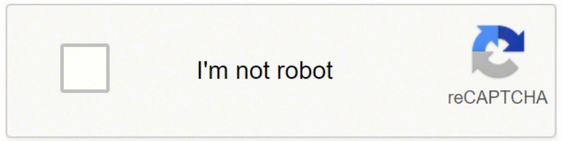

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Is star wars the last jedi a good movie

I understand the complaints about episode VIII. I really do. The Leia scene is infamous for good reason, the comedy was a little off beat in a bad way. And all in all, it might not be as tightly paced as its predecessors.But when taking all of these new Star Wars films as a whole (including the spin-off's), The Last Jedi is absolutely the only one that did ANYTHING new.The Force Awakens is utterly unoriginal. Abrams basically remade a New Hope and swapped out some characters. Even the mentor figure introduced to our new leads is killed in a Death Star-style space station. For crying out loud: it starts off on a desert planet and with a lead character whose main motivation is "getting off this rock." It's just a recap. It might have felt like Star Wars, but it was nothing but fan service and safe filmmaking.Then Rian Johnson comes along. For the record - he's no Abrams when it comes to piecing together a fast-paced SciFi film. But his writing is far and away the best the series has had since Empire Strikes Back. He expands upon and introduces new concepts with the Force (something that happened in the OT routinely). He introduces aspects of the SW universe that have never been explained before, like how Rebels and Imperials alike are financed and exactly how put-upon poorer citizens of the Galaxy are. And for the first time, gray area exists in Star Wars where before, there were only two things you could be: good, or bad. Even Han Solo, the most morally ambiguous character in the OT, could never be called anything but a "good guy."Then there is the wonderful subversion of fan expectations at almost every plot development. Rey flirting with the dark side, Kylo cutting down Snoke, an Alliance cruiser smashing through a Super Star Destroyer at lightspeed. The fact that the entire film is a contained chase scene, employing a structure never seen in a Star Wars film before. Even Luke's arc, his attitudes about the force and training Rey, are contrary to what fans want and expect from Star Wars. And Johnson's refusal to reveal some huge, epic backstory for Rey, when everyone expected one, was delightfully surprising and realistic.Subversion of expectations, for the record, should be WHY we enjoy watching new films. If you want the same thing over and over again, just keep watching the same movies.All in all, I just really feel like Star Wars fans were not fair with Rian Johnson. Was it the best-made film of the year? No, but Star Wars seldom is. Did it deliver on every fan theory and expectation of blatant fan-service? No, but good films don't do that.These are just some of the reasons why I believe, in 10-15 years' time, the Last Jedi will be the only new-era Star Wars film that stands up to scrutiny. 'The Last Jedi' re-established what it is possible for a franchise to do. In 2015, J.J. Abrams released a Star Wars movie finely-tuned to make people happy. The Force Awakens isn’t so much a sequel as it is a remake of A New Hope. Abrams copies the same broad narrative arc of that first film, and his characters excitedly chatter about plot points from George Lucas’ original trilogy like chirpy franchise fans. When they meet Han Solo, they react with the same shock and awe as any 40-year-old who once had their brain set on fire by Harrison Ford and his blaster. Abrams’ villain is a Darth Vader stan. If you expect sequels to be nothing more than paint-by-numbers remakes of the originals, then The Force Awakens is as perfect a sequel as could be imagined. It’s reverent, and it’s fun, and it’s joyously slight. It’s the film for both six-year-olds just discovering the franchise and die-hard fans alike — a work of pure spectacle that breaks into your heart with a crowbar, all while honouring the films of the past. And it’s brand management, a way for Disney to sell a million soft toys. But what if that’s not what you want sequels to be? Hell, what if that’s not what you want Star Wars movies to be? After all, if the current glut of nostalgic properties has taught us anything, it’s that you can’t make great art by simply aping great art. You make great art when you break the mould. When you reset boundaries. When you remind people of the past, without being just one more slave to it. Enter The Last Jedi, the controversial middle chapter to Disney’s new trilogy written and directed by Rian Johnson. The Last Jedi doesn’t just break free from the past — it sets it on fire. All the irate trolls who have spent years hounding Johnson online are right about one thing. His film does piss on the franchise’s legacy. And that’s its whole point. In fact, it’s exactly that destruction that makes The Last Jedi not just one of the greatest Star Wars movies, but one of the great Hollywood blockbusters of the 21st century. No contest. Killing A Kitten Shortly after the release of his strange, cold debut film, THX 1138, George Lucas responded to the people who said his work was unfeeling. “Emotionally involving the audience is easy,” he said. “Anybody can do it blindfolded: get a little kitten and have some guy wring its neck.” Six years later he made Star Wars. Star Wars is the work of a man wringing a kitten’s neck on the biggest scale possible. Borrowing from Akira Kurosawa’s The Hidden Fortress, a slapstick caper about a Princess and a Castle, Lucas stripped out everything from his story but the mythic. He read Joseph Campbell’s The Hero With A Thousand Faces, a run-down of the typical hero’s journey, and he copied it beat by beat. He carved his heroes from light and his villains from obsidian blackness. He started big and then he went bigger. The result is an exercise in pure emotional involvement; in kitten-killing. Each plot beat of A New Hope is designed to be larger-than-life, and crashing, and loud, and big. Jean-Luc Godard once said that you crane upwards to look at the cinema screen — not just physically, but emotionally. The first Star Wars film is proof of that. Star Wars: The Force Awakens (dir. J.J. Abrams, 2015) pic.twitter.com/pYCit3vEfV — Carlos Caramantin (@carcaramantin) December 7, 2019 Every film Lucas authored from that point forward followed in that framework. And then, when Abrams came along, he followed in that framework too. The Force Awakens functionally works not because Finn, Rey and Poe are people that we recognise from our real life. They’re mythic tropes, not human beings, and we love them because of the sheer scale on which they operate. That’s why Abrams ties them to these big symbols — Kylo to his mask; Rey to the saber that tells her she’s different from the world around her; and Poe to his ship. These symbols grow to define them. It’s not just that Kylo wears a mask; it’s that he is a mask. That everything important about him is contained within that black, grilled object. He’s as complicated as it, and it’s as complicated as him. Which makes him easy to understand. But also makes him slight. The Last Jedi Complicates Everything. That’s The Point The Last Jedi is a different proposition entirely. Within the first act of that film — hell, within the first 20 minutes — Johnson throws away the symbols that Abrams handed him. That’s not even a metaphor; Luke hurls Rey’s saber, the McGuffin of The Force Awakens, off the edge of a cliff. Kylo smashes his helmet into the side of a lift. And Poe’s heroism is completely undermined, everything that makes him special mocked and derided by the film itself. The torching of the past amps up from there. Yoda, one of the moral cornerstones of the series, burns the Sacred Jedi Texts with a bolt of lightning. Kylo Ren, the Darth Vader surrogate, completes Vader’s arc, but shockingly out of order — he slices the shadowy Emperor Palpatine surrogate in two. Princess Leia not only demonstrates that she’s force sensitive, but does so in a way that defies the language of everything that we’ve seen in any Star Wars films; she flies through space, Mary Poppins-style. And, in a direct fuck you to both Abrams’ slavish franchise-building and the mess of fan theories that circulated online, Rey learns that she’s no-one. Trash. With no connection to anything. Rian Johnson is a genius, Last Jedi is a masterpiece, and some people have zero fucking taste. — Alex Kane (@alexjkane) December 11, 2019 So, what happens when you strip these characters of their symbolic armour as Johnson does? The answer: they become human. They become relatable. And their journey becomes more complicated — more unusual — but significantly more raw. And because they’re actual people, not just stock standard tropes, they act like actual people act; as in, unpredictably. The final act of The Last Jedi is a mix of feints and double-feints that it’s not possible to second guess. The moment that Kylo severs in two the character that we’ve expected to lead our final showdown, we become unmoored. Luke’s death, Kylo’s showdown with a spectre, Finn’s aborted self-sacrifice — these things feed into no obvious template. Instead, they thrum with the energy and inventiveness key to any great movie — the excitement you get when you see human beings living their lives. Sign up for a free Disney+ trial to watch your favourites from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars & more. The Terrifying Freedom Of Living Without The Past To some, this might all just sound like aimless destruction. But Johnson’s genius is not just in how he frees up the characters to be human. It’s how he reshapes the possibilities for the franchise. Paradoxically, by refusing to ape the past, Johnson injects the franchise with real life. With stakes. Force Awakens nominally established Kylo Ren to be the big bad of the new trilogy. But he poses no real threat in that film. He isn’t really a villain as much as he is a slave to other villains. He’s threatening because of those old antagonists that he invokes, not because of who he is. That’s not the case in The Last Jedi. When he axes Snoke — when he jettisons the entirety of his past — the choice of how to behave from that point forward lies entirely within his own hands. So, when he decides to continue the project of the First Order, that responsibility is wholly his. He’s no puppet. He is the architect of his own destiny. And in that moment he suddenly and immediately snaps into a focus as a real and genuine threat. THE LAST JEDI was the best, liveliest STAR WARS movie since EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. To demand that the series adhere to the narrowest possible parameters for what a STAR WARS movie can be is everything wrong with mainstream filmmaking today. — Scott Tobias (@scott_tobias) December 11, 2019 The same goes for Rey. Rey spends the majority of the first film searching for some kind of proof that she’s a heroine, proof that she believes lies in her past. In The Last Jedi, she learns that the ‘proof’ lies within her. That’s not novel for storytelling — most great films end with the protagonist settling warring factions inside themselves. But it is novel for a franchise. Rey doesn’t have to be special because of her lineage. She can be special because of her own choices. And that’s not something that’s happened in a Star Wars film for over four decades. So, when you end a film with two human beings coming to blows because of choices they’ve made — because of who they are, not because of what their pasts are — that’s real stakes. That means something. In fact, it means something in the way that the denouement of A New Hope means something. It just took Johnson burning the franchise to the ground to get back to where it started. What The Future Holds The key players of the Disney trilogy have spent the press cycle for Rise of the Skywalker negging Johnson’s efforts. Ridley has revealed she cried when she learned that Abrams was returning to the fold to course correct. Boyega has complained endlessly about Johnson’s decision to separate the characters and let them have their own individual journeys. That doesn’t just feel like an attempt to soothe angry fans. It feels like an attempt to prepare The Last Jedi lovers for what’s about to happen. Script leaks suggest that Abrams’ plan for the new film involves returning to his original vision. Interviews where the director spits on Johnson’s offering make those feel like more than rumours. I think people associated with RISE OF THE SKYWALKER taking thinly-veiled swings at THE LAST JEDI during their current press tour is a very shitty look. — Scott Wampler™ (@ScottWamplerBMD) December 11, 2019 Of course, whatever happens is in Abrams’ hands now, and after that, who knows how the franchise will progress. But Abrams and his cronies are speaking with the confidence of people who are sure that their efforts at simply replaying the past will look better in ten year’s time than Johnson’s. I’m not sure that’s true. Hollywood blockbusters, led by Marvel studios and the comic book formula, are becoming less and less human and more and more vague. Characters are developed by their connections to one another, rather than anything that they do in their own right. And heroes are becoming increasingly mythic, their struggles less like the struggles the rest of us innately understand. Being big and constructed and vague is the flavour of the moment. But it won’t always be. After all, that’s not what cinema has been about for at least a hundred years. We go to the movies to see human beings. That’s not what Force Awakens is about. But it is what The Last Jedi is about: people, in all their ugliness and complexity, unburdened by the weight of the past, going at it alone. Hey, just FYI, if you buy something from one of the links in this article, we may earn a small commission. Joseph Earp is a staff writer at Junkee. He tweets @Joseph_O_Earp.

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