

The emperor wears no clothes

By [David Williams](#)

January 13, 2016

Maybe it was the buildup, the unyielding relentlessness of it. Month after month, reveal after reveal, one manufactured controversy after another, to the point where my innately contrarian nature was feeling a little put upon.

Or perhaps it was that Star Wars Battlefront has been spooled up on my Christmas-gift PS4 for the last week, and that I was so steeped in the immersiveness of that medium that any additional LucasArts inputs couldn't feel new.

Or maybe it was that, as a introvert-pastor on a Sunday evening, I was a little neurally fried.

But there I was, finally watching *The Force Awakens* with my family, the single most materially successful film of all time, and it was doing nothing for me. It felt utterly unspecial.

It wasn't terrible in the way of the prequels, which were dismal messes. Visually, it was superior, generally uncluttered and with a fine sense of scale. The actors were trying, and generally competent.

But it wasn't working.

I was not swept up by the scale of it, by the palette of it. The new characters failed to connect. The old familiar faces just seemed ... out of place. The plot wildly, impossibly flawed, less a reboot than a rehash, to the point of feeling faintly parasitic.

Honestly, though, I think most of the issue was fatigue. When I lined up to see *Star Wars* that summer of '77, what I saw in the theater was wildly new, unlike anything I'd ever seen. That wonder continued with *Empire Strikes Back*, and was satisfyingly completed in *Return of the Jedi*.

But *The Force Awakens* felt ... familiar. I've seen this film now a hundred times. I've watched epic battles against impossible odds, explosions and wild heroics and CG hoohah. Again, and again, and again, in Middle Earth, in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, in the *Star Trek* reboots, in the endless superhero movie conveyor belt.

Bing bang shooty-slashyness is so relentlessly present in the blockbuster-spectacle storytelling of corporate media that every movie may as well be the same film, clumsily shoehorned into a different skin.

It didn't feel light, or magic. It just felt ... industrial.

Ah well. Everyone else seems to like it. And I'm sure the shareholders are pleased.

*Originally posted at [Beloved Spear](#)*