

Story is Just a So-So for 'Solo: A Star Wars Story'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 23, 2018 - 12:51pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Solo: A Star Wars Story” is one intergalactic space adventure that sadly never makes the jump to light speed. The end result is not awful, it’s not great, it’s just kinda okay... it slavishly attends to the beats hinted at in the original trilogy without offering much in the way of surprises, or freshness.

The film gives Han Solo (Alden Ehrenreich) an origin story that doesn’t differ much from what fanatics might have already conjured up in their fan fiction. Ehrenreich is no Harrison Ford, but he’s not terrible either. His Solo starts as a petty thief, working for the first in a long string of slimy gangster creatures on his home planet, a grimy mud pit called Corellia. He and a fellow thief Qira (Emilia Clarke) hatch a plan to double cross the gangster, steal a valuable hyperspace fuel and make their escape. When things go wrong he gets out and she doesn’t, so he improvises and joins the Empire Air Corps to learn to be a pilot.



Alden Ehrenreich (center) is the Title Character in 'Solo: A Star Wars Story'
Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

Fast forward a few years, and Solo's smart-aleck backtalk has gotten him busted down to grunt soldier. In the middle of a war zone, he stumbles across a crew planning a heist and seizes this as an opportunity to go AWOL. Thieves portrayed by Woody Harrelson, Thandie Newton, Jon Favreau (voice only) and company reluctantly agree to take the hot shot pilot under their wing. Along the way he hooks up with Chewbacca, gets his first blaster, and we even see how he adopted that super cool vest look.

Considering the turmoil surrounding its production, it may be considered a minor miracle that the final production bears little evidence of its tortured path to the screen. Original directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller were fired just weeks away from completing filming, and Ron Howard was brought in to right the ship and essentially reshoot the film. Howard does stage some exciting sequences, including a heist aboard a train soaring in midair through the mountains, but the film mostly just hums along at a safe speed throughout.

There are more intergalactic gangsters, a flying luxury cruise ship, and other bits of Star Wars characters that hint at nostalgia. You would think that all-Han-all-the-time would be akin to spending a couple of hours in the Mos Eisley Cantina, but it never quite delivers on that promise. It's so interested in hitting those fan-satisfaction beats it never develops a momentum of its own... as it travels the exact same path everyone expects it to go, it plods a bit.



Han and Chewy, Together Again for the First Time in 'Solo: A Star Wars Story'

Photo credit: Walt Disney Pictures

The one bright spot is good old Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover). He is so dynamic, he's easily the coolest thing on the screen. Glover managed to do both a credible Billy Dee Williams impression and make the character his own, so much so that it really made me wish it had been his movie all along. In that sense, Han Solo was once the coolest guy in the galaxy. But in "Solo: A Star Wars Story," he elicits little more than a shrug.

"Solo: A Star Wars Story" opens everywhere in IMAX, RPX and regular screenings on May 25th. See local listings for IMAX/RPX theaters and show times. Featuring Alden Ehrenreich, Woody Harrelson, Emilia Clarke, Donald Glover, Thandie Newton, Paul Bettany, Jon Favreau and Linda Hunt. Written by Lawrence Kasdan and Jonathan Kasdan. Directed by Ron Howard. Rated "PG-13"



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