

Star Wars: The Force Awakens - A Bit Frivolous, But Still Fun

Written by By Glenn Kay

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Rating: ««« out of 4 Stars

Running Time: 137 min.

I've got to be honest, the hype surrounding *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is almost absurd. It has been 10 years since the last chapter and even though the majority of people were disappointed, its fan base still continues to grow. This has always been confusing to me. I enjoyed the original films as a kid, but never to the extent that many others my age and older have. So, please don't send me death threats for my tempered reaction to the latest installment, which I found to be fun and enjoyable but far from revelatory. Clearly, I'm just not the target audience.

Picking up 30 years after the events of *Return of the Jedi*, viewers are told that a new Empire menace known as the "First Order" poses a threat to the universe. Don't ask how all of this happened after the closing events of the last movie - it just came to be (admittedly, those who know the minutia of the series may know, but as someone who hasn't seen anything but the films, it comes as a bit of a surprise). Of course, the rag tag rebellion, who are now called the Resistance, is struggling just as they were three movies ago to fight off the threat.

As this is happening, a desert planet scavenger named Rey (Daisy Ridley) finds a robot named BB8 that is hiding secret information. She also encounters a Stormtrooper gone rogue named Finn (John Boyega). The two attempt to evade capture, find their way off of the planet to safety. Of course, they encounter many of the characters from the original series along the way. Together, all must stand against the menace, who are destroying worlds with their "Starkiller", a space station that will look very familiar to fans.

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Don't be surprised if it appears like a bit of a rehash. Most elements of *A New Hope* (and to some extent,

Empire

) are amalgamated and reused here, making this new chapter almost feel like a remake. Yes, the characters aren't exactly the same and some have been shifted into new roles, but ultimately the framework of the story is noticeably similar. Yet while it is too recognizable and predictable at times, there are a couple of roles that make an impression.

Finn is one such character. He's a conscientious Stormtrooper who flees from the First Order and struggles to find the strength to join with the Resistance. He's possesses some interesting inner conflict, but is also imbued with a great deal of humor. His interactions with one particular cast member provide some of the movie's best moments. Ridley is more than capable in the new Jedi-to-be role, Oscar Isaac is a lot of fun as a fighter pilot and the BB8 robot is a great addition, adding a lot of humor.

But there are some weak links. There are plenty of logistic questions that aren't answered (the Resistance could be easily squashed if only a different tact was taken) and the call-back references to the original series become a little overbearing. There isn't a whole lot of tension in the third act. The cross-cutting between characters doesn't create as much suspense as it should and the familiarity of the scenario doesn't help matters (we've seen this event happen before more than once). Finally, villain Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) is great early on, but becomes progressively less menacing towards the final third, eventually behaving like a petulant teenager.

For all the hype that has come with *Star Wars*, the final product is enjoyable but perhaps a bit slight. In the original series, we saw sights we'd never seen before - space dogfights, a giant walker lumbering through the snow, even an impressive chase through a dense forest. Beyond Finn and few little additions, there's not a whole lot that is new here.

Yet it's still fun for what it is - a simple and entertaining science-fiction adventure (here come the death threats). I don't know... I can watch James Bond go through the same actions every couple of years and still get a kick out of it, so this all depends on personal taste. Overall, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*

feeds off of fan nostalgia, works in the moment and will please most fans - just don't expect to remember it as fondly as some of the other episodes years down the road.