

REVAMPED GALAXY

WHY 'ROGUE ONE' MATTERS

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Over the winter break, "Rogue One" hit theaters. Marketed as a "Star Wars" story, the trailers promised action, adventure and an experience unlike any of its "Star Wars" predecessors. In 2015, the excitement over Luke, Leia and the Skywalker legacy was brought front and center with the continuation of the beloved series with "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." This story drew from the nostalgia of the original trilogy while also incorporating elements of the prequels, which culminated in hope for the "Star Wars" universe for the future.

However, while the general atmosphere surrounding "The Force Awakens" was steeped with excitement, Disney's attempt at a standalone, "Rogue One," was met with apprehension. After all, the story was taken from a small plot detail in Episode IV about finding plans to the Death Star. The famous Jedi were absent from the marketing materials and the faces featured were not recognizable. Could a "Star Wars" movie, set in the universe with some elements of familiarity, do well without the Skywalker name to carry it? The answer to that question is yes, yes it can. In fact, some might even argue that "Rogue One" was better than "The Force Awakens." If you are crying blasphemy, take a moment to hear me out. This movie mattered, and in some ways opens up more potential for the universe than "The Force Awakens" did. **Warning: Spoilers to follow!**

1 It shows that 'Star Wars' exists outside the Skywalker trilogies.

This movie worked to separate itself from the trilogies. Right from the beginning, it jumped in without the typical crawl, setting up the story. The familiar film score was lacking, and instead we got familiar sound effects and hints of the original "Star Wars" melodies. There were no Jedi, but instead devoted followers to the Force and the hope it symbolizes. The lack of these elements helped us think of this movie in terms of its own entity. Instead of seeing the familiar "Star Wars" landscape and comparing it to the original trilogy or "The Force Awakens," we can begin to look at it on its own.

3 It gives a new meaning to Episode IV.

"Rogue One" answers the plot hole question that people have been wondering since 1977: how does one small torpedo blow up an entire Death Star? How could the Empire have been so incompetent as to miss that detail while creating their superweapon? The answer: it was planted. It really is a genius explanation, and it transitions well into "A New Hope." When watching the movie, you now know what sacrifices had to be made in order to get those plans to Princess Leia. All of a sudden, Leia is lying through her teeth to the biggest terror of the galaxy. The fight to destroy the Death Star is a bigger deal, because we saw what happened the last time the rebellion went head-to-head with the Empire. It makes "A New Hope" more exciting because it exists for more than just world-building and exposition.

5 It didn't give in to Hollywood whitewashing.

This, perhaps, is the most relevant and important detail. This movie is coming from Disney, a giant in Hollywood and the film industry. Instead of giving in to whitewashing—which typically is when stories are told that favor white people as the main character as well as predominately casting white people in main roles—it embraced diversity. Of the main characters we follow on the mission, not one of them is a white man. The character we learn the most background about is a woman. Her mentor is a black man who acted as her father growing up. Her counterparts did not give in to eurocentric ideals—the actors kept their accents and did not have to take on American or British accents.

2 It's a war movie that shows the realities of war.

There are a lot of movies about fighting the odds, where every character comes out happy in the end. In fact, some of the original "Star Wars" plot lines follow this: Han, Luke and Leia miraculously defeat the Empire, destroying two Death Stars while coming out alive. "Rogue One" reminds us that, in war, not everyone makes it out. In fact, none of the characters we are introduced to make it. While some people might be upset about this—maybe you didn't have enough time to become attached to them for their deaths to fully impact you. However, the portrayal is accurate. Not everyone survives on luck. Sometimes, in order to help a cause bigger than yourself, sacrifices need to be made.

4 It gave us the Darth Vader we had only heard rumors of.

We always knew he was feared, but we never really saw why up until now. Even if the movie was a drag for you, the entire thing was worth it because of those last few minutes when we saw Vader take down an entire group of soldiers. We saw the terror they experienced, the hopelessness when facing him. We got to see his power—not only with the lightsaber, but with the Force in action, not just to intimidate in meetings. I could see an entire movie on Vader with that kind of action and be perfectly content.

Yes, the dialogue wasn't the strongest ("Save the rebellion, save the dream!"), however that was never "Star Wars'" strength. Remember when Anakin hit on Padme using his hatred of sand? Yes, it was weird to see a CGI Peter Cushing gracing the screen, 20 years after his death. However, "Star Wars" has always been groundbreaking with their cinematic technology. Yes, the Death Star was a prominent aspect of the plot, however the focus was the threat it posed and the potential to bring hope to a rebellion that was struggling to survive, which gives us echoes of the Star Wars story without recycling ideas like "The Force Awakens." Yes, it was sad not to hear John Williams' epic film score as the backdrop for Jyn and Cassian's adventures, but again, the goal was to differentiate and break away from the trilogies.

All in all, the movie worked because it showed the potential the Star Wars universe has on the big screen apart from the iconic stories. It brought us hope for a future outside of the trilogies, and it reminds us that the galaxy far, far away is so much bigger than we could have imagined.