by fake-killing 3PO, only to immediately bring them back again. They even fake-kill Ben Solo too, which makes it even more unsatisfying when he dies for real toward the end of the film, in the manner that he does. Leia is awkwardly spliced in using recycled and unused footage, then rather lamely killed off, with the Force, no less, as is Ben Solo when he heals Rey and dies immediately after kissing her. There are far too many damned MacGuffin⁷s in the movie that Rey and company must play fetch quest for to find Palpatine, such as the multiple wayfinders and the Sith dagger. However, once again, if you shut off your brain and just enjoy the ride, none of these things are too upsetting.

The movie does many things quite well. These include Lando finally coming back onto the scene, even though it is when there is not much left for him to do and his major contribution to the film happens off-camera. I was puzzled as to why they did not cut away and show Lando broadcasting a message of his own to counter Palpatine's, rallying the galaxy's freedom fighters, and rousing them to battle. It would have been cool to see his holographic image pop up in multiple places aboard some of the ships we see appear in the end and an awesome tribute to Billy Dee Williams and his character. Regardless, it was good to see Lando again on camera. There are many entertaining battle scenes and the fleet of common people's ships coming out of hyperspeed and engaging the Star Destroyer fleet at the end was reminiscent to the *Return of the Jedi* assault led by Lando, but also different and fun.

Jedi/Force symbolism abounds, is placed quite well, and pulled off superbly again. Luke finally lifts his X-wing out of the ocean, something he was incapable of doing as a Padawan, for the one who will continue his legacy as well as the entire Jedi Order's, Rey. She then repairs it and flies away to confront Palpatine after she had previously purposefully wrecked her stolen TIE fighter and set it on fire, planning to banish herself on planet Ach-To like her Jedi Master once did. Yoda's theme plays when Luke's spirit lifts the X-wing, symbolizing that Luke now is truly the master, doing what his master (Yoda) did for him on Dagobah so long ago in *Empire Strikes Back*, completion of his character arc, and his oneness with the Force, the perfection of his spirit. Things have come full circle and are beginning to become complete, and the Force is balancing. Luke's pep talk to Rey is perfect, and the quote "confronting fear is the destiny of every Jedi. *Your* destiny" might just be the most Jedi thing anyone has ever said in any of the films, and it is said by Luke, the most Jedi of any person throughout them. It brings a tear to my eye and a shiver to my spine.

⁶ One may protest and say General Leia is a high-stakes character. However, by this point in the trilogy, with Carrie Fisher only appearing posthumously and Leia having a diminished minor role, I would hardly call her high stakes at this point.

⁷ A MacGuffin is a commonly used element in stories and is widely known as an item a hero or group of protagonists are seeking after to fulfil the next part of their quest. The item is often something that the plot at least temporarily revolves around and cannot move forward without; after the item is found it becomes entirely useless because the plot can finally move forward.

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The film's action is fast-paced in a manner reminiscent of the classic *Indiana Jones* films, engaging and entertaining enough so that some of its pitfalls plot wise and other irritating things like the illogical nature of the several successive fetch-quests and compounding questions can be ignored with experiencing it still being enjoyable. The voices of the deceased Jedi speaking to and helping Rey from the nether regions of the Force while she fights Palpatine is a nice touch, and her battle with Palpatine is compelling, suspenseful, and well done overall, even if it could have been enhanced by Ben joining her for the duration of the fight. (Imagine she and Ben crossing those sabers together against Palpatine's lightning and saying, "and WE are all the Jedi!" It would have worked well on multiple layers, having both a literal and a figurative meaning, like many *Star Wars* things do.)

Rise of Skywalker is filled with *Star Wars* references, visual Easter eggs, and fine details to please the fans. It goes out of its way to undo some of the things fans complained about in *TLJ*, including scaling back Rose⁸, and toning down a seemingly overbearing theme of female superiority, in favor of a more traditional, "we're all in this together against the forces of evil" tone that fits and is more consistent with and authentically *Star Wars*. Its ending with Luke and Leia's Force ghosts is a bit silly-looking, and they strongly resemble Jesus and Mary, in my opinion. (I wonder if they will alter this for the special edition release in 10 years, lol!) Rey burying their lightsabers at Uncle Owen's moisture farm on Tatooine is a bit odd, as it is a Jedi practice we have never seen before, and the scene makes it feel as though it ought to be incredibly meaningful to the audience. I suppose Rey has read the sacred Jedi texts she stole from Luke and knows best. At the very end she activates a yellow-bladed lightsaber of her own construction, a necessary step for any Padawan toward their goal of becoming a full-fledged Jedi. It also signifies the completion of her test in her journey toward Jedi-dom, the war that was ultimately her ancestors' having finally been resolved by herself and her friends, the ordeal testing her readiness to be a Jedi finally being complete. Now she is ready to forge her own path, and this is symbolized in her forging of her own lightsaber, which is a different color than any we have seen in any previous film, to wield moving forward, rather than having to borrow Luke or Leia's.

Rey finally takes the name Skywalker, which feels weird, because it seems to contradict the symbolic act of moving on embodied by her saber. Luke did not take the name Kenobi or Yoda, although he admittedly already had a legacy in his name. Perhaps the studio was going for a "preserve what was good about the old, while forging forward with the new" type of idea with this choice. If that were the case, one would think perhaps Rey would keep Palpatine as her surname and own it, making it better and righting her grandfather's evils, but then again that probably would have scared the tunic right off the old woman who asked her name in the end. Some fans have said that perhaps Rey would have been better off answering "just Rey" and that this would have been more consistent with her journey and its end and have worked just fine. Taking the name Skywalker kind of undoes her entire quest toward self-identity and discovery throughout the trilogy. It is also kind of painfully predictable and a cringy self-reference to the title of the film. It almost feels like a

⁸ I did not personally have a problem with Rose. She was a decent character portrayed by a good actress. I don't think she deserves the treatment she has gotten as the most hated *Star Wars* character since Jar-Jar Binks. However, *TLJ* did seem to insist upon her, even when she was not all that interesting of a character, or a standout among her peers in the films by any means.

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disingenuous “we’re sorry” message from the studio for killing off all the beloved Skywalkers like they did. After all, the Force literally kills ALL the Skywalkers in this trilogy!

Overall, *Rise of Skywalker* is a very entertaining movie, and like all the sequels has some well-done things within it. It pulls off the good things smoothly, if in the bigger picture the film is haphazardly done. It is a fitting end for a weird, illogical, and ultimately unnecessary trilogy that finally subtracted from more than it added to or improved the existing body of films and works. It took very few true risks, but nevertheless paid off and was easily the best installment in a trilogy that had no clear, consistent plan, or even a real, well-developed story of any depth to tell.

5) OVERALL SEQUEL TRILOGY RATING: C, OR, MEH.

The lack of holistic planning for the series is evident. An agenda or ideology to a degree is pushed forward at the cost of good storytelling, which was clearly not a priority. It is now a well-known fact that George Lucas had a vision for a sequel trilogy and handed over his script treatments to Disney when he sold the franchise. They gutted those and re-wrote the idea for the initial Episode, then scrapped the rest in favor of making their own. They went with the smorgasbord with an adlibbed plotline method of storytelling, which works well for some franchises, but (clearly) not *Star Wars*. This franchise benefits best from a focus upon telling a compelling story with relatable characters. Having strong female characters is a good thing and something I think everyone ought to support, but they need to focus on the overall story and how the characters fit in and become a cohesive group together *first*, then let the other ideals follow later.

I really get the sense that Disney saw *Star Wars* as a cash cow that could be milked to sell *Star Wars* toys to tons of girls as well as the boys who are already fans, so they went a bit gung-ho with the girl power theme to try to gain them as viewers/consumers. *Rogue One* ought to show them that strong female characters can be compelling and good, as well as marketable within the franchise, and that by focusing on quality storytelling first they can bring girls into the *Star Wars* fold. They have alienated an enormous part of their fanbase through what they did in *TLJ*, and the collection of mediocre stories that did not really need to be told in the sequel trilogy with Rey (who, for the record, I happen to *like*) at the head, who is overpowered from the beginning and struggles comparatively little in contrast to her fellow counterparts in the different sagas.

I think moving forward Disney can bring in more new *Star Wars* fans in the future by focusing on telling good stories that are appealing to everyone, and have a variety of strong protagonists, male and female alike, like they have done with *The Mandalorian*. One of the failings, I think, of the prequel films was that you have all these female Jedi but never see any of them in action for very long or hear them speak. Ahsoka Tano was only brought starting with the Clone Wars TV series and was a huge missed opportunity for the prequel films, having no spoken lines and only a brief appearance where she was presumably killed in *Revenge of the Sith*. She is a wildly popular figure among both male and female *Star Wars* fans. So it can be done right. The only other strong female lead in the *Star Wars* prequels was Padme, and she was very badass, until she got pregnant in *Revenge*, and then spent the entire movie starting out windows sadly, finally dying of a broken heart. This aspect of *Star Wars* could stand improvement but needs to be done more along the lines of a female Jedi that shares characteristics with Jyn Erso and Ahsoka rather than Rey. I really hope

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they invest in story telling in the future and putting more depth and effort into the characters to make them memorable and lovable instead of pushing ideals and agenda to sell toys. They either need to do that or sell the franchise to the next contestant and pass the buck!

6) **Solo: A Star Wars Story- A-, or, the most underrated of the Disney *Star Wars* films.**

I have come at last to my final review! It is the culmination of my “trilogy sandwich,” with the two stand-alone films as the slices! See what I did there? I had a plan with my sequencing and writing all along. Take notes, Disney!⁹

Solo: A Star Wars Story is the second of Disney’s standalone films in this franchise, and it did not do well at the box office. This is not due to poor writing, a lack of quality, or it being a mediocre film. On the contrary, I believe it was a wonderful *Star Wars* film with a lot going for it. A quick Google search reveals the film had a budget of between 275-300 million, and it only made a bit over 393 million, which by Hollywood standards is barely scraping by, or in other words, a huge failure. What is the reason for this? I believe it is because it is the most irresponsibly managed and marketed film in *Star Wars* history.

Up until this point, under Disney’s ownership of the franchise, the pattern had been releasing a *Star Wars* film each December, around Christmastime. *TFA*,¹⁰ Disney’s first ever *Star Wars* film, was released on December 18th, 2015. Nearly a year later, *Rogue One*, Disney’s first stand-alone *Star Wars* film, came out on December 16th, 2016, followed by *TLJ*, the 2nd installment of the Skywalker saga sequel trilogy, on December 15th, 2017.

Solo was released on May 10th, 2018, for its world premiere screening, not even 5 months after the most recent film at the time, *TLJ*. Its official U.S. release date was May 25th. This was done on the part of the studios to coincide with the release date of May 25th, 1977 of the original *Star Wars* film, which was having its 41st birthday. Details about the film were kept hush-hush, with only a spoiler trailer released during the Super Bowl that year quite late in the game before the film’s release.

When the film hit theaters, it did so in a market where it had to compete with the *Marvel* franchise. *Marvel*’s giant, the film that all the superhero tie-ins in their franchise had been building toward for an entire decade, *Avengers: Infinity War*, was released just a month prior and detracted from audiences attending *Solo*, as many families would choose to go see this enormous blockbuster over yet another *Star Wars*. Fanboys kept going to see *Avengers* repeatedly for the love and thrill of it, and for finding all the hidden details in it. Just before *Solo*’s mainstream release, on May 18th, *Marvel*’s enormously popular *Deadpool 2* came out, too. These two movies siphoning away would-be viewers, and the *Marvel* franchise’s consecutive release of *Ant Man 2* on July 4th that same year as well as another one of Disney’s movies, the widely popular and long awaited *Incredibles 2*, released in mid-June, only worsened this effect. The film had generally favorable reviews and was a decent *Star Wars* film that stands alone on its own just fine. Most fans who saw it seem to think of the film favorably. It is an endearing movie, and while campy at times in ways reminiscent of

⁹ Totally kidding, this happened completely by accident.

¹⁰ i.e., *The Force Awakens*

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Phantom Menace, it really works and is good. It has rewatchability, captivating my attention and wonder every time I stream it, so it is a shame that it did so poorly.

Solo is a Han Solo origin film, telling not only how Han Solo came to be the ruggedly handsome, scruffy nerf herder, rough around the edges space captain, but also how he came from a volatile situation, growing up poor on an enslaved world working for a crime boss. He manages to escape from this life, working for his ticket off the planet, which he in true Han Solo fashion, uses trickery of the planet's biggest mob boss to obtain, and has to escape from in a hover-car chase to the Imperial space port. Tragically, his girlfriend, for whom he also stole a chance to leave their home world, gets caught in the process of traversing the spaceport. We learn that Han is an orphan, and having no surname, an Imperial officer dubs him "Solo" because he is all alone in the galaxy. This is a bit cringy, but if you just wince and get past it, it does not ruin the movie.

The young Han Solo goes on to join the Imperial Army and is placed on the frontlines of a hopeless battle, having been taken out of the Flight Academy for "insubordination." (Imagine that!) He defects in the middle of the gruesome battle that would surely have infantry such as himself slaughtered, by teaming up with a band of thieves posing as a company of Imperials on the messy battlefield. That group of scoundrels is headed up with none other than Woody Harrelson, who plays just the kind of Byronic character you might expect to have mentored Han Solo at a young age.

After a wild turn of events where a heist goes wrong, and accidentally reuniting with his girlfriend, who is now involved with a nefarious crime lord, Solo inadvertently meets and befriends Chewbacca, the loveable, fur-covered Wookiee. Chewie helps the two of them escape an Imperial prison cell. They go on to meet Lando Calrissian, who is portrayed by *Community's* Donald Glover (aka the Childish Gambino!) and who does an amazing job playing a younger version of the classic fan favorite. They fly a new, pristine, well kempt, shining millennium falcon, whose nose is completely intact, having a triangular shaped bow, not the two split nodes we normally see up front. We see how, why, and what the Kessel run is and get to experience the wild ride of Han navigating that adventure. Throughout the movie Solo hilariously dents and dings and scratches the paint of the Falcon, causing emotional outcry from Calrissian, and explaining how the Falcon inevitably got to be in the state that Luke eventually referred to as "a piece of junk."

The film's pinnacle happens when Solo, who had hopes of freeing his seemingly innocent former girlfriend from a life as the crime boss's slave, has yet another wild turn of events happen where she kills her boss and takes his place as diabolical leader of the syndicate, dashing Han's hopes of a future life of her. He encounters Rebels seeking supplies he has stolen and is offered a choice to join the alliance after helping them. Being Han Solo pre-*A New Hope*, he turns them down, but is given just enough of the supplies to track down Lando, who has fled, and buy into a game of sabacc Calrissian is playing. Employing his own cheating strategies witnessed earlier in the film against him, Han wins the Millennium Falcon, then rides off into the sunset with Chewbacca as his copilot, on to find new ventures.

As mentioned above, there is a certain campy quality to the movie, an almost intangible cartooniness to it, that takes it hard to take serious at points, particularly the more cringy parts like where Han is given the last name Solo. Another such detail is when Han turns out to randomly know Wookiee speech, able to converse with Chewbacca and convince him to work together, (begging the question of why he is never shown speaking Wookiee speech to Chewie in any of the other movies,

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just understanding him and speaking to him in the common tongue) or when Han fires the escape pod which comprises the Falcon's triangular nose at a space squid in order to escape the Kessel Run. At other times, the film is downright dark and has unexpected twists. Like Disney's other standalone film, this one takes risks and kills off characters you wouldn't expect. Han has just recently joined Harrelson's crew, when on their first job together something goes wrong and both Woody's wife and his multi-limbed Muppet alien pilot get killed; the Muppet being killed is disturbing because he's so bubbly and nice, and kind of fluffy and cute. This snaps us back from the daze the campiness lulled us into.

The huge twist in the end of the central crime syndicate in the movie they are trying to appease being owned and operated by none other than Darth Maul, the same Sith Lord Obi-Wan cleaved in two, was resurrected in *Clone Wars*, and has intermittently wreaked havoc in the *Star Wars* galaxy ever since (ending of course with his defeat in *Rebels*) is a really good touch and one that actually caught me off guard and surprised me. The whole "Crimson Dawn" title of the syndicate makes far more sense then. It is intriguing and leaves me wanting more, and to see a possible *Solo* trilogy possibly ending in a reemergence of Obi-Wan in a retelling of he and Darth Maul's final rematch during the time it is depicted in *Rebels* would be really cool.

Overall, *Solo* was a good movie, if unnecessary to make in the first place. Fans did not necessarily need to know how Solo got his name. He did not need to have gotten his name from anyone except his family, whoever they may have been, anyway. The film made few mistakes narratively and plot wise, and while somewhat gratuitously *Star Wars-y*, telling stories like how Han Solo completed the Kessel Run simply because it can be told, it was still decent, wholesome, entertaining, and fun. Alas, as fun, entertaining and thrilling a ride as this film was, with a lot of good things such as Darth Maul and a good actor who fits the role well performing a young Lando in it, we likely will get nothing to follow it up any time soon. This again is not due to the quality of the movie, but its box office failure, which in turn was due to a lack of an effective marketing campaign, management that decided to release it in May immediately following its most recent *Star Wars* installment in December, among other "big player" films that drew away movie goers from seeing *Solo*, in a cinematic environment that was already heavily saturated with *Star Wars*. Unfortunately, while the Disney studio has themselves to blame for this, the fans of the franchise, and not the Mouse, the executives who make the decisions and hold the coin, will ultimately be the ones to suffer.

That does it for my reviews of *Star Wars* for now! This was a fun little writing exercise. If you read this far or read it at all, I hope you enjoyed it. Feel free to comment your thoughts or opinions on the post or respond to me. I am thinking of following this writing up with a review of *Mandalorian*, *Clone Wars* (both Disney and Lucas), and *Rebels*, perhaps even *Resistance* once I've watched it. Happy Star Wars Day, May the 4th be with you, and Revenge of the 5th!!!