

Eye-Popping 3D, Same Story in 'Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace' Rerelease

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 10, 2012 - 11:37pm

- [3D. Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace](#) [2]
- [Ewan McGregor](#) [3]
- [Frank Oz](#) [4]
- [George Lucas](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Liam Neeson](#) [7]
- [LucasFilm](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Natalie Portman](#) [10]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [11]
- [Ray Park](#) [12]
- [Samuel L. Jackson](#) [13]
- [Terence Stamp](#) [14]



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Jar Jar Binks is back, and George Lucas has him in 3D. Yes, the re-release of 1999's "Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace," takes advantage of the new 3D technology. However, it can't change the story or the now 13-year outrage regarding this weird take on the Stars Wars legacy. Were we ever that young and that angry?

It was interesting revisiting the film and its controversy, since it was probably the most anticipated release of the 1990s. The simplicity and clean lines of the narrative in first series of films – actually the middle series, which again caused some consternation – gave way to a film about blockades and trade wars, with an introduction of the most hated character in cinema in the last 25 years, and that's even taking in the entire Adam Sandler's oeuvre. Jar Jar Binks, actually the whole bizarre Gungan tribe, is still obnoxious and completely out of place.

As the famous credit crawl states, "Turmoil has engulfed the Galactic Republic. The taxation of trade routes to outlying star systems is being disputed." Quite a introduction to a whole new myth involving the stories and characters of the 1977-1983 Star Wars films. The trade routes are being blockaded around the planet Naboo, ruled by Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman), and her Supreme Chancellor (Terence Stamp) has dispatched two Jedi knights, Qui-Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson) and his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), to negotiate with the Trade Federation. However, the evil Darth Sidious orders an army to kill the Knights and invade Naboo with an army of battle robot droids.



Liam Neeson, Jake Lloyd and Ewan McGregor in 'Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace'
Photo credit: Twentieth Century Fox

Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan escape to Naboo, encountering Jar Jar Binks (voice of Ahmed Best), who leads them to his underwater home of Otoh Gunga. From there they escape to the surface, and end up rescuing Queen Amidala and taking her to the planet Tatooine. There they encounter a slave child named Anakin Skywalker (Jake Lloyd), who has a strong aura of The Force, and through a series of events is set free. The child will lead them, with his prototype C-3PO droid (Anthony Daniels) and the addition of R2-D2 (Kenny Baker), another loyal mechanical companion. The origin of the rest of the legend is on course.

I don't know why I even tried to summarize that. I remember “The Simpsons” had a wicked parody, when a large robot broke into the Stars Wars-style senate chamber, and proceeded to just sit down and read a procedural manual, complete with robot reading glasses. Who knows why George Lucas went this route with his story? I think he was trying to make a veiled political reference, when really it's just the light sabers, space battles and good-over-evil triumph that the admirers want to see. And there is plenty of that in this Stars Wars chapter, it just has to work too hard against the other stuff.

There is something to admire about the film. The visionary production design has obviously been an influence on epic films going forward, there were similar design in a couple of the fantasy movies in recent years. The 3D gives it a new polish, with space an ever-deepening kind of mystery, and the Star Wars settings becoming more expressed and admirable. Using all the power of the ever-burgeoning rendering technology of the time, George Lucas created an extension of his myth that went beyond the first run through it, and in turn ushered in the creative potential of CG technology that we're all now used to.

I believe the story problems has to do with a generation gap. The mind of George Lucas has proved through his film history that he loves the candy-coated past of his time, including the TV and movie serials as a kid – and that includes the Buck Rogers simplicity that winds through the Star Wars universe. Jar Jar is comic relief in the Abbott and Costello/Three Stooges mode, which was a terrible decision. That's so easy to say now, and it seems crazy to get a 3D reminder of it, but so be it.



Jar Jar Binks and Natalie Portman in ‘Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace’

Photo credit: Twentieth Century Fox

It's also a kick to see the young Ewan McGregor and Natalie “I'm Really the Queen” Portman. The light saber battles are intact and righteously cool. Is “Phantom Menace” worse than “The Star Wars Holiday Special”? Both come from the time and era they are in, and both have their strengths and flaws. But its Star Wars, man, not “Citizen Kane.” Hell, you might even get a laugh about how angry you were over Jar Jar. As the floppy-eared creature himself said, “Yoosa should follow me now, okeeday?”

There are so many friends and neighbors who are Star Wars fanatics. It reminds them of their youth, and when getting excited about a movie was the most important thing in their lives. Good, bad or indifferent, that is the hold Stars Wars has on two generations, summed up nicely in the Anakin Skywalker line, “This is where the fun begins.”

“Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace” in 3D opens everywhere on February 10th. Featuring Liam Neeson, Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Ray Park, Terence Stamp, Samuel L. Jackson and Frank Oz. Written and directed by George Lucas. Rated “PG-13”



[15]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [16]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [15]

© 2012 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 25 2024 - 2:31am*):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/17417/eye-popping-3d-same-story-in-star-wars-episode-1-the-phantom-menace-re-release>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/3d-star-wars-episode-1-the-phantom-menace>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/ewan-mcgregor>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/frank-oz>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/george-lucas>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/liam-neeson>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/lucasfilm>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/natalie-portman>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ray-park>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/samuel-l-jackson>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/terence-stamp>
- [15] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>