

Force is not always with ambitious *Jedi*

Rian Johnson's entry in the *Star Wars* series brings back old heroes, develops new ones with often mixed results



Photo courtesy of LUCASFILM

Protagonist Rey attempts to get training in the ways of the Jedi from reluctant, would-be mentor Luke in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

By DYLAN HAJNASIEWICZ
Quill staff writer

Star Wars: The Last Jedi, the latest installment in the new *Star Wars* trilogy, is a brilliantly directed but not perfect film by Rian Johnson. The film has amazing shots throughout that capture the scale of the First Order ships in comparison to the Resistance ships. In addition, the film makes the planets feel alive with background characters during the various set pieces. The movie also is beautifully scored by long-time composer John Williams, who takes many old themes from the original trilogy and meshes them together with the newer music he has created. At the same time, I think there is a lot that could have been done better not only with this movie, but with the trilogy as a whole so far. That being said, this movie and its predecessor, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, are both entertaining movies and are good installments in the *Star Wars* franchise.

Star Wars: The Last Jedi is the follow-up to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, where we were introduced to a whole new ensemble of characters. Some of them are well written and portrayed on screen, while some fall short of what some fans are expecting of them. Specifically, the villains in the new series, aside from Kylo Ren, remain underdeveloped in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

Throughout *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, audiences are left with many questions and few answers. In the new movie, most of those questions are answered. *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* addresses issues such as Rey's parentage and why Luke went into hiding, two things that were left dangling above your head after *The Force Awakens*. At the same time, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* still falls short of giving viewers answers to all of the questions, which I feel hurts the trilogy. This makes it necessary for fans to buy the supplemental books and comics just to learn more of the story.

In the new movie, Rian Johnson does a good job of taking plot aspects of *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* to make the viewer think they know where the story is going, but undercutting those expectations in surprising ways. He also sets up and builds up relationships between characters that they will likely flesh out in the next film and possible sequels after that. In the end, however, it sometimes seems like he and the executives at Lucasfilm are trying to put too much into this film. In fact, it is the longest *Star Wars* movie, with a running time of two hours and 32 minutes.

Rian Johnson expands the *Star Wars* universe with many new planets and characters, whether they be in the background or they are central to the story. Specifically, he introduces two new planets, the most important of which is Canto Bight, a casino planet where the rich of the galaxy go to have fun and gamble. This is a new and fun addition to the *Star Wars* universe and I think it served as a good way to develop some characters and introduce some new ones.

At the same time, the Canto Bight sequence is evidence of one of the biggest issues in the movie, which is how much story they put into it. At any given time in the film, the audience is being bounced between at least three stories. While this isn't always a bad thing, it does sometimes take you away

from things you would rather be seeing. With its long running time, there are many fillers that they put into the plot that plainly did not need to be there or receive as much focus as they did. The movie is entertaining enough that it never makes you feel like you are watching a long movie, but it does have many plot elements throughout that I don't think are necessary.

A good example of this can be seen with some of the secondary characters. Captain Phasma, the silver stormtrooper who was hyped up for *The Force Awakens*, makes her return in the sequel, but not in any way that audiences would think or hope. She is yet again cast aside in order to spend more time with other villains such as Kylo Ren and Snoke. The same thing goes for General Hux. Throughout the previous movie, he is just a punching bag for Kylo Ren and the same thing happens this time around. If they are not going to do these smaller characters justice in either of the two movies, perhaps they should not have even introduced them.

I also had some issues with their approach to one of the central characters to all of the *Star Wars* movies: Luke. In *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, Mark Hamill shows yet again that he is not a good actor. His performance underscores the fact that it is time that they move on from the original characters as a whole. The last movie introduced us to new, amazing characters, but this movie backtracks by focusing more on Luke and Leia than anybody else. It is time to give the new characters stories that do not revolve around Luke, Leia or Han.

I am hoping that the next movie will place Rey and Kylo Ren at the forefront of the story so they are not the plot devices they have been so far in the new trilogy. Rey is one of the strongest female leads in the *Star Wars* saga, but she is still getting overshadowed by the powerhouse characters from the original movies. Nobody cares about some no-name girl from a desert planet when Luke, Leia and Han are in the story.

In contrast to Rey, Kylo Ren is one of the stand-out parts of this movie. Adam Driver has taken this character to a whole new level of intensity. Whether it is him dealing with the thought of his mother or his struggle with the light and dark side of the force, he perfectly encapsulates just how torn and broken his character is at this point. He is a well-rounded and meticulously crafted villain.

Another highlight of the film is its approach to fight and battle sequences. I think these are some of the most well-crafted scenes in all of the *Star Wars* movies. Whenever any of the characters are fighting, you always feel anxious because they are in real danger. You learn quickly in *The Last Jedi* not to think that any of the characters will be safe just because they are the main characters.

I will always have a passionate love for *Star Wars* and I can't wait to see where the next movie takes this story. Overall, though, *The Last Jedi* falls a bit short in my mind. I think the story could have been better and there could have been more action pieces where the characters face each other in person instead of being in ships. Still, the great visuals, music and hidden messages throughout the movie make it enjoyable to watch. This is a good installment in the *Star Wars* franchise and it should serve as a good lead into the ending of the trilogy in two years when Episode IX, which will be directed by JJ Abrams, comes out. I give *The Last Jedi* three out of five stars.

Walking Dead is coming alive in season eight

Several lackluster seasons are more than made up for in current storyline

By DYLAN HAJNASIEWICZ
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AMC's *The Walking Dead* has been a household name since 2010. The show is about to enter the second half of its eighth season, which has so far been one of the best of the series.

The new season follows a not-so-stellar season seven where viewership dropped considerably and was on a fairly steady decline. Some of this had to do with losing beloved characters like Glenn and Abraham. It was also because the show was slow and sometime boring during season seven.

Fortunately, this all changed in season eight when they started the "All Out War" story arc from *The Walking Dead* comics. It is a great story with lots of twists and turns that really keep you engaged. The show's writers have effectively translated this to the show by throwing in some heavy plot development and often going against what audiences have expected.

In season eight, central protagonist Rick is the leader of Alexandria, which is allied with two other communities, Hilltop and The Kingdom. These three communities are all banding together to take down the Saviors, who are under the oppressive rule of Negan. In the first episode of the season, Rick introduces a well-thought-out and meticulous battle plan to confront these enemies. The show's writers set up Rick's plan in such a full-proof way that it is a shock when it all comes tumbling to the ground. For example, Daryl and a few other characters don't want to wait for Rick's plan to unfold, so they take matters into their own hands and end up freeing the Saviors from a horde of walkers that were keeping them in their compound.

I love the ways the writers are using some of these characters this season. The way they are building up the tension between Rick and Daryl and between Negan and Simon has been effective. They're showing both pairs of characters fighting and arguing, which is making the viewers draw a parallel between these characters. Audiences can see how both pairs are not that different from each other, even though one pair is supposed to be bad and the other good.

Throughout the series, I have never been a fan of the Carl Grimes character. He has always been a whinny, dumb kid who either makes life harder for everybody or gets people killed. However, this season has really moved Carl in a new direction. He has finally become a man and has stepped into a new role in Alexandria.

The show continues to do a good job at world building in season eight. Even though we have been exposed to these towns and characters for a while now, they still find a way to keep things new by showing us more details from each community.

The current season has also gone down a different path in terms of how they shoot the episodes, present the music and design the dialogue. I can't help but get a bit of an '80s vibe from the show thanks to its quick cuts from frame to frame, the background music and the action. All of it seems like they are drawing from classic '80s action films such as *Rambo* and *The Terminator*.

The Walking Dead has gone through some much-needed improvement this year, which has given the show a new and fun feel. Season eight is delivering a well-rounded story that keeps drawing the viewers in more and more. I give the first half of the season five out of five stars. This is one of the best seasons of *The Walking Dead* yet and I hope they can keep up this level of storytelling for seasons to come.

Genre-busting visual novel has shocking twists

Hard-to-categorize *Doki Doki Literature Club* earns its description as a "Psychological Horror" game

By KYLE COX
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Doki Doki Literature Club (*DDLC*) seems like a standard, run-of-the-mill, dating sim visual novel at first glance. Released on September 22, 2017, *DDLC* comes from a new development team named Team Salvato, which is headed by Dan Salvato, a former *Super Smash Brothers* modder. When I first heard of this game, I thought it was a standard Japanese visual novel. After some more research, I was surprised to see it advertised as a "Psychological Horror" game because it seems extremely innocent when you see it online. However, after playing the game, I realized that it is a fitting description of the game's genre. Overall, *DDLC* is definitely something that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

One of the main reasons why this game is so good is because of the

characters themselves, specifically the Literature Club members. In *DDLC*, you are the main character and it is your last year of high school. Sayori, an old childhood friend, asks you to join the Literature Club, which is a place where people can read, write and share their literary interests with fellow club members. You decide to join the club after getting pressured by its other members, including Sayori, Natsuki, Yuri and the club's president, Monika.

While Sayori has always been there through thick and thin, the two of you start to see less and less of each other due to her being late. You also start developing different tastes and interests. In addition, Sayori suffers from depression, which soon affects the club as a whole. Through the game and your own actions, however, you decide what will become of her.

Another club member is Yuri, who is the shy one of the group. She doesn't

really talk much and usually keeps to herself. Over time, you start to see her more and more, which makes you able to chip away at her shell piece by piece.

A third character you can connect with is Natsuki. Even though Natsuki may seem a bit off because she is not nice to you, once you get to know her, you can tell she has a good heart. Much like the previous characters, you are able to get with her, too.

Lastly, there is the club president, Monika. The Literature Club, which she founded after leaving the Debate Club, is important to her. She aspires for it to be a place to showcase and grow everyone's passion for literature. Monika openly displays care and concern for her clubmates, praising each member and what they write. She doesn't talk as much as the others, but as you progress in the game, she starts to talk to you more directly. Unlike the other characters, she is the only character you

cannot be with romantically, most likely due to her position as president.

As the story begins, the school hosts a festival to advertise clubs, so the members of the newly founded Literature Club decide to participate. On the weekend before the school festival, Sayori confesses her love for you and you have the choice to accept her confession or reject it. This sequence is crucial because it is the first main focus of the game. Ultimately, whatever choice you make does not matter as it all leads to the same outcome: Sayori ends her own life.

Once that happens, the game "ends" and you get sent back to the main menu. Upon being kicked to the main menu, you see Yuri, Monika and Natsuki with the character that is supposed to be Sayori, who is now a

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