

# 'The Last Jedi' is Awful and Disney is Ruining Star Wars

In 1964, shortly after the release of Disney's adaptation of P. L. Travers' charming 1934 book [Mary Poppins](#), J.R.R. Tolkien sent a letter to one Miss J.L. Curry of Stanford University. In the letter, Tolkien complained about the corrupting influence Walt Disney's movies had on literary works.

"Though in most of the 'pictures' proceeding from his studios there are admirable or charming passages, the effect of all of them is to me disgusting," Tolkien wrote. "Some have given me nausea."

I always felt this was hyperbole on Tolkien's part. But after watching the latest Star Wars installment, I now take Tolkien at his word.

*The Last Jedi* is not just bad. It's a steaming pile of bantha droppings, a dumpster fire of intergalactic proportions. Disney is ruining all that was good and pure in a galaxy far, far away. (That's the last bad pun, I promise.)

I took my four-year-old to see the movie. Dressed in full Darth Vader garb, he kept asking, "Dad, when is Luke gonna fight Kyla Rin"? (That is Kylo Ren in Four-Year-Old.)

"Soon buddy," I'd answer. "Now shhhhh."

Alas, I was lying. Luke never fights Kylo Ren because, somewhere between *The Return of the Jedi* and this film, our hero inexplicably transformed into a sulking pre-teen trapped in an old man's body. It's a convenient switch in that New Luke basically fits in with the rest of the Star Wars cast, an ensemble of one-dimensional characters full of banal one-liners. On the surface, these characters are diverse. In reality, they are pretty much the same: predictable, dull, and

mildly irritating.

Rumors have been swirling for months that the rebooted Star Wars franchise was in trouble and that Kathleen Kennedy, president of Lucasfilm, was a ruthless control freak ["desperate to stamp out any spark of originality"](#) in the new trilogy.

I have no idea if Kennedy is a control freak. But this latest Star Wars effort suggests there is truth in the latter claim. There is nothing redeeming in the Star Wars reboot. Even the few breadcrumbs that had been left behind in *The Force Awakens* by J.J. Abrams, the teasing trickster who gave us *Lost*, have been swept away with little or no explanation.

I actually found myself rooting for ~~the Empire~~ the First Order. If one of those dreadnaughts had happened to swoop in and put the Resistance (and me) out of its misery, at least that would be interesting. My wish was almost granted.

Turns out Leia Organa isn't much of a general. Late in the film, viewers watch (in boredom, not horror) as Resistance transports get snuffed out one by one like ducks on a frozen pond. A couple ships predictably escape. (Some will argue that this criticism of Gen. Organa's military prowess is unfair, since she spends most of the film comatose. But directly engaging a fleet of Corellian-class Star Destroyers in the first place is dubious military strategy, in my humble opinion; a Fabian strategy would have been wiser.)

None of this, I should point out, bothered my four-year-old; he loved the movie.

This is to be expected. *The Last Jedi* feels very much like a film written by a child for children. Surely no adult would write a scene in which two crew members, in the middle of a battle, jet off to a distant planet in hopes of bringing back some unknown person who might be able to help them sneak onboard one of the enemy starships and disable its tracking

system. (All in the space of 12 hours, mind you.) This is just one example of the lazy, unimaginative writing viewers encounter throughout this potboiler.

All of this is bad enough, at least for anyone who gives a damn about quality storytelling. But the deficiencies go beyond *The Last Jedi*.

The characters of the original films might serve no real purpose in this trilogy—they primarily are walking props designed to evoke nostalgia and sell tickets—but their very presence creates a continuity that threatens to undermine the wonderful piece of pop art that George Lucas created in the late 1970s and early 80s.

That's a shame, particularly when one considers the merits of the last installment.

Gareth Edwards' *Rogue One* is one of the finest films in the Star Wars franchise. Edwards succeeded by working effectively within the original Star Wars framework, a framework the latest films seem intent on wiping away.

Destroying the past is one of the most prominent themes in *The Last Jedi*. It's the one thing on which the evil Kylo Ren and the wise Yoda can agree. After listening to Luke prattle on about how the Jedi must die for much of the film, viewers get to watch Yoda's Force ghost call down lightning to *burn down* the Jedi Temple and the ancient Jedi scriptures within.

"Page-turners *they were not*," Yoda quips. (Yes, he really says this.)

What possessed Kennedy to take the franchise in this direction is anyone's guess, but it's clear even some cast members had serious doubts about the direction (see the clip below).

*It's just entertainment*, many will say; and they would be right. Still, like Tolkien, I take stories seriously. And

watching a cherished story from my childhood be butchered in this manner is a bit sad and, to borrow Tolkien's sentiment, nauseating.

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