

## *A Newer Hope*

Regarding the cinematic series *Star Wars*, much debate and critical dialogue has been published in nearly four decades since the original movie was screened. For some the question of best movie is a conflict in terms and is not indicative of which film had the highest entertainment value or artistic integrity as a means of storytelling. The prequel films, while hugely financially successful were in general not well received by fans compared to the original run of three films spanning *A New Hope* to *Return of the Jedi*. From casual observations of forums, message boards, fan fiction and the like the clear consensus of best movie appears to favor *The Empire Strikes Back*. While this movie has perhaps the best dramatic setting and arc of a storytelling line, it is *A New Hope* that serves as the exemplar of the series.

In terms of most complete and therefore defensible movie taken as a whole, *A New Hope* is the clear winner. Initially a larger arc of movies was planned for the Star Wars universe by creator George Lucas, but studio backing and funding was only available for one script. As such, there were no guarantees sequels or prequels would ever be green lit by the studios. From this construct *A New Hope* was the only film in the Star Wars franchise that encapsulated an entire story arc in a self contained manner. In this regard the viewer was immediately immersed in an organic myth-making experience; the tropes of Good versus Evil, the Underdog defeating the Giant, and the Farm-hand saving the Princess are all well worn constructs. Taken as a whole, *A New Hope* is the most complete film in the franchise that requires no outside forces to give it merit or standing from a critical and artistic lens.

Many may point to the darker storytelling and dramatic depths that Act II embodied in *The Empire Strikes Back* as a reason why it is a clear fan favorite and the most compelling film. This stance has merit and is my personal favorite film. However, this film requires all of the character development and plot elements of *A New Hope* to have any relevance or meaning. Taking as an organic composition, *The Empire Strikes Back* is more of a vignette of isolated storytelling loosely related before the final act brings the disparate characters together on Bespin. Finally, this film does not have a resolution of the conflicts depicted throughout and if not for *Return of the Jedi* would be considered a cliff-hanger; this is not a completed arc in the manner of *A New Hope*.

The storytelling, characters, setting, tropes, and indeed the meta universe of Star Wars is most fully embodied in the confines of *A New Hope*. While a rather crude picture by the standards of all that followed, it has no critical shortcomings in terms of an artistic piece of storytelling and art. The following films and chronological sequels and prequels all indeed added to the rich tapestry of the Star Wars universe, but no film barring the fan panned *The Phantom Menace* sets up an arc or a universe in the way that *A New Hope* did. This is even more compelling when one considers the seemingly highly disjointed and critically lacking plot and back-story of *The Force Awakens*. Perhaps one must view the films regardless of continuity and chronology to truly be able to assert which film is the strongest, but *A New Hope* is a bulwark of the series and must be reevaluated.