

'Rogue One' a must-see for Star Wars fans



By

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After seeing the latest "Star Wars" epic one has to ask: Was it even necessary for George Lucas to make the prequel trilogy leading up to his original "Star Wars" movie back in 1977 with "A New Hope"?

Did we really have to see a young Anakin Skywalker from the planet Tatooine in the first of those three prequels, "Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace" and subjecting us to a Jar Jar Binks in the process? Well, with "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" this latest outing in the continuing franchise I feel is the perfect alternative to a prequel leading up to episode four. But then I imagine there would have to be another two prequels to complete the thread.

For you fellow diehard "Star Wars" fans you can't help but think where does this one fit in exactly? In "Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith" (the best of the prequel trilogy) we see the Death Star still under construction yet with "Rogue One" the Battlestar is already complete (not giving anything away here as it's in the trailers and posters).

That said, the latest Star Wars story could be a standalone all by itself, which sounds weird because of course one can't dismiss all of the other seven films while viewing this chapter in one of the most incredible and successful franchises in movie making history. Director Gareth Edwards ("Godzilla") still takes us to a world set "long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away" but, unlike all the other films we don't get that long scrawling text that opens all of the other Star Wars stories. Also missing is the familiar John Williams score, but new composer Michael Giacchino definitely borrows some riffs from the original putting his own spin on it musically to as not sample too much from the original.

Our main heroine is Jyn Erso (played by Felicity Jones who was nominated for an Oscar in "The Theory of Everything") who learns the evil ways of the Empire at a very young age because it was her father, Galen (Mads Mikkelsen) who was responsible for the planning and construction of the Death Star.

Here's where it gets interesting and, yes, even though he's responsible for building the ultimate weapon of mass destruction he himself is a rebel and it'll be 15 years later when we see why Jyn has inherited that side of her father and her purpose for being: to steal the plans of her father's creation. Right then you get the feeling that this movie so perfectly leads into what will be Lucas' groundbreaking original, "Star Wars: Episode 4 – A New Hope."



Of course Jyn can't do this alone and she gets assistance (starting when she was very young) from Saw Gerrera (Forest Whitaker), a friend of her father's. Later on as a young woman Jyn is introduced to the dashing Capt. Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) and, yes, in a parallel Star Wars world you do see hints of a Princess Leia and a Han Solo, but I digress.

As with any really good action flick you need a solid supporting cast that kicks some serious butt ... literally! Huge kudos for casting Donnie Yen as Chirrut Imwe, a blind warrior monk whose mantra is reciting "I'm with the force and the force is with me" branding the franchise and Riz Ahmed as Bodhi Rook, an Imperial pilot now working with the Rebellion. But it's Alan Tudyk who steals every scene he is in as the voice of K-2S0 (Kaytoo to his masters), a security droid with a very sarcastic attitude. To him (I'm assuming it's a him in the robotic world) it's all about numbers and the percentage of winning or losing battles which, like Han Solo, Cassian Andor likes to defy the odds and just go for it.

But it's the new and familiar faces (and voices) of the evil Empire that kept this filmgoer on the edge of his seat in anticipation of what was to come. Darth Vader, although not the centerpiece of the movie, is obviously a force to be reckoned with and thankfully the great James Earl Jones, the original voice remains. His voice never ages. What is amazing to me is how masterfully some actors were brought back to life after they've long since left this planet. Case in point: rather than recast the role of the Empire's Grand Moff

Tarkin (originally played by the late Peter Cushing) director Gareth Edwards and the wizards from Industrial Light and Magic digitally re-created the actor. The effect will blow your mind.

However, the final scene of the movie (and I won't reveal who it is) you'll see a very familiar face who in fact is a real actress and not a digital recreation.

When you do see "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" ask yourself if you feel this would have been a more perfect prequel to "Star Wars: Episode 4 – A New Hope." I do have to snicker some because there is a major continuity problem having this as a prequel to the original 1977 classic. Times have changed in Hollywood and "Rogue" offers up one of the most ethnically diverse casts ever, making this movie very appealing and universal. Then as it leads into the 1977 Lucas debut of "Star Wars" the cast (as with most of Hollywood back then) is very white and you find yourself asking, "What happened to all of those people of color from the movie I just saw leading up to this one, huh?" Just an observation folks, not a political statement.

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