

## ‘Star Wars: The Last Jedi’ Turns Up the Volume

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 12, 2017 - 5:46pm

- [Adam Driver](#) [2]
- [Anthony Daniels](#) [3]
- [Benicio Del Toro](#) [4]
- [Carrie Fisher](#) [5]
- [Daisy Ridley](#) [6]
- [George Lucas](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [John Boyega](#) [9]
- [John Williams](#) [10]
- [Laura Dern](#) [11]
- [Leia](#) [12]
- [Luke Skywalker](#) [13]
- [Mark Hamill](#) [14]
- [Movie Review](#) [15]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [16]
- [Peter Mayhew](#) [17]
- [Star Wars: The Last Jedi](#) [18]
- [The Dark Side](#) [19]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Everything that could be thrown into the Stars Wars legend – and the official story – is present in “Star Wars: The Last Jedi.” With three concurrent stories converging into an amped-up climax, all manner of Star Wars-mania and fan satisfaction can be realized in Episode 8.

Taking over for Episode 7 director J.J. Abrams is Rian Johnson (“Brick,” “The Brothers Bloom”), a more independent and offbeat helmsman. He obviously wanted to establish his own heartbeat in the series and did it by the balancing act of the complex stories (he also wrote the script), that all erupted over each other to effectively emerge together at the conclusion. It is an epic tale, much like the audacity of a seafaring novel written in the 19th Century, with conflict and emotion that have a bearing on both the older and new characters in the canon. This is not your Daddy’s Star Wars, but this is also not your Daddy’s time, and that all becomes necessary to evolve to the new cast and potential for the series.

The film picks up where the last film, “The Force Awakens,” left off. Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) has been found by the mysterious Rey (Daisy Ridley), in hopes of having him join the Resistance fight... which is being led by his sister General Leia (Carrie Fisher). Skywalker’s reluctance becomes part of Rey’s new evolution in Jedi training, and at the same time she has communication visions with a key enemy in the First Order, Kylo Ren (Adam Driver).





The Cast of 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'

*Photo credit: Walt Disney Studios*

Meanwhile, the Resistance is going badly, as their main space port is being savagely attacked by the First Order and Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis). Finn (John Boyega) is going rogue in hopes of short circuiting a superior First Order technology, and enlists a mechanic named Rose (Kelly Marie Tran) and a slovenly space pirate (Benicio Del Toro) to infiltrate it. They also seek the aid of pilot Poe (Oscar Isaac), but it's up to their guile and Force within them all to complete it.

What is most remarkable about this chapter is the sheer scope of where it goes with the story. Every piece of the Star Wars legend and their space battle components are put to the task, and each journey is compelling enough to create the pounding of the pulse that the series is famous for. It contains a precise balance between the old and new characters, with some creative casting (Del Toro and in another part, Laura Dern) to invent new characters.

The special effects created for the battle sequences, both in vast space and more intimate settings, are state-of-the-art movie magic. It is a feast for the eyes and other senses, combining ship movements with the more human-scale settings, and taking some care and discretion in not overdoing the battle sequences – they are huge, but not too huge, and thrill-ride-like in their excitement.





Luke (Mark Hamill), Rey (Daisy Ridley) and Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) of ‘Star Wars: The Last Jedi’  
Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

The familiar themes of the Star Wars morality are also turned louder, it is a basic dark versus light battle, fought between demigods. The motivations between the two “sides” become obvious with the larger bombast, but less clear, and it becomes as subtle as a twirling mustache villain versus an Eagle Scout. The power source of the Force – and who is chosen to possess it – will always be the mystery in the series, and as we well know in the real world, that power comes in both in evil and good varieties.

So expect the next (and final) chapter of the current trilogy to offer the same themes, with different circumstances in the fight of the Resistance against the First Order. Aren’t we essentially fighting that battle within ourselves on a daily basis? What hath Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker wrought?

*“Star Wars: The Last Jedi” opens everywhere on December 15th in regular and 3D IMAX versions. See local listings for 3D IMAX theaters and show times. Featuring Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver, Benicio Del Toro, Laura Dern, Peter Mayhew, Anthony Daniels. Written and directed by Rian Johnson. Rated “PG-13”*



[20]

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