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Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans

Will Brooker

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#2360800 in Books Continuum 2002-04-17 2002-04-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 228.60 x 15.88 x 6.00l, 1.26 #File Name: 0826452876272 pages | File size: 66.Mb

Will Brooker : Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Lucas BerriniFun book. Not for casual fans. Brooker

dives deep into the fandom of Star Wars. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Piece of Ethnographic Research By Dr. Laurence Raw Anyone who does not understand the cultural impact of STAR WARS since the first of the franchise was released in 1977 should read this book. Based on extensive interviews, e-mail communications, and other exchanges with fans of the franchise, this book shows the ways in which individual fans have consumed, and continue to consume the films, as a way of defining their identities. An entertaining read as well as a theoretically important text for anyone interested in film audience studies. 29 of 32 people found the following review helpful. A pleasant change from the usual... By Lagniappe Okay, we all know the stereotype - the nerd who is incapable of carrying on a conversation with the opposite sex, but is able to speak fluent Klingonese; the geek who can't shoot a basket to save his life, but who can personally reenact the final lightsaber duel from *The Phantom Menace* (complete with sound effects); the misfit who owns every Star Wars action figure ever produced, displayed on a set of shelves built into the walls of - wait for it - his parent's basement! I give you the stereotypical science fiction/fantasy fan. Only, stereotypes are an inch of fact and a mile of embellishment and conjecture. Are there fans that dress up like Mr. Spock and wave the V sign, telling you to "Live Long and Prosper"? Sure there are! Are there people who can do perfect imitations of a wizened, green puppet (and now CGI character) asking the Force to be with you? You bet! However, such stereotypes are only a small portion of what encompasses fandom, but they are likely all that the non-fan (or "mundanes" as in the Harry Potter series) may envision, because it is upon the more flamboyant fans that the media so loves to shine their questionable spotlight. Yet, in truth, fandom is as varied as - well - "real life!". For every guy dressed as a Jedi and waving a plastic lightsaber at a Star Wars premiere, there is a family in jeans and t-shirts sitting down to share popcorn in the front row of the theater. Perhaps most unfortunate of all is the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) suggestion of superiority on the part of the media covering fandom - the outsider studying some exotic, and not quite healthy, cultural phenomena and offering it up as an object of amusement if not outright derision for the "normal" masses. I've heard the jokes and the put downs, repeatedly. I've come to expect it. So it was with some trepidation that I picked up William Brooker's study of Star Wars fandom. "Here we go again," I thought. "Someone who thinks they understand fandom and is going to tell us all about the "unhappy, socially inept fans who use science fiction and fantasy as a form of escapism from their sad, miserable little lives." I was wrong. The first thing you should know about Will Brooker is that HE is a fan himself, and this gives him a unique perspective - not to mention it makes it more likely fellow fans will trust him enough to allow glimpses into aspects of their lives they have learned to keep secret to avoid ridicule. Brooker walks the walk and talks the talk. He respects his fellow fans and their views, and he presents them in a fair minded and non-judgmental light in his book, which makes for a pleasant change. Furthermore, he discusses fandom from many angles, including those that are often overlooked or somewhat obscure and may not be familiar even to many that consider themselves Star Wars fans. Do the terms PWP, EU, "gusher" and "Space Wheat" mean anything to you? They will once you have read this book, and some of the insights you discover may surprise you. Brooker covers such topics as women in fandom. How do they view the Star Wars universe, and how do their reactions and expectations differ from those of the men who tend to dominate science fiction? What about creative expression in fandom? When fans use George Lucas' characters and universe to inspire their own flights of fancy, whether it be through short films, writing or art work, is this a form of homage to Lucas or a blatant disregard for legal copyright laws, or both? How did fans react to *The Phantom Menace*? Was it a disaster or a glorious success, or a little of each? So who should read this book? Everyone! Non-fans should read it to gain an insight into fandom. Fans are not simply some exotic creatures you only see dressed in Jedi robes on the news coverage of a Star Wars premier. Fans include the teacher in your child's classroom, the vet who takes care of your dog, the guy who programmed your business software, the kid down the street who mows your lawn, and the Air force meteorologist. They are people like you, and, yes, like me - I am a fan and proud of it. Fans should read to gain a broader view of the myriad aspects of fandom and the response people have to the Star Wars phenomena. As Brooker points out, Star Wars fandom is a dynamic, complex entity. Many fans don't even agree on issues covered in this book. However, for the most part, they do speak a common language that allows for immediate recognition and a sense of inclusion in a world where fans often feel excluded. Even when they disagree, there is a sense of community - a community Brooker knows well.

In this intelligent and entertaining study of fandom at its most intense, Will Brooker examines the Star Wars phenomenon from the audience's perspective and discovers that the saga exerts a powerful influence over the social, cultural, and spiritual lives of those drawn into its myth. From a Boba Fett-loving police officer in Indiana to the webmistress of www.starwarschicks.com; from an eleven-year-old boy in south London to a Baptist Church in South Carolina; Brooker unearths a seemingly endless array of fans who use and interpret the saga in a number of creative ways.

"This is a wonderful book. Will Brooker provides a wealth of badly-needed evidence, which will be of great use to anyone interested in ongoing debates about the relation between cultural production and consumption, the place of media in identity formation, and the ways in which meanings are produced from texts. The book is intelligent and

informed, and is supremely careful only to make claims which are supported by the evidence it presents. It shows that it is not only possible, but vitally important, for academics to have a detailed knowledge of the texts and communities they are writing about, if they are to provide reasonable analyses of the ways in which they function. Above all, this book is beautifully written, and extremely readable." Alan McKee, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* "Timely and provocative. enthusiastically written. In 10 well-crafted chapters, Brooker manages to capture the original excitement surrounding the film's 1977 premiere while dissecting how and why the enthusiasm endures. Brooker's clear prose sings. [his] obvious dedication to his project makes *Using the Force* a must for fans and a necessary read for students of pop culture." *The Austin Chronicle* "...both readable and informative... There is a lot for the Maul fan here" *Darth Maul Estrogen Brigade 2*, 9/12/02 About the Author Will Brooker is Director of Film Studies and Television at Kingston University, UK. He is the author of several books, including studies of *Batman*, *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, and *Lewis Carroll*.