

No Mythic Archetypes Here

Just dogfights, creepy aliens, lost causes

STAR WARS EPISODE III REVENGE OF THE SITH:

Written and directed by George Lucas. Produced by Rick McCallum. Executive producer, George Lucas. Cinematography, David Tattersall. Production design, Gavin Bocquet. Editors Roger Barton, Ben Burtt. Costumes, Trisha Biggar. Sound, Ben Burtt. Music, John Williams. Starring Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Hayden Christensen, Ian McDiarmid, Frank Oz, Samuel L. Jackson and Christopher Lee. With Jimmy Smits, Peter Mayhew, Ahmed Best, Oliver Ford Davies, Temuera Morrison, Anthony Daniels, Silas Carson, Kenny Baker. Twentieth Century Fox, 2005. PG-13. 143 minutes.

Sorry to be a wet blanket, but I was so bored by Episode III's senseless aerial battles, heartless and humorless humans, grotesque aliens, corrupt officials and unrelenting galactic warfare between faceless robots that I drummed my nails, glanced at my watch, shifted in my theater seat and dug around in my purse looking for chocolates long before the first hour was over.

This can't be right, I thought. Didn't the highly respected Joseph Campbell praise George Lucas for making contemporary the ancient myth of the hero in his original *Star Wars*? Where's the myth here, I asked, mentally staggering from the overload of computer generated and special effects in the opening aerial battle scenes. The battle takes place in the outer atmosphere of the planet that's home to the Republic and the Jedi Knights. Filled with action, the screen shows clever Jedi outmaneuvering evil aliens; space craft blowing up; gigantic, burning ships falling apart in the sky, fiercely plunging toward the planet.

Processing overwhelming information and activity leaves the viewer no time to reflect and no empty space to fill in with her or his imagination. The filmmaker has done it all for us, like a video game or an arcade game. And if the carnage of war isn't your fantasy, you're SOL. Galactic in scope or close-up in repetitive, interminable light-saber fights, *Revenge of the Siths* is about fighting, killing, maiming.

True mythology on the other hand offers guidance, shows consequences, honors conflict and leaves room for imagining a unique solution to an individual's dilemma. Heroes, such as those in Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, are multifaceted and flawed, while villains are rarely metallic monsters or evil incarnate as pictured here. Despite its fairy tale beginning, "A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away ..." *Episode III* is pure showbiz hokum.

In Lucasland, all eyes are on the prize: money, and lots of it. The film will make obscene profits not only from the film's record-setting, four-day opening domestic weekend, but also from its lucrative foreign theatrical box office, eventual television, video and DVD sales, and myriad commercial spin-offs such as apparel, toys, dolls, fast-food franchise merchandise, cell phone rings, soft drinks, etc. As the press material gamely notes in a section modestly called The Force Will Be With You ... Always: "Without doubt, *Star Wars* remains firmly entrenched in every



Emperor Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid) speaks to his protégé Anakin Skywalker (Hayden Christensen) of the powers of the Dark Force.

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX, 2005.

aspect of our lives." Whoa there, Georgie. Rein in that hyperbole. "Every aspect" of my life is not affected by The Force of commercialism you have set in motion, and neither is that of any self-respecting adult in the country. Just say no, parents.

Unfortunately, with howlers such as "Hold me as you did on Naboo," even a talented actor such as Natalie Portman (Padmé Amidala) can only smile and go on. For other actors, simply their names render them incapable of being taken seriously. Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson) speaks his wooden lines as if every word pains him, while Count Dooku (Christopher Lee), General Greivous (voice, Matthew Wood) and Darth Sidius (Ian McDiarmid) are made fools before they speak. The good guys, Yoda (Frank Oz) and Obi-Wan

Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), are allowed their dignity, as much as can be mustered for a short, green creature with large ears and a manly, bearded man in a long skirt.

John Williams' music soothes at its lyrical best, but it is also intrusive and annoying. I prefer emotion be carried by actors rather than by music that mediates and smothers all feelings. Only one scene expresses its own pathos, but I imagine the final clink which leaves Darth Vader to his fate will resonate for many as the repercussion earned from bad decisions.

See it if you will; see it if you must. *Star Wars Episode III Revenge of the Sith* is now playing in multiple theaters at Cinemark and Cinema World. I give it one, begrudging star and apologize to all 11-year-old boys who love the film. **EW**

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