

Not Wise to Criticize 'Star Wars'... But Here Goes

By Michael Gallagher

New York (NC) -- "The Return of the Jedi" (Fox), George Lucas's completion of the "Star Wars" trilogy, has both the strengths and weaknesses of its two predecessors, both intensified.

Thus the gadgets are better than ever, but the human element, never too prominent, becomes even more negligible than before.

The main plot propellant this time is the effort of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) to confront Darth Vader, who, we've been led to believe, is his father.

Then of course, the Empire's ruthless lust for conquest has to be combatted as before, and something does have to be done about poor Han Solo (Harrison Ford), who was cast in carbonite or something last time we saw him.

A long first episode is devoted to saving Han, who, at the onset, is functioning as a wall hanging in the sinister and quite messy pleasure dome of Jabba the Hut, a huge, bloated creature to whom Han, before he became part of the decor, owed a great deal of money. Jabba's place, by the way, is pretty much an over-extended reprise of the bar scene in the first film.

A not very well coordinated but nonetheless successful effort carried out by Luke, Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) -- who doesn't complain at all this time out, you'll be glad to hear -- and Lando (Billy Dee Williams), with assists, of course, from Artoo-Detoo, See-Three Plo and Chewbacca, restores him to his old insouciance and deflates Jabba and his motley minions.

This is the liveliest portion of the picture, but, narrative flow not being one of Lucas's strong points, it has nothing to do with what follows. For next we're abruptly caught up with the rebels marshaling their forces to attack another and more powerful Death Star

that the Empire is now constructing before it becomes fully operational.

Luke, however, goes off on his own for his fated rendezvous with his father, and while a double battle rages without -- a space clash between the rebel and Empire forces around the Death Star and a ground battle on an adjacent moon pitting Empire infantry and armor against Han, Leia and company allied with some friendly natives who look and act like mildly truculent teddy bears -- an inner struggle takes place within Luke as the evil Emperor (Ian McDiarmid), who makes old Darth look like a pussycat, tries to turn him to the "dark side of the Force."

Of these three contests, the one featuring the Teddy Bears is by far the best. The interior struggle falls flat because poor Hamill has to play his emotions against a masked, expressionless Darth Vader and also because Lucas and his friends are even less adept at philosophy and logic than narrative flow, though they obviously have heard of Freud.

The space clash leans too heavily on special effects (done, admittedly, to dazzling perfection) with not nearly enough care taken to let us know where the various combatants are and who is doing what to whom at a particular time.

Everything, as before, is pretty much on a comic book level. There is no point in asking such questions as where does the money come from to build all these gadgets, where is the industrial base, where in fact are the people who are being defended, and who is the sinister Emperor and where does he come from both literally and metaphorically.

But even in comic book terms, Lucas could do better with regard to motivation, I think. Bad guys should be bad, and for the most part we never, over the



Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker and Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia prepare to swing to safety from deck of Jabba's Sail Barge in George Lucas' "Return of the Jedi." All the featured players from the first two "Star Wars" space adventures appear in the third. (NC PHOTO)

course of all three movies, see the Empire gang doing anything especially naughty. (Yes, they did destroy a whole planet in "Star Wars," but it's not what you do, it's how you do it, and that was all special effects not like the kind of stuff the Nazis and the Japanese used to pull in the old war movies.)

Criticizing any of the "Star Wars" trilogy, however, is like criticizing Mount Rushmore. If this is the kind of thing you like, then you'll like this kind of thing. Here, with the third film, is a picture that lacks the shining naivete and

enthusiasm of the first, but which is, I think, far more entertaining than the anti-climactic second outing. And those Ewoks (the teddy bears) are decidedly cute, as well as brave.

The direction is by Richard Marquand with script by Lucas and Lawrence Kasdan. Because of the rather scary creatures in the opening episode and some violence involving a loathsome monster in Jabba's basement, the U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-II, adolescents and adults. The industry rating is PG, parental guidance suggested.

'Fascinating' Study of Chesterton

(Father Hennessy, a member of the Passionist order of missionary preachers, is a former theology professor and editor and was a charter member and president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.)

"The Outline of Sanity!" by Alzina Stone Dale. Eerdmans (Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1982). 354 pp., \$18.95.

Reviewed by Father Augustine P. Hennessy NC News Service

To call a very scholarly and meticulously documented book "fascinating" is an unusual tribute to its author. But to say it remained fascinating even while being read amidst the hubbub, strident mechanical noises, bustling crowds and multiple moods encountered in a metropolitan airport is the test of its power to allure against a

very demanding criterion. For me, this work of Alzina Stone Dale came through this exacting test with flying colors.

Chesterton, the hero of this study, was undoubtedly a fascinating man, and author Dale makes him come alive again for those who remember being enriched by so many of GKC's works, which still remain remarkable sources of integrated wisdom.

In the early pages of her book, Alzina Dale highlights many interesting details concerning Chesterton's youth. For example, he did not learn to read until he was nine. She reports: "At one point his parents took him to a brain specialist presumably to try to make sense of the puzzle that Gilbert was as bright as a button yet brought home poor school reports -- only to be told that he had a large and very sensitive brain

and it was an even chance whether he would grow up a genius or an imbecile."

Upon Chesterton's meeting his future wife, Frances Blogg, our author records that "she gave Gilbert the kind of jolt of recognition that Dante had upon seeing Beatrice: she changed his world." Gilbert expressed his own feelings about her. "If I had anything to do with this girl, she would never deceive me: if I depended on her, she would never deny me: if I loved her, she would never play with me: if I trusted her, she would never go back on me: if I remembered her, she would never forget me."

We learn that Chesterton's image of his mother engendered in him a lifelong appreciation of and dependence upon the practicality of women. He called them the only realists "whose object in life is to pit their realism

against the extravagant, excessive, and occasionally drunken idealism of men -- while real selfishness, which is the simplest thing in the world to a boy or a man, is practically left out of their calculations."

For Chesterton, the normal wife's attitude toward the normal husband is, as he says in commenting favorably on George Bernard Shaw's "Candida," "an attitude which is not romantic but which is quite quixotic, which is insanely unselfish and yet quite cynically clear-sighted: it involves human sacrifice without in the least involving idolatry."

Mrs. Dale saves her best writing for the last two chapters of her book -- "The Return of Don Quixote" and "The Spice of Life." Cumulatively, the two chapters involve 235 footnotes -- all illuminating.



SEMINAR - On death and dying in four-day training workshop for death educators and death-related counselors, Tuesday through Friday, June 14-17, St. John Fisher College. For more information and registration contact Dr. Nathan Kollar at: 586-4140, ext. 266.

BENEFIT - Showing of "A Dinner With Andre"

sponsored by the Friends of the Webster Ave. Family Resource Center, 7 p.m., Tuesday, June 7 at The Little Theater preceded by hors d'oeuvres at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10.00 each and can be obtained by calling 654-8673.

CLASSIC FILMS - "Singin' In The Rain" starring Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds and Donald O'Connor, 2 and 8 p.m., Tuesday, June 7 in Eisenhart Auditorium. Free with general museum admission.

PLANETARIUM SHOW - Laser Celebration - a kaleidoscope of light set to music, 9 p.m. nightly through Sept. 5. Admission, \$3.50. Children under 5 not admitted.

NFP SESSIONS - Sponsored by Natural Family Planning Education, 7:30-9 p.m., Monday, June 6, Kearney Building, St. Mary's Hospital.

SENIOR MATINEE - "Without Love" starring Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 2, George Eastman House.

TOUR - Of Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, 2 p.m., Sunday, June 5 and 12. Free to members, free to non-members with gallery admission.

EXHIBIT - Of Dutch painting in the Age of Rembrandt from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, through June 5 on second floor adjacent to Fountain Court, Rochester Memorial Art Gallery.

SUMMER FESTIVAL - 6:30 - 11:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, June 3-4, at St. Christopher's, 3350 Union St., N. Chili, featuring a 6:45 p.m. Saturday five mile road race.

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



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A friend is dying, what can I do?

Do not avoid your friend either by staying away or by changing the subject when your friend talks of illness or death. Dying people generally know they are dying and most welcome honest conversations. Effective listening permits you to pick up on cues that the dying person may wish to talk about. Allow them to talk, letting them know that you care about them and will help in any way you can. Your friend may choose not to talk about death. In that case follow the normal conversations that are a usual part of your relationship. Your presence will always serve you better than words or actions.

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