

New Star Wars movie... did JJ Abrams and John Williams pull it off?



Keep your eyes on Rey, the real light of the new Star Wars movie. They won't do badly to write everything around her (oh, and maybe give her a decent piece of theme music too)

Obviously, it may be dangerous to keep reading if you don't want to see spoilers of sorts. I'm not going to give away plot details, just sweeping generalities about the nature of the epic "adventure" movie this is supposed to be.

So you've seen the new Star Wars movie. Can you run through your mind a single piece of new music from the movie? Just one? Anything? Contrast that to the 5 minute clip below, taken from the first 10 minutes of JJ Abrams first "new" Star Trek movie.

YouTube Video: [YouTube.com/watch?v=vAf5qSwsZrM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAf5qSwsZrM)

The end of this sequence, in JJ Abrams first Star Trek movie (his "reboot" of the originals, as he's now doing for Star Wars), comes 10 minutes into the movie. In that opening 10 minutes we know more about a non-continuing character (James T Kirk's heroic father) than we learn about any character through the entire Star Wars Episode VII that just came out. And, we have a piece of music, a couple actually, that stick in our minds. All in 10 minutes.

Energy, focus and music are all a bit lacking in the new Star Wars, in my opinion. There's a bit too much of a "reunion" sort of feel, too much of not wanting to spoil things by taking your mind off familiar friends & themes. The music especially is my biggest disappointment. Christmas Eve, my family re-watched The Empire Strikes Back. Blasting "The Imperial March" loudly, you're not just watching but feeling an all-encompassing embrace of evil from Darth Vader. It's an experience that sticks.

The high point of the new movie, without question, is Rey. You can't take your eyes off her. She's an amazing actress playing a well-thought-out character. A better Luke Skywalker than Mark Hamill ever was. She is going to steal the show in the future movies. Let's just hope they get her a decent theme and make her central to the story line.

My feeling is that JJ Abrams got far too concerned about keeping "true" to the original fan base, and George Lucas' style of story telling; he went conservative and left on the table the very things that he (JJ Abrams) does best. And while I'd hate to think John Williams' best days are behind him, I think a reinvention of the score by Michael Giacchino would have been a huge improvement; he's shown an ability to combine earlier themes with new & bolder visualizations.

Coming up with a rating for this movie is difficult. It's a "must-see" event, but that doesn't make it a great movie. I'm going to see it again, and I think I'll likely enjoy it more the second time, as I get a chance to look for those things I've said are missing and find maybe they are there, just not in a sledge-hammer sort of way. For now, I'll say 6 out of 10. For comparison, there are probably just three movies I'll give 10 out of 10 to; Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Casablanca and Robocop (the original, not the remake, which would charitably get a 4). Empire Strikes Back, The first JJ Abrams Star Trek movie and Lawrence of Arabia would get 9, while the original Star Wars (episode IV) would get 8.

Feel free to discuss "plot spoiler" issues in the comments, as those aren't likely to be accidentally seen.

--Mike Jacoubowsky, speaking as Mike Jacoubowsky and not Chain Reaction Bicycles... the last thing I need is to alienate customers because I was critical of their new favorite movie!