

News

Guided by The Force

Fans head to Boston for Star Wars premiere

Published On 5/20/2005 12:00:00 AM

By **SAM TELLER**

Crimson Staff Writer

In Boston and across the country, fans poured into movie theaters early yesterday morning to be among the first viewers of "Episode III: Revenge of the Sith," the latest installment in the tremendously popular Star Wars series.

The film, directed by Star Wars creator George Lucas, follows the young, passionate Jedi warrior Anakin Skywalker (Hayden Christensen) as he betrays his mentor Obi-wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), on his way to becoming Darth Vader.

Originally driven by a desire to protect his wife, Princess Padmé (Natalie Portman '03), Skywalker's insatiable hunger for power draws him to the Dark Side at the urging of the Supreme Chancellor Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid).

Many Boston cinemas offered showings of the film starting at 12:01 a.m. yesterday. The Loews Boston Common theater played the film simultaneously on a number of screens for the opening and had 30 more showtimes during the day yesterday, beginning at 9 a.m.

Because of fervent fans like Benjamin B. Bolger, a student at the Graduate School of Design and a teaching fellow in the Government department, "Revenge of the Sith" stands to be the biggest blockbuster hit of the summer, and possibly of the year.

"I would say that the core existence of my outlook on humanitarian life can be equated to a Jedi philosophy," Bolger said. "Star Wars transcends the traditional science fiction movie in the sense that it is not a fluff film, but rather it is an anthropological ethos and zeitgeist."

Bolger and his girlfriend, Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture and of African and African American Studies Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, stayed up late to see one of the first screenings of "Revenge of the Sith." He wore a Darth Vader helmet, which only caused minor tension with the self-styled Jedi knights they sat next to in the theater.

"I thought 'Star Wars: Episode III' was a more fantastic experience than watching the Red Sox win the World Championship this year," Bolger said.

While Shaw thought "the trailer was kind of lame," she said that the final product did not disappoint. "It was stunning," she said. She added that they were planning to see the film again the next night.

Some die-hard fans from Harvard celebrated the movie's release with an overnight viewing marathon of all six installments.

Adam S. Levine '05 and two friends gathered Wednesday in the Mather Junior Common Room to watch Episodes I and II, before heading into Boston for a 12:01 a.m. showing of Episode III. Finally, from about 3 a.m. to 7 a.m., they finished up with the original Star Wars trilogy.

"I managed to stay awake for most of it," Levine said. "It was a ton of fun."

While most of the late-night cinemagoers were already Star Wars fans, some were drawn to the theater simply out of curiosity about Star Wars' colossal popularity.

"I want to see what the hype is all about," Nancy A. Chow '08 said before the film. "I've never seen any of

the Star Wars movies and I don't even know what the plot is."

Asked afterwards for her reaction, Chow was unenthusiastic.

"There were siths and droids and glowsticks as swords," she said.

Still, a majority of the crowd, including Alexander M. Hubbell '08, appeared to have enjoyed the film.

Asked if it met his expectations, Hubbell replied, "Yes, definitely."

"It was just as good or better than the rest of them. The action was much better and the love scenes were more bearable," he said.

"Yoda rocks," he added, referring to the diminutive but sagacious head of the Jedi Council.

Clay T. Capp '06 said he enjoyed "Revenge of the Sith," but not more than the original trilogy. "Episode III was the coolest one, but it lacked the evocative human element of IV, V, and VI, which I think is pretty important," Capp said.

In Hollywood, many are counting on fans like Bolger, Shaw, Hubbell, and Capp to help pull the film industry out of a rut of low ticket sales.

"Hollywood seems to be pinning its hope on the Star Wars movie to turn this box office slump around, and I think it will," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of the Los Angeles-based film industry tracker Exhibitor Relations. "Never have we needed a Star Wars movie so badly."

But some have taken offense to what they interpret as overtly political messages meant to recall the Iraq war. Princess Padmé says at one point, "This war represents a failure to listen," and later comments, "So this is how liberty dies—with thunderous applause."

"I think this film was really an excellent representation of how rhetoric can be misused by a democratic leader," Bolger said. He said he was unsure whether the movie was an intended critique of current Bush administration policy.

—Staff writer Sam Teller can be reached at steller@fas.harvard.edu.

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=507796>
