

HEAD TO HEAD: STAR WARS

New Star Wars films will lack originality



Dan Mika

I'm calling it right now — the next set of Star Wars movies will be like fireworks. There will be violent explosions, plenty of bright colors and many loud noises, but it'll have the same plot and emotional depth as any movie from the "Transformers" series. Movie buffs will go on long, angry rants about how the series doesn't live up to the original trilogy released during the late 70s to early 80s, but the studios really won't care because they'll make tons of money from the movie anyway. That, in my opinion, is how the movie industry ruins movies.

During 2011, the French film "The Artist" debuted with a meager budget of \$15 million, but it grossed \$133 million worldwide and won the Academy Award for Best Picture, Director, Actor, Original Score and Costume design, according to boxofficemojo.com. In contrast, the first "Transformers" movie was given \$150 million for production and won a grand total of zero Academy Awards. It even lost out against "Alvin and The Chipmunks" for Best Movie at the Kid's Choice Awards. Yet, it grossed just less than \$710 million, according to boxofficemojo.com.

It appears studios would rather invest in a bad movie that's a guaranteed hit than a fantastic film that would be risky at the box office. But the surest bets aren't new ideas. Not a single one of the top 10 highest-grossing movies throughout America last year was an original screenplay, according to IMDB. Eight of them were sequels. The other two were adapted from comic books. That increase of repeating ideas is becoming the norm in Hollywood because it allows for endless merchandising opportunities.

I hate to continue to pick on "Transformers" (actually, no, I don't), but it's worth noting that Hasbro made \$482 million in toy sales and licensing fees in the aftermath of the first movie, according to MarketWatch. That makes sense — retailers will sell more posters of Megan Fox bent over a Camaro or Robert Pattinson in a tree than they will if they sold posters for "127 Hours" or "The King's Speech."

Now, I'm not saying movie studios should invest in any project that's pitched to them in the hopes they'll have a hand in producing the next classic movie. They're businesses and their mission is to make as much money as possible. But sometimes, it pays to take a risk on a script.

For example, I once saw a documentary on the History Channel about a studio gambling on an idea from a young filmmaker fresh out of USC. It took him two years to finish writing his script as he worked on other projects to keep from being consumed by his debts. He started filming his movie in a Tunisian desert, but fell behind due to a rainstorm and a costume malfunction that stabbed one of the actors in the foot. The crew didn't take the movie seriously and poked fun at the director's vision, and the studio scrutinized his rising budget and production setbacks. At the high point of production, the filmmaker was diagnosed with hypertension from all his stress. But in the end, his movie became a worldwide phenomenon and a cultural icon. The young director's name? George Lucas. His labor of love? The first Star Wars.

But after Lucas' triumph with his first trio of movies, the money got to his head and he produced a set of films that ruined all the magic of the originals. Lucas made just less than \$165 million just from licensing merchandise from his terrible prequels, according to Forbes.com. Making money is okay with me, but it begs the question: what would the world be like if Hollywood stopped making movies from original, creative scripts because they couldn't make money on the side from selling action figures and commemorative cups with Burger King? I should write a screenplay about that ...

Dan Mika is a freshman communication major from Mt. Prospect, Ill.

Disney's creativity will benefit franchise



Jeremy Busch

As a kid, Star Wars was my life. I could quote most of the movies, I played with the action figures and one of my first video games was a Star Wars one. It got to the point that my mother refused to buy me any more Star Wars Legos due to the preexisting abundance in our basement. I remember going to the release of the "Phantom Menace" with my dad and brother and, as a 6 year old, that movie made my life.

When I first heard about the plans for the release of Star Wars: Episode VII during 2015, I absolutely was ecstatic. The rebirth of my childhood was imminent, something that I could not wait for. I hopped on the Internet and scanned for an article to find unexpected news. Disney had bought out LucasFilm and was now the producer of the new movie, according to an Oct. 30 Huffington Post article. Additionally, it will no longer be directed by George Lucas himself but instead by his co-chair Kathy Kennedy.

After reading this, I was disappointed. Why would the company behind one of the

most well-known movie franchises simply sell out? How could Disney, a company famous for a mouse and a singing mermaid, possibly crank out an action-packed, adrenaline-pumping Star Wars movie? These were tough things to ponder, but as I read more, the situation seemed logical. The sell to Disney has a lot of potential for success in a series that seemed to be dying.

George Lucas never planned on directing another Star Wars movie, according to an Oct. 31 NBC News story. In addition, the heavily criticized prequels were claimed a disaster by many critics. The transition to Disney could put a fresh spin on it. After all, Disney put out the other half of the movies I watched as a child. Their creative aspect could be beneficial to the movie series, sparking a Star Wars rebirth in all of our hearts.

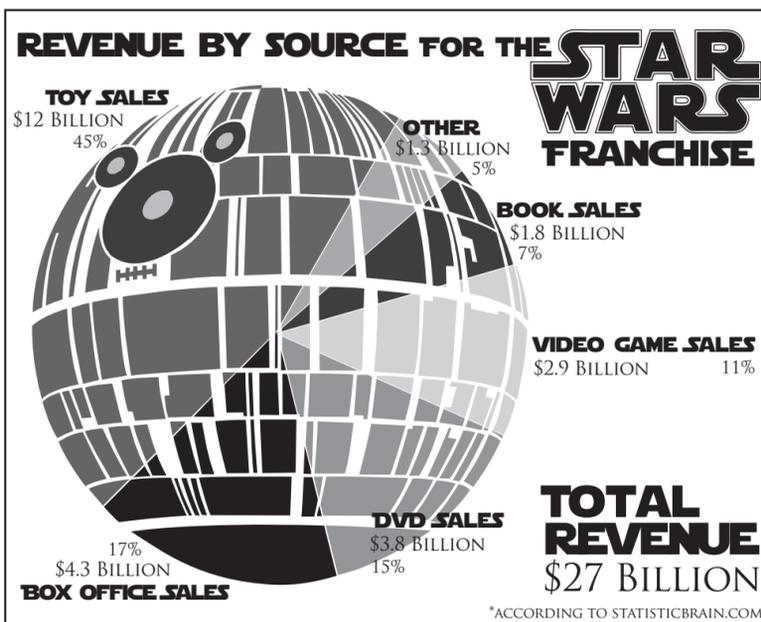
There still is the question, though, of whether Disney could make such an action-packed movie. However, Disney was the company behind "The Avengers," as Disney owns Marvel. That movie was far from lacking action, as anyone who has seen it can vouch. Not only does Disney have a history of excellence, but it also has the money to put on the movie of the year.

The story writing also is in question. How could Disney produce something as excellent as the work of George Lucas? However, the Star Wars movie set for 2015 has its story treatments written by George Lucas himself, according to E! News on Oct. 30. The movies still will have the originality that we're used to, not some strange adaptation that an outside company might try to put on.

In addition, Disney has the potential to produce Star Wars movies with a legacy of their own. People typically categorize the current movies into the originals and prequels, opening a new area for Disney. They can hire a new and exciting cast, as did the prequels. For example, the original three starred Carrie Fisher as the powerful female figure of Princess Leia, whereas the prequels starred Natalie Portman as Padmé Amidala. Their roles in Star Wars launched their careers, as they were both fairly new to acting. There is so much potential for new rising stars to take roles that will shape their careers, which only increases excitement for the new Star Wars addition.

Disney has a lot on their hands when it comes to the new movie. Even though some might think LucasFilms is a sell out, this purchase could spark a new life to Star Wars. It is a change that might be risky, but in the end should turn out to be a great success. Disney has proven they know how to make quality movies, creating a legacy of their own. All I can say is 2015 cannot come soon enough.

Jeremy Busch is a freshman communication major from St. Louis, Mo.



AROUND THE QUAD:

How does the communal aspect of college impact your education?



"It enhances it because within your major, you start to make friends with people that have the same interests. This generates new ideas and perspectives on things."

Kelsey Boeding
senior



"In the dorms, you're living in close quarters, which forces you to get to know people. It definitely helps when it comes to education and academics."

Alex Hromockyj
freshman



"It distributes the burden so a person is not just carrying it themselves. They can work with other people with problems they may be having."

Tony Roberson
senior



"I share a lot of classes with my friends who are in the same major. We do a lot of our assignments together which helps us understand the material better."

Callyn Burgess
junior

Disuse of public spaces reinforces prejudices



Connor Stangler

The cause of death is unknown. The autopsy revealed no clear culprit, but witnesses and those closest to the deceased all suspect murder — culture-cide of the most tragic degree.

For centuries, Americans valued the public sphere, that civil and democratic space where people from every walk of life and socio-economic background mingled and interacted. These spaces equalized us — we

all had to use the public library for information and the train station for transportation. These spaces humbled us — we would see people different from us and be yanked from our own self-absorption and reminded of our blessings and pretensions. These spaces linked us — we were aware of our place in humanity and recognized that more things bonded us than divided.

The prime suspect in the case is the private space, that comfortable zone of righteousness where only our values and lifestyle matter. Culture has turned us inward on ourselves, teaching us to be, at best, indifferent toward and, at worst, suspicious of the public space. If we don't try to resurrect the trust and interest in those communal things, we risk alienating everybody from everyone.

I admit, I was an accomplice. During the rare moments when I'm in a public space, I feel unsettled. At a public library, even the unfamiliar

furniture and books used by everyone disturb me. A frightening urge to return to a place where my iPod plays my music and my laptop plays my movies overcomes me. All of a sudden, I am crippling aware of my class, preferences and luxuries. I see the people who read the books and use the computers because they can't afford to buy them. The sense of a universal struggle for life reminds me of the world outside my own mind.

Then again, this is what the public space is meant to do to you. Along with the discomfort, I also relish the times I experience the common area.

Whenever I take a train or bus, I can't help but marvel at the diversity of the crowd. The transient, the CEO and the schoolteacher all sit beside one another, briefly thrown together by circumstance. We are forced, whether by choice or accident, to consider one another. Unfortunately, we've found more efficient ways to remove ourselves. All three travelers

bury their minds in their own escapes: the newspaper, the Kindle or the blog. Our private world caters to our own particular interests while the public world caters to blanket interests. Why wouldn't we prefer the former?

Is the public space really dead, or have we just replaced the physical commons with the virtual? We can't tell whether online communities mirror the ones we've been used to, but even though social networks and collaborative sites open new avenues of communication, we seem to talk past each other rather than to each other and trumpet our own interpretations more often than others'. Physical closeness liberates your mind like virtual proximity can't.

For students, college is the last bastion of the public. When we walk on the Quad, sit in the classroom or eat in the dining halls, we judge others. This might sound bad, but the opportunity to judge actually undermines our prejudices. If we always stick to our

private worlds, we react badly when we confront something different. If we are exposed to diversity throughout the public realm every day, then our judgments gradually become more reasonable, less harsh and rooted in an appreciation for other people. When we leave here, we'll escape to our own professions and families and buy the luxury of privacy. We'll grudgingly go to the gas station to fill up our cars, looking down at our phones rather than up at our neighbors who might not be exactly like us.

There's not much we can do to stop such a powerful cultural force and mindless killer. While at college, we can try to appreciate the public interactions that challenge our biases. Afterward, we can hope that, eventually, the emptiness of the private leads us back to the public.

Connor Stangler is a senior English and history major from Columbia, Mo.