

The Last Hurrah

By Holly Lisle

Last night was the last time for the first time.

We went to the midnight showing of STAR WARS: Revenge of the Sith.

Some of you are too young to have been to the first one in a theater before it was “Oh my God STAR WARS,” back when it was just this offbeat movie by this young director of American Graffiti.

I was sixteen in 1977, and saw STAR WARS: A New Hope the first couple of times before anyone knew what it was, or suspected what it might become. It was magic from the first instant, though, of the very first time I saw it, and it became a shared bond between all of us who had loved it, a deep community built around characters and a universe that we loved. I stuck with the movies through the years, good and bad, and now I’m forty-four – a long way from sixteen – and the story is done, and I and several later generations of young people have grown up inculcated by lives lived in a galaxy long ago, and far, far away.

More than a thousand of us stood in line last night – folks who’d bought their tickets days or even weeks earlier. None of us had expected so many, or for the line to be so long. It stretched from the theater through a parking lot the size of Oregon, out to the street, down along a sidewalk. We had the usual street theater: two teenaged boys, one dressed (badly) as Count Dooku, another in street clothes, slashed at each other in a dead serious light-saber battle that proved they had been practicing those moves way, way too long, and that they needed to lighten up, just a tad, and realize they were not, in fact, really Sith and Jedi; men and women in full STAR WARS regalia paraded past, looking for places in line.

It was a good-natured bunch. No shoving, no pushing, no line-jumping. Friends spotted each other at various places in the line, yelled "Save us seats" but patiently trekked back to the back of the line as they arrived.

Strangers talked to each other. We ended up chatting with a young couple behind us – the man a tennis pro, the woman in the Air Force, their kids with a babysitter for the night – who struck up a conversation with us because Matt had brought his hand-held video game system with him, and he has a cool case for it. We chatted about the earlier STAR WARS movies, about the best one (still agreed to be *The Empire Strikes Back*), about other mass turnouts we'd heard of or seen – toy lunatics hunting for special-edition Barbies, Teddy Ruxpin, or Tickle-Me Elmo, [a toy we all agreed was creepy. To the question "What freak came up with that thing?" Matt got in the best line of the night, with "Michael Jackson?"] Nobody mentioned Jar-Jar, that hellish embarrassment to the STAR WARS series. The mood was upbeat, positive, celebratory.

We were the final gathering of a very large family, complete with weird and embarrassing relatives, who had come together to experience the first time ... for the last time.

The story is done now, and done well. The movie had none of the sins of Episodes I and II, and it didn't cheat. But while we were there to see the movie, we were also there for something more. We were there to see the movie with each other, to share one last time an experience that some of us have been working our way through for more than half a lifetime. To see, for the first time for the last time, the way it all ended, and the way it all began.

I wish you could have been there. It was a hell of a thing, and it will never happen again.

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