

## *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*



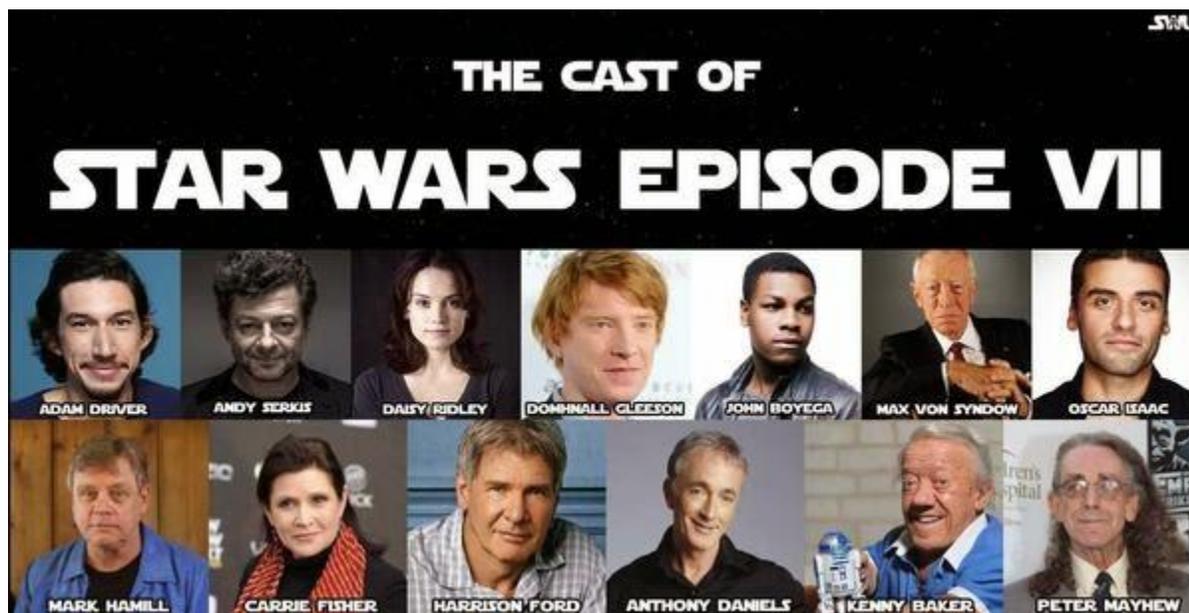
*Reviewed by Garry Victor Hill*

Produced by Kathleen Kennedy, J.J. Abrams & Bryan Burk. Directed by J.J. Abrams. Screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan, J.J. Abrams & Michael Arndt. Based on characters and stories created by George Lucas. Production Design by Rick Carter & Darren Gilford. Cinematography by Dan Mindel. Music by John Williams. Edited by Mary Jo Markey. Costume Designs by Michael Kaplan. Special Effects Supervision by Chris Corbould.

Cinematic length: 135 minutes. Distributed by Walt Disney Studios. Production Companies: Lucas Films Ltd & Bad Robot Productions. Cinematic release December 2015: Check for ratings. Rating 90%.

All images are taken from the public domain.

## Cast



## Review

Back in 1977 I did not particularly like the first star wars movie. My eyes hungered for green scenery in a world of blackness, sterile interiors and dreary deserts. My ears wanted to block out the clichéd dialogue. My mind did not want to be bothered by a predictable plot. I could not identify with an anal retentive, permanently worried and fussy golden robot who reminded me of bosses in my life. There was an overall feeling at the back of my mind of being manipulated by Hollywood with recycled ideas. Strikingly, the next two films in the trilogy reversed the usual trend where sequels are weak and tired clones of the initial hit.

Even so, this reviewer must be one of the few English speakers on planet earth who did not see the subsequent episodes four and five or even know their basic plots. Given that Episode Seven *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* must be one of the most expensive films ever made (\$245 million) and one of the most profitable as it made over a billion in its first twelve days and over 1.5 billion before the first week in January ended. It is still going strong to the extent that across the globe *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* has taken over cinema screens while other films are waiting for a chance to get onto those still occupied screens.

So with nothing else on at the pictures I went to see it and although the target audience are teens and I am old enough to have grandchildren that age, I was pleased. Everything technical looks well done, sets, special visual and sound effects, costumes, editing, photography.... They all combine to be part of the epic feel that permeates, but does not overwhelm the movie. Mercifully the plot and the sudden conclusion contain surprises and are not what everyone expects. In terms of spectacle few previous films reach this level. The acting comes across as more subtle than in Episodes One and Two. Now more gets conveyed with body language and less obvious facial expressions, shown with more speed than previously. Too much was yelled or communicated through overly obviously inflected tones (sometimes accompanied by overloud music) in past episodes. There are still plenty of explosions and bodies falling dead at a zap, littering locales. Villains still speak in silken tones as they unveil their evil intentions or issue orders to underlings.



Ray and Finn do a great deal of running, but eventually fight back

The continuing battle between goodness and the dark side of the force will apparently continue for as long as audiences line up to see it. In this episode the dark side has reformed into The First Order, a fascist dictatorship with ideas,

symbols and rallies that recall 1930s Nuremberg rallies. Instead of a Hitler we have Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis) a gigantic old recluse residing in a mouldy Wagnerian castle; he seldom appears in the film. When he does it is to give orders to his underlings, General Hux (Domhnall Gleeson) and Commander Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) They are so concerned with uniformity and order that their Stormtroopers (the guys in white plastic) are taken at birth for training and never have names just i.d. numbers.



The landscapes and skies often have great beauty

Some people in the galaxy do not like the idea of being enslaved and have organised a force of their own, The Resistance. General Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher) commands them. She gives one of their pilots Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaacs) the mission of finding the missing Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) so that he will reform and train the Jedi knights. The Jedi will then have a key role in vanquishing The First Order, who are also out to find Luke. Others become caught up in the search, a renegade Stormtrooper (John Boyega) Ray, a desert scavenger (Daisy Ridley) Chewbacca ((Peter Mayhew) and Hans Solo (Harrison Ford) and an android. Distance and mystery are two problems in finding Luke Skywalker, the fact that the First Order are also after him and therefore the Resistance searchers, turns the puzzle into the big problem which fuels the action.

On the journey there are aerial duels, assorted forms of explosions in many colours, sizes and sounds, monstrous octopuses in attack mode, street gangs out for their owed money and nasty about it, battles between armies, massive fascist rallies with Stormtroopers by the hectacre, Medieval swordfights, castles under attack, enflamed planets, plane crashes in the desert, earthquakes, hectic races through mechanical mazes to get away from Stormtroopers and a much needed peaceful stopover from most of the above in the galaxy's most bizarre tavern.

*Star Wars: The Force Awakens* at this point in time is probably both the most expensive movie ever made and the most profitable. It was fun and impressive, but its very success will almost certainly lead to imitation and Hollywood's history is littered with expensive imitations that hit a fickle public taste. The subsequent flops caused financial havoc and as the costs rise, so will the financial effects. Hollywood could cope with financial disasters like *Heaven's Gate*, *Ishtar* and *Waterworld*, which all lost dollars by the tens of millions, but when the flops cost quarter of a billion dollars, what happens to Hollywood?



Old faces from the 1977 beginnings appear a third of the way through.



Medieval motifs are frequent in a galaxy far far away



The previous phantasmagoria

