

WHY WE ARE EXCITED FOR “STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS”

1. OVERVIEW OF HOW THIS HAPPENED

In October of 2012, George Lucas sold his studio, Lucasfilm, and all rights to past Lucasfilm IPs to Disney for 4.1 billion US dollars as well as an additional 40 million shares in Disney, making him the second largest non-institutional shareholder in the company. Soon after, Bob Iger (Disney CEO) announces that the newly acquired studio would immediately begin the process of continuing the epic space-fantasy, Star Wars. Kathleen Kennedy would take the helm as executive producer and studio head to oversee the production of 6 new films.

The hunt for a director was a spectacle to say the least. Many great directors were approached to further the Star Wars legacy, including Brad Bird (*The Incredibles*), David Fincher (*The Social Network*), Guillermo del Toro (*Pan's Labyrinth*). J.J. Abrams was handpicked by Kathleen Kennedy and, after quite a resistance, eventually decided to accept the position. The first draft was penned by Michael Arndt, using George Lucas' input after the negotiation. However, Abrams and Kennedy felt it focused too much on the new generation of characters; and instead chose to focus on the beloved character from the original trilogy to allow a “passing of the torch” for the future leads in the franchise. This script was penned by Abrams and Lawrence Kasdan, most famous for writing the screen play for “*The Empire Strikes Back*”.

After the cast was announced in April of 2014, news halted. Abrams is famous for his mystery box, the philosophy that the less you know about an upcoming film, the more enjoyable it will be. “*The Force Awakens*” has been one of the most secretive productions in cinema history. Even today, one month out from release, us fans have nothing except for wild speculation about what the general plot of the film would be.

A. Why is there so much excitement for this film?

- i. The Return of the Jedi! Most die hard fans were crushed after they had seen “*The Phantom Menace*”. The majority says that it didn't feel like Star Wars, that it didn't look like Star Wars. Everything was so shiny and the plot was entirely focused on politics. Many felt that Lucas destroyed his franchise because he didn't “care” as much as they, the fans, did. However, *The Force Awakens* is being produced by Star Wars fans FOR Star Wars fans. The sets, costumes, use of

practical effects, and even the return fan favorite characters give this film that “feeling” of the original trilogy.

- ii. The Incredible Marketing. We don’t know anything about it, save for some new characters names and the planets they will visit. Fans literally talk for hours about what little things in poster, trailers, and photos could mean. In 3 years, we have gotten two teasers, two trailers, and four T.V. spots. It is important to mention the before October, all we had were two amazing teasers and a behind the scenes look. Any news is gobbled up by fans and often results in the smallest bit of news tending on Twitter and Facebook. Even if you don’t keep up with the news, you can’t escape the constant explosions of excitement.

2. MY PERSONAL THOUGHTS

Star Wars is the entirety of my childhood. I literally cannot remember ever not playing with my action figures and wearing out the old VHS tapes from multiple viewings a day. It was something that connected me to other children. I even unabashedly loved the prequels before I knew anything about film. I’ve spent countless hours on forums and read any book I could find with the name “Star Wars” attached to it. It didn’t matter what it was, I consumed it all.

My initial thoughts when I heard there was not one but SIX new films being released over the course of the next 6 years was one of jubilee. Finally, I got see how my favorite characters grew after their story was over. I knew it would be a big deal in the media, but I couldn’t have even dreamed that this franchise was getting the hype that it was getting.

It really sank in after presale tickers became available. Every major ticket sight immediately shut down due to the traffic. I was terrified I wasn’t going to get my ticket to the first showing! But the next day we heard about all of the records this film was already shattering. Hunger Games held the record for most presale I max tickets ever sold, yet Star Wars beat it by six times within 24 hours. Fandango claims that it beat their day one records by eight times, and AMC claimed theirs was beaten by 8 times. These numbers are so mind blowing. The record for highest opening weekend in December is 86 million, a record set a few years ago by The Hobbit, and the financial predictions for The Force Awakens is sitting at somewhere between 240-250 million. Tripling a the record of 86 million is a very real possibility. John Campea from Collider Movie Talk says, “We will never seen something like this ever again.” I must say that I agree.

My expectations are high, but I’m realistic. If it’s just good, meaning a few wow moments and some genuine fun. I will be over the moon. Honestly, I feel as if expectations may be running too high amongst the fans. I honestly expect the to be a group that will expect it to be better than Empire Strikes Back, regardless of how unreasonable that is. I just

think that we, us fans, should try our best to leave expectations at home and just try to fall into this world again.

Also, Lucasfilm has made a conscious effort to represent females. Kennedy claims that there will be a lot of new, impressive female characters coming. I think this is great. Princess Leia is one of the toughest, if not the toughest, characters in the saga. She is great because she so much more than just a princess that needed to be saved. She was the princess that saved the guys! I think that it's so very important to have more roles like her character. And it seems they are doing just that! Rey and Captain Phasma, as well as Leia, are in the forefront of the marketing. Star Wars is no longer "just for boys".

As for my predictions about story? I don't think that Rey and Kyle Ren are siblings. In fact, I think that Rey was born into Maz Kanata's band of pirates. Also, I would love it if the Knights of Ren were more than just cannon fodder. I want to see an evil parallel to the knights of the round table, with Supreme Leader Snoke as their Merlin and Kyle Ren as their King Arthur. Which reminds me; I think Snoke is Darth Plagueis. I know it's a popular theory that pretty much everyone believes now, but I genuinely do think he is. And that's awesome!