

'Star Wars' fans keep going back to the future

Author: UEBELHERR, JAN

Abstract (Abstract): He saw the "Star Wars" trilogy over and over. He was Darth Vader for Halloween, and any other chance he got. He collected action figures. He dreamed of Princess Leia. And then there was all that talk about "the Force."

"It's a very simple story good vs. evil. A moral story," said Hugh Wronski, manager of the Oriental Theater, 2230 N. Farwell Ave., who watched the re-release of "Star Wars" Jan. 31 set a new attendance record (5,800 tickets in two days) at his theater.

This new generation is experiencing "Star Wars" a bit differently than Dad did. First, many are seeing a beloved classic on a big screen for the first time. They remember seeing it as toddlers on video or televised broadcasts. They know the story, but they can't wait to see it big.

Full text: Daddy was a space cowboy.

He saw the "Star Wars" trilogy over and over. He was Darth Vader for Halloween, and any other chance he got. He collected action figures. He dreamed of Princess Leia. And then there was all that talk about "the Force."

Years later, the Force is very much with his offspring. They discovered droids and Wookies and Jedi at an early age. And they liked it.

It turns out that this devotion to the Force is genetic, usually (but not always) passed on to the male child.

What does this 20-year-old tale of love and war in space hold for a new generation?

"It's a very simple story good vs. evil. A moral story," said Hugh Wronski, manager of the Oriental Theater, 2230 N. Farwell Ave., who watched the re-release of "Star Wars" Jan. 31 set a new attendance record (5,800 tickets in two days) at his theater.

He expects the same today when the re-release of "The Empire Strikes Back" opens.

"You have very simple characters doing very simple things," said Wronski, who recalls seeing "Star Wars" when he was 11. "It's a Western in outer space." And you know, Westerns never go out of style.

Wronski added cheerfully, "A massive amount of advertising and hype that always helps."

This new generation is experiencing "Star Wars" a bit differently than Dad did. First, many are seeing a beloved classic on a big screen for the first time. They remember seeing it as toddlers on video or televised broadcasts. They know the story, but they can't wait to see it big.

In fact, ask a twentysomething moviegoer why he's seeing "Star Wars" in a movie theater and you're likely to hear two words: "Big screen."

Of course, it has to be more than just the draw of the big screen. We asked some twentysomething viewers of the re-released "Star Wars" to explain what it was they saw in a film that debuted when they were just babies, and in some cases before they were born.

Here is what they said:

MELISSA AHO, 24

Why are you here: "To see it again on the big screen. It's such a great story. And I saw it when I was little. I was 5 or 6. I was like overwhelmed at the special effects. I liked all the aliens." She called it "the eternal story good vs. evil. Good wins out over the evil. And it's a big sprawling space saga."

Favorite character: "Han Solo, because he tries to be really hard and mean, but he's really got a heart of gold."

JASON RAITEN, 23

Why are you here: "I've never seen it in a theater." But he has seen the film many, many times on tape. He estimates he has seen each film in the series "at least 60 times."

(A note from the "Star Wars" trivia files: The average person in the United States has seen the movie 6.7 times, either on the big screen or the little screen, according to a recent USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll. Many in their 20s have seen the film 12 times or more.)

Raiten offered an explanation for its appeal to a new generation. "Most people are interested in science fiction. The whole idea of space travel is interesting. And every kid wants to be an astronaut."

Favorite character: "Probably Han Solo (Harrison Ford), because I always thought he was the better actor."

JIM CENTER, 18

Why are you here: "I wanted to see it on a big screen." He's seen it about a dozen times on video.

"It's sort like a hero story, really well told. Good and evil. Love and hate."

Favorite character: "Luke Skywalker. Even when I was a little kid, I wanted to be like him. He's a hero."

JILL VAN DE HEI, 19

Why are you here: "The action, a good story. Action, but not overdone with blood and guts."

Favorite character: "I'm a huge Ewok fan. Besides just being cute, they also add a little humor."

MATT GONZALES, 19

Why are you here: What he sees in "Star Wars" can be summed up in two words. "Hollywood entertainment."

"I've seen the whole trilogy at least 20 times," he said. "I have all the action figures."

Favorite character: "Wow," he said, and took a moment to think. "Probably Chewy, because he plays such a silent role."

ERIC CARLSON, 26

Why are you here: "Because I hadn't seen it on a big screen. I wanted to recapture the grandeur of how it's supposed to be."

The appeal of this tale lies in the fact that it's "a classic quest story," said Carlson, who is majoring in medieval literature at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"It's the type of story that's been told in literature for thousands of years. I think George Lucas tapped into something. He tapped into a familiar story and made it new."

Favorite character: "I would have to say either Han Solo or Luke Skywalker as a Jedi."

"Han Solo represents impetuous behavior, and Luke represents the strength and solidity that all of us should have in our lives."

Carlson said he and his friends discuss the re-released "Star Wars" quite a bit, and have reached a consensus.

"We all pretty much agree that it's an improvement. The final scenes with the attack on the Death Star, in my opinion, are much better now."

And for the record, he says, he is more of a "Star Wars" fan than his dad was.

Credit: Journal Sentinel staff

Publication title: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Pages: 8

Number of pages: 0

Publication year: 1997

Publication date: Feb 21, 1997

Year: 1997

Section: Cue

Publisher: Journal Sentinel Inc.

Place of publication: Milwaukee, Wis.

Country of publication: United States

Publication subject: General Interest Periodicals--United States

ISSN: 10828850

Source type: Newspapers

Language of publication: English

Document type: NEWSPAPER

ProQuest document ID: 260521463

Document URL:

<http://login.ezproxy.lib.umn.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/260521463?accountid=14586>

Copyright: Copyright Journal/Sentinel, Inc. Feb 21, 1997

Last updated: 2010-06-13

Database: ProQuest Newsstand