

# Review: 'Last Jedi' Has Surprises And Excellent Portrayals Of Its Characters

Entertainment

**Star Wars: The Last Jedi**

By A.H. Lee



*Rian Johnson's 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'*

And the series continues.

After the immediate success of J.J. Abram's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, which is the third highest grossing film of all times, director Rian Johnson brings us the latest installment, Episode VIII -- *The Last Jedi*. While it is a continuation of the series, with follow ups to Rey(Daisy Ridley), Po(Oscar Isaac), Finn(John Boyega), and of course, the return of Luke Skywalker(Mark Hamill), there is plenty to enjoy in Johnson's film even if you haven't seen the rest of the films in the Star Wars franchise; in an broad general statement, *The Last Jedi* can still serve as a dandy piece of entertainment for those who are not fans of Star Wars.

The film, like all the other films, starts off with the iconic opening crawl with bright yellow words against -- well, space. In many ways, this is exactly what makes the Star

Wars franchise recognizable. Even though we have seen an opening crawl in every Star Wars film -- played against John Williams' theme -- it seems as though it never gets old. Not to mention the momentary silence and suspense that is caused by 'LucasFilm Ltd.' appearing on the screen in its bold, silver letters.

*Star Wars: The Last Jedi* has a ridiculous amount going on, mixed with minor twists and character developments, that it is best if I give you the briefest plot overview of the film: As the "First Order," led by Snoke (once again played by Andy Serkis, who gives an award-caliber performance in *War for the Planet of the Apes*) is determined to wipe out the Last Jedi -- Luke Skywalker -- General Leia, Poe, Finn, Rey, BB-8 (just because), and the rest of the Resistance. But the rebels will do all they can to stop the dark side from taking over.

What I just told you is more than what I knew about *The Last Jedi* before the screening for this film. After viewing the film, I can assure you that it is best to stay away from any spoilers no matter how big or small, and to not inform yourself too much about what goes on in the film...because there is a lot.

For the most part, that is this installment's weakest point. It starts off in one area, and then transitions to a next with the blink of an eye. This issue in *The Last Jedi* isn't large enough to say that the film is sloppy, but at times the film feels like a pile of ideas that gets smushed together, and held together through its visual effects and its characters.

While Rian Johnson's Star Wars entry has quite the amount of entertaining action sequences, the lightsaber battles are no match for previous Star Wars films. Not only does the sound of the lightsabers feel off, but some of the combat scenes are generic, and not nearly as exciting as they could have been.

While *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* may not be as “epic” as *The Force Awakens*, it sure is smarter. The majority of audiences go to see Star Wars films not just because of the sci-fi, but because of the characters themselves. (spoiler for *The Force Awakens*) When Han Solo was killed by Kylo Ren, aka Ben Solo, it created a strong emotional effect from fans, especially those who have adored the Star Wars series for their entire life. Why? Because people grew to adore, admire, and see him in some ways as a fictional role model due to his lack of conceit.

*The Last Jedi* respects its characters and spends a lot of time developing them further to make them even more lovable than they already are. Hamill’s performance as Luke Skywalker is one of the best “return of a character” moment in recent films. While it may not have the same power as when Solo and Chewbacca were seen entering the Millennium Falcon, it will still hit home for Star Wars fans.

Even though Episode VIII respects its characters, it is too evident that they prioritize certain characters -- and even throw others under the bus during the film. For example, Maz Kanata (Lupita Nyong'o) who was one of the more intriguing new characters in *The Force Awakens*, has one 30 second scene in the latest film, and she is only seen through a space “FaceTime.” Kanata is not the only example: Rose Tico (Kelly Marie Tran), the Asian rebel, has her fair share of screen time in the film, but what ends up happening to her character is barely concluded, as the film feels as though we must get back to Poe, Leia, and Skywalker.

Based off the ending of *The Last Jedi* and what happens throughout the film, it is clear the Star Wars franchise is not going anywhere. Similar to franchises such as *The Fast and Furious*, each Star Wars installment leaves an opening for another film. Eventually, the Star Wars saga will inevitably become worn out (especially as a result of the unnecessary ‘A Star Wars Story’ films), just maybe not as fast as other franchises.

While for the most part *The Last Jedi* is an entertaining blockbuster, it is just too long for a story that becomes repetitive and never ends. With a runtime of 2 hours and 35 minutes, not even the porgs or lasers can save the film from losing its momentum at moments.

‘Will fans enjoy this film?’ is the question most people have regarding Rian Johnson’s Episode VIII. With a Rotten Tomatoes approval rating of 52%, more audiences enjoyed *Justice League* than *The Last Jedi*. If you are a true Star Wars fan who accepts the realities that not everything in a story will go just the way you had in mind, this newest Star Wars film will be a blast. However, even if you despise Star Wars, it will be nearly impossible to resist its tricks, one-liners, and beautifully and perfectly portrayed characters.

While *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* is a better film than *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *The Last Jedi* doesn’t leave the audience with an immediate feeling of needing to see the next film. Most will go see the next entry just because that is how this series operates, but it doesn’t leave us with nearly as much suspense as *The Force Awakens*. Despite this, it is wonderful to finally feel as though the story (for now) has decently concluded, and not left off with a cliffhanger. For now, let’s not think about Episode IX which will also be directed by J.J. Abrams, and just enjoy this solid story that takes place in a galaxy far, far away.

★★★★