

Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 152 min.

It hardly seems that reviews are necessary given the anticipation for the latest entry in the behemoth *Star Wars* saga. While this reviewer will admit to not being a huge aficionado of the franchise, or one who understands the gargantuan enthusiasm, I will confirm that *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* provides series devotees plenty more of what they want. While overlong and clunky in spots, it includes enough action, adventure and otherworldly beasts to entertain.

The opening crawl claims that despite the huge victory in blowing the up the planet-sized “Starkiller” base, the rebels have been whittled down. In fact, they’re on the verge of being wiped out by Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis) and Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) of the First Order. The remaining resistance tries to make an escape through space, but find themselves being pursued by the massive enemy fleet, which can track their every move. Poe (Oscar Isaac), Finn (John Boyega) and a worker named Rose (Kelly Marie Tran) try to locate a code-breaker who can dismantle the First Order’s tracing signal as Rey (Daisy Ridley) attempts to recruit Jedi Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) to help in the fight.

The improvement in this particular chapter comes with the addition of a welcome sense of humor. There’s an amusing joke early on as a First Order general (Domhnall Gleeson) attempts to communicate with the rebels and messages aren’t acknowledged. And later, there are fun physical gags with the Porg, who are essentially a species of space chickens. The villains are

mocked frequently in this feature. While the use of humor does diminish the sense of threat, it does add a bit of levity amidst the personal melodrama. And, of course, Luke Skywalker gets to deliver a couple of sharp comments. Admittedly, plenty of jokes fail, but the playfulness on display helps.

This humor makes up for a very simple story. Rey spends much of the film on a remote island training alongside a less-than-enthused Skywalker. Via the power of telepathy, she also develops a closer relationship with Ren, who attempts to explain his motivations and why she should consider him an ally. A weaker element is the covert mission to find a code-breaker on a planet that looks like... well... Monte Carlo. There is talk about the uncaring upper-class who reside in the resort, but Finn and Rose never confront these characters directly. In all, there's too much exposition in the middle of the film that slows events down.

Still, the big action set pieces are entertainingly rendered and fun to witness, including the initial conflicts with an enormous fleet and the climactic confrontations late in the film. When the movie deals with action, it's a fine piece of popcorn entertainment. And while there's nothing presented that will go down as iconic in *Star Wars* history (even *Attack of the Clones* featured a memorable scene with Yoda pulling out a lightsaber, doing back-flips and taking down enemies), it's all capably handled and appears to be slowly moving the series onto a different path.

It's longer than it needs to be, but fans who have been eagerly awaiting this chapter will likely love every minute of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. Those of us who aren't as taken with the series on the whole won't necessarily be converted, but will find this effort to be a flawed yet enjoyable diversion as well as an episode that may even improve slightly on
The Force Awakens
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