

Had a little trouble deciding on the rating for this. The left side of my brain is frustrated with the many plot and structuring issues, but the right side of my brain was absolutely entertained by this.

The movie has maintained the current and original trilogy's legacy of being the definition of a popcorn film. The action is great. The movie looks fantastic, really the most visually impressive of all the Star Wars films.

The cast and characters are again great. I'm glad to see the trio of Finn (John Boyega), Rey (Daisy Ridley), and Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaacs) all together for a substantial stretch of time. The interactions between the three are great. (They could've had more time together.) I also liked the new characters with the exception of the Knights of Ren who despite being first teased in Force Awakens, just don't do enough.

The humor works well. However, I felt even though C-3PO (Anthony Daniels) has been comic relief since the beginning, he was too aggressively jokey. I liked that this continued the last film's theme of hope.

Now for the problems. These three films changed creative control from JJ Abrams to Rian Johnson and back to Abrams without the Disney brass doing enough to pre-plan or control consistency. Abrams did a lot of things I found so maddening that I'm shocked that the producers greenlit them. The major threat in this movie introduced so quickly and with such little plausibility. Reveals and plot elements pop up so arbitrarily that they don't feel natural at all. It's a little like poor fan fiction. Abrams jams way too much story in here in order to arrive at the conclusion he wants. I felt Finn just wasn't given enough room to breathe and was disappointed with how his story ended.

The whole change in directorial voice is exacerbated by the fact that Abrams like Johnson before him is actively resistant in running with what he is given. Abrams does something that is a major slap in the face to his predecessor, which is so mishandled in its execution. It takes you out of the film. Say what you will about the Canto Blight subplot in The Last Jedi, but I liked the character of Rose Tico (Kelly Marie Tran). I didn't like that they cut her role so short in this not to mention completely axed her set up from the last film as a romantic interest for one of the characters. It's like Abrams decided he didn't like her because he didn't create her and she wasn't in his plans.

J.J. still has his Achilles heel of being too blatantly nostalgic. It isn't half as prevalent as in the Force Awakens, but there are a couple moments where it raises its head and is downright insulting to the audience.

I know I talked way more about the cons and the pros, but it's easier to talk about what doesn't work than what does. When it works, the movie pulled me in and would make me forget the problem areas when they weren't around. It still embodies the essence of a Star Wars film. I'd rank this as the weakest of the trilogy but better than Solo and the prequel trilogy. This is one of those films where your opinion could really go either way. I've found both negative and positive criticism of this to be accurate. If you're already uber angry at the first two movies and didn't think or were unsure if you wanted to continue, then you really might not want this. However, if you enjoyed the ride so far, I suggest you take the gamble.