North and South Korean Olympians will march under one flag

Olympics may be helpful in relieving some of the tension between the North and South. In an act of what has been termed “sports diplomacy,” the International Olympic Committee has allowed a total of 22 North Korean athletes to participate despite missing the deadline to register athletes.

Some of the most anticipated North Korean athletes to attend the Seoul Olympics are figure skaters Ryom Tae-ok and Kim Ju-sik. The pair placed 15th at the world skating championships last year and are “expected to represent the height of sporting aspirations for North Korea,” according to The New York Times.

“The Olympic spirit is about respect, dialogue and understanding,” said International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach. “The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 are hopefully opening the door to a brighter future on the Korean peninsula, and inviting the world to join in a celebration of hope.”

North Korea has had turbulent relations with its southern neighbors in the past. South Korea has been repeatedly selected to host major sporting events over North Korea. According to The New York Times, choosing Seoul as the location for the 1988 Summer Olympics was seen by North Korea as “an affront to their national dignity.”

In response, the North “shunned” the 1988 Games and attempted to sabotage them via a terrorist attack on a Korean Air plane which killed all 115 passengers. Despite the attack, the 1988 Seoul Olympics continued as planned and were highly successful.

Other Dordt faculty members have come to the same conclusion about the present interactions between to two countries. “I think that if sports can be used to work towards a more perfect peace, then I’m all for it,” said English professor Howard Schaap.

The Diamond would like to thank Lydia Marcus and Ellen Dengah for their services the past few years. As a staff, we wish you both luck in your life after graduation and cannot wait to see where the Lord directs you.

Photos By: Allison Wordes

Bringing in the Women’s Voices

Allison Wordes - Staff Writer

Each poster yells, pouts or insists upon the rights of women. Each one defies expectations of Cuban women—why should they be chained to cooking or cleaning, when they have the rights to be free? Art professor David Versluis, who’s been at Dordt since 2001, learned of the showcasing art exhibit last year in Chicago from a fellow graphic designer.

Dordt applied the labels to the artwork—the original show did not include them. “Studies have shown that an artwork’s labels give it legitimacy,” Versluis said. The posters, being posters, are able to communicate a lot on their own. However, adding English subtitles for Spanish posters and vice versa allowed for clarification in viewing.

“The poster is an important vehicle for the public to communicate in Cuba,” Versluis said. In 1959, when Fidel Castro came to power, thousands of posters were commissioned by the government to communicate his vision of a socialist society. While those such posters were commissioned by the government, these posters are done by women in collaboration from two different institutions—Purdue University and the Instituto Superior de Diseño in Havana, Cuba.

“It was striking how differently many of the student artists took the theme,” said sophomore Emily Wicker, sophomore graphic design major. It’s combination of Spanish and English also added to the depth of the meaning for Wicker, a Spanish minor.

The gallery debuted in 2016 and has since been traveling around the country, visiting large and small institutions from the art metropolis that is Chicago to the small campus of Dordt. Somehow, having graphic designers tackle these issues allows them to be more acceptable in the community, according to Versluis. Graphic design is such a different medium from painting or sculpture, and it utilizes basic geometry and color to simplify stark ideas. The students from the Graphic Design III class are adding to the poster craze by creating their own renditions of the women’s posters to hang around campus.

There isn’t any disclaimer posted on the gallery entrance stating that Dordt doesn’t agree with the ideas portrayed in the gallery. However, visitors tend to be aware that there are still controversial topics that even those of the Reformed perspective do not agree on. “[Even] Within our Reformed institution, there is room for a kind of common grace,” Versluis said.

He said we should not block it off, or refuse to deal with it. He should start a conversation at Dordt that allows understanding and freedom for women, both in Cuba and in the U.S.

A public reception will be held Feb. 7, from 7-8pm in the gallery.

Tess Hennings – Staff Writer

North and South Korean Olympians will march under one flag

After a long period of waiting, North Korea has officially committed to participation in the 2018 Winter Olympics. The games are being held in neighboring South Korea’s city of Pyeongchang.

In the spirit of unity and peace, North and South Korea will be permitted to march together under the name “Korea” at the Opening Ceremony, according to the International Olympic Committee. In addition, North Korea will send 12 players to unite with the South Korean Women’s Hockey team of 23 players. The hockey team will compete under the Korean Women’s Hockey team of 23 players.

Some of the most anticipated North Korean athletes to attend the Seoul Olympics are figure skaters Ryom Tae-ok and Kim Ju-sik. The pair placed 15th at the world skating championships last year and are “expected to represent the height of sporting aspirations for North Korea,” according to The New York Times.

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Prepare for two California's

Tessa Hemmila – Staff Writer

The New California movement is gaining support to sever California into two separate states. A large section of the coastal counties and the county of Sacramento have been selected to remain as California, while the rest of the state would become “New California,” and form the 51st state.

Robert Paul Preston and Tim Reed are the founders of the New California movement. According to the New California website, the current state of California has become “ungovernable” due to its large size and the resulting decrease of “essential basic services” including law enforcement, water resource management, education, and many more grievances.

“Well, it’s been ungovernable for a long time—high taxes, education, you name it... We’re rated around 45th or 50th from a business climate and standpoint in California,” Preston said in an interview with CBS News. "The New California movement is an Article IV Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution into play as justification for their desire to establish a new state. This legislation will allow the state to split in a way that is similar to the way West Virginia was formed."

The campaign hopes to separate the largely liberal coastal counties from the more conservative inland counties of California. The state of California has voted “blue” for the last seven elections, according to Huffington Post.

Conservatives in rural California are largely outnumbered by the massive liberal population in California’s major cities of Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco.

"An important part of democracy is having representation for everyone," said sophomore Tristan Verduzo, a resident of Los Angeles County. "If people have lived in California their whole lives and never felt represented, that’s a problem."

Despite the need for representation of all citizens, solutions are being proposed by the displaced splitting of their state.

"I understand the desire to be heard as a conservative growing up in California," Verduzo said. "But this goes directly against a topic before publishing. A good journalist is skeptical enough about things to fully research the kind acts that are being done in the world. This means that yes, the news will not always be cherry and have front-page articles about the kind acts that are being done in the world. This also means that people should not have to thumb through a newspaper wondering if the same articles could be in a tablespoon. According to a survey conducted by Media Insights Project, only 17% of the public agree that the news media is accurate. An opinion-based bias is as bad as the same article listed under a different title."

"People open up a fictional novel when they want something exciting to read. They know what they are reading is not always real. But when people look at newspapers, they want to think what they are reading is the truth. But in a time when everyone can be a reporter, who can be trusted?"

With the use of the internet, it has become a lot easier for anyone to share news. This can be helpful and dangerous. It may be nice to share news of family or an event, but it can also portray lies as biased and untrue. "It was the Ryans" and other Dordt attendees got to meet their fellow festival-goers and tour the city they are going to visit. "All of our taxes from throughout the region performed their monologue and duet scenes with their partners in front of judges and competitors. The top 14 nominated—out of over 300—moved onto the semifinal round. Sixteen of those semifinalists moved onto the finals."

"I was glad that I was able to work on the scene for ACTF for the first and last time as a sophomore," said Kaitlyn Baljeu. "It was exciting seeing what everyone in the region was working on and gain more experience to use for our own productions," sophomore Ben Kuiper said.

ACTF invites students to showcase their talent for acting in musicals and plays, along with their makeup, set, lighting and other designs. Anything original that students create for theatrical purposes can be presented and even awarded. "I loved hanging out with all my peeps," said sophomore Kelyn Baljeu. "Seeing all the shows and productions put on by other schools is going to be a major issue going forward," said junior Engineering major Adam Galloy.

"It all sounds pretty cool. Really, this is just another step in the long history of humans replacing a task with machinery and yet, they did not shoplift. This is the story without physically exchanging any money; and yet, they did not shoplift. This is the story of the store, from the weight sensitive shelves, and then cameras and sensors, is able to determine which cameras and sensors, is able to determine which items were removed. While the actual transactions are fully automated, there are still human employees who stock shelves and perform other tasks."

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There is little doubt that Amazon will continue moving onto new areas of retail with technology. "It all sounds pretty cool. Really, this is just another step in the long history of humans replacing a task with machinery and yet, they did not shoplift. This is the story of the store, from the weight sensitive shelves, and then cameras and sensors, is able to determine which items were removed. While the actual transactions are fully automated, there are still human employees who stock shelves and perform other tasks."

"When you live in a democracy, not everyone can get their way," said Dordt History Professor Paul Fessler. "We're built on compromise."
Musk shoots for the stars—or at least for Mars

Evangelone Colarossi--Staff Writer

“Did you hear about the guy who made a small fortune in the space industry? He started with a large one.”

The man behind that joke is named Elon Musk, who invested his fortune from PayPal into funding a new company, SpaceX, and is setting his sights on colonizing Mars.

Musk, an entrepreneur at a young age, started several companies long before he founded SpaceX, a rocket manufacturer. He wanted to advance rocket technology and “reinvent the country to go to space again.” In a TED ED talk, Musk asked himself, “What are the things that need to happen in order for the future to be an exciting and inspiring one?” His own answer was to make humans a multi-planetary species.

SpaceX was founded in 2002 with the goal to create the ability to support human life on other planets. Since then, they have become the only private company to deliver cargo to the International Space Station (ISS). Using their aircraft, the Dragon, they have partnered with NASA to continue cargo shipments to the ISS. Dragon took its 13th load in December, delivering scientific research, crew supplies and equipment to the ISS.

SpaceX’s current project, Falcon Heavy, had its first test on Jan. 24. After several delays due to equipment, other launches and the brief government shutdown, the company fired up the rocket. It lifted off launch pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, rising into the air and settling back onto the pad after 12 seconds. In the following two weeks, the Falcon

Contributed Photo

Heavy will be prepped for a real testing launch, set to take place on Feb. 6.

Falcon Heavy is a partially reusable rocket, something that is fairly new on the design front of space travel. Composed of three rockets strapped together, it can lift about 140,000 pounds of cargo into space. It intends to find a way to reuse rockets to transport people to Mars, the next sustainable environment for our planet. He predicts that the trip could take 80 by 150 days, depending on the orbit.

Remember Marvin the Martian from Looney Tunes, or perhaps green aliens drawn with huge black eyes? Many once wanted to be astronauts and see the Red Planet up close. If people are still interested in the 2080’s, they might get that chance. Musk intends to launch four spacecrafts in 2024 to take a crew to Mars to find the most reliable water sources and build a propelling plant to launch from during the following years.

“If we can understand how to create and maintain habitable spaces out of hostile, inhospitable places on Earth perhaps we can meet the needs of both preserving our own environment and moving beyond it,” Musk said.

With breathable air, poisonous soil and frozen water, Mars may not seem like the greatest place to move to, but SpaceX, NASA and China are all in pursuit of landing on Mars. There is no real way to tell who may reach the planet first.

“The Republicans have a majority in the Senate, but that’s not important,” Taylor pointed out. “Nowadays, the minority in the Senate doesn’t even have to do a filibuster; all they have to do is threaten a filibuster and it keeps them from the majority from moving ahead unless they have the 60-vote supermajority lined up.”

The shutdown lasted for around two days until the following Monday, when a vote was taken to end the shutdown and approve temporary funding.

“Personally, I think [the filibuster’s] a poor system on two counts,” Taylor said. “First, that’s a choice after the fact. It was not found in the Constitution. It is a longstanding Senate tradition, but if it were up to me, I would abolish it. Second, the majority rolls over too easily. If Democrats threaten to filibuster, then they should be forced to actually do it.”

In addition to the filibuster, policies like DACA and (stances on the larger issue of immigration) do not always neatly fall between party lines. To Taylor, the issue of immigration is a perfect example of the hidden complexity of the two-party system.

Not all Republicans want a secure southern border. With the exception of President Trump, the GOP leadership in DC likes the status quo because it provides cheap labor and upholds the possibility of unionization. This reflects an underlying commitment to their big-business funders, even though it goes against the wishes of their party’s conservative grassroots base,” said Taylor. “Democrats use humanitarian rhetoric in support of the Dream Act and comprehensive immigration reform, but corporate-funding and partisan-advantage motivations are also in play with party leaders.”

At the end of the government shutdowns tend to be relatively minor in consequence, according to Taylor. “They draw lots of media attention and partisan puffing-and-puffing, but average Americans, including the military, see little of this, or worse a compromise in DC ends the shutdown.”

Perhaps instead of panicking over shutdowns, policymakers should take a closer look at the underlying issues behind them, including ethical issues surrounding lobbying and corporate funding.
Reflections on studying abroad

Elizabeth Heinkamp--Staff Writer

On Jan. 18, a storm with record wind speeds swept across the Netherlands. Several Dordt students were studying in the Netherlands at the time, as a part of the SPICE (Studies in Political Economy) program. Senior Brittta Provart, a Dordt student who is taking classes in Zwolle, shared her experience with the storm.

"That day," she said, "we had a terrible wind storm. Some parts of the Netherlands had winds up to 150 mph. Even in the town I was staying in, we were calling for 'code orange' [and then 'code red'] storms, which is supposedly very bad. My host family told me that these storms were closer to 20 mph."

"I tried to bike over the bridge but fell over. There were five other people on the bridge that also fell off their bikes because of the wind. Most people were walking their bikes to their destination because the wind was too strong."

"There were chairs and tables from outside restaurants on the sidewalks. Parked bikes had fallen over. I have never experienced wind like that! I learned that day, and other days here, that it is practically impossible to bike in the Netherlands. Even the professionals have trouble biking when it becomes so windy!"

Martin Gelderman, a native of the Netherlands from a village called Zak—three miles from Zwolle in the province of Overijssel—was not at home when the storm hit. "I was teaching at a grammar school when the storm hit. In the neighborhood of the school there was quite a lot of damage to cars which had been hit by falling tree branches, but there was nothing [too] serious going on.

"I thought the news reports were blown out of proportion. Many people were responsible for taking their cars to the garage for fear of getting damaged by winds. People who didn't need to go to work did not go to work at all. There were also a few deaths in other parts of the Netherlands because of the winds."

"Semi-trucks were being blown over on the highways and big advertising signs were falling over," Provart said. "[But] in Zwolle, the most damage was from trees falling over. To my knowledge, no one was injured."

"My first reaction was that it surprised me," Gelderman said. "The school is surrounded by houses so the wind was fast, but not so fast that it could knock over a house. So when I saw the videos from the coast, I was quite surprised by how hard the wind actually was... when I drove to Zwolle, I had to drive back a distance of 10 miles over a highway, when I got stuck in traffic after 2 miles. It took me 2.5 hours to drive the rest of the distance back home."

"The wind blew all day and kept blowing over an empty truck. That is how hard the wind was."
Dordt screens four short films

Zachary Sanford · Staff Writer

Endless editing hours, countless cuts, four movies, one award.

The Short Film class showed a film, and three Senior Projects were on display here at Dordt. The Short Film class presented their motion picture Monday Dec. 11th, in the Campus Center. A big crowd came to support the film making class and their hit performance. The Frinedt Plain hosted the premier of “Echoes”, directed by Aaron Radtke, and “Go Up In Smoke”, directed by Ellen Denagh.

SH 1606 showed all three short films. “Echoes”, “Go Up In Smoke”, and “Geminios”. “You’re Invited”, directed by Jake Brouwer, was a surprise birthday party gone wrong from the very beginning. As the main character was dragged from a cupcake and hauled around in the back of a van the party goers covered in masks had an abundant miss happenings that spoiled the party plans.

Main character woke-up in the van, suspecting she was in danger, she ran. She stumbled into the party, and out only to be hit by a passing car. This film provided stellar chase scenes and comedy at laid back cuts. “Go Up In Smoke”, directed by Ellen Denagh, this film was an insightful depiction of a man who’s daughter wants to get married, the man having flashbacks of his marriage life and his struggle with smoking, discourages his daughter. The theme of smoking is prevalent in the world today, can refer to all of man and only an ideal past,” she said. “And I think it shows how much people that don’t get longed for the quiet or to do with their life every day. This shall be the Lord with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

This trend of movements, once led by King, continues today. Civil Rights Movement.

In the case of ACTF, this “freak flag” is really helpful and I’m very thankful for the everybody who helped me out. The feedback

After spending a week in Des Moines at Region 5’s American College Theatre Festival (ACTF), I can say that I’ve learned some things.

I’ve learned that Dominio’s delivers to hotels after 10 o’clock, but if you are only staying for a couple of days you don’t get locked out of the hotel while trying to get to your room. Also, “Fuzzy’s Taco’s” does not have any food that is not ordered in frizz, no matter what one might assume.

I’ve learned that burgers with buns made of deep fried macaroni and cheese are nauseatingly fantastic and should only be attempted once in a lifetime. I also know I can converse a Spicy Chicken 30 and flies within the space of a two-block walk.

I’ve learned some tangible theatre skills. I know what kind of things are important when blocking a scene in the round—a setup that puts the audience around the stage. I’ve now lifted someone heavier than myself, which is possible as long as you do it right. Pro tip: Don’t attempt someone heavier than myself, which is possible as long as you do it right. Pro tip: Don’t attempt.
Young blades team looks for strong finish

The Dordt College men’s basketball team (11-14 overall, 5-8 GPAC) won one of their two games last week.

The Defenders won a tight contest against Mount Marty in Yankton, SD, by a final score of 77-73 last Wednesday. Dordt came out hot, but faltered midway through the first half. The game had 11 total lead changes.

The game came down to Mount Marty’s final possession where the Lancers set an illegal screen, which allowed sophomore guard Matt Harrison to score the winning goal just under two minutes into overtime.

With the two wins after the break, the Defenders improved to 5-17 on the season and 0-6 in the GPAC. However, the team is confident as they enter their last couple of games of the regular season, the Blades are confident as they continue into the coming seasons as the Blades have had four or five guys that have been able to have before. The team will have some stress with finals looming.

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RECAP - Men’s basketball splits last week’s contests

Caleb Polianna – Staff Writer

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The game came down to Mount Marty’s final possession where the Lancers set an illegal screen, which allowed sophomore guard Marcus Winterfeldt to ice the game with a pair of free throws for the bonus.

Dordt had a rough night shooting the ball, only shooting 29-69 from the field. However, the Defenders made up for their lack of offense by a great night defensively by forcing 16 turnovers by the Lancers.

"We forced 16 turnovers to our nine that and difference was obviously critical," Dennis said.

With the win, the Defenders looked to their upcoming game against Midland on Saturday afternoon.

The Defenders fell to the Warriors by a final score of 99-95. They went 32-4 for 60 from the field and 18-26 from the three-point range.

The Defenders led the game 76-73 with just over six minutes left in the game on back-to-back three pointers from Jesse Janzen.

The three pointers were not enough as Midland took control the rest of the game, stretching the lead back to eight points in the final minutes of the game.

The Defenders’ next game is at home tonight against the cross-county rivals Northwestern Red Raiders.

Northwestern edged Dordt earlier in the year by a final score of 111-116 in overtime in Orange City. It could be a different story in front of a home crowd in the DeV. Wind this time. The game is expected to live up to the hype in this fiercely competitive rivalry. Tip-off is at 6:00 p.m. in the DeV. Wind for the men.

Men’s volleyball serves up new season

Clara Rojas-Vanek – Sports Editor

Men’s volleyball is beginning its third season of varsity competition this week. Under the direction of head coach Chad Hanson, this year’s goals have been raised since last season.

Hanson is looking forward to this season and seeing how his players have progressed since last season, as well as how the new freshman class mixes in with the veterans. He says his players know what’s needed after last season and what the competition around the conference is like.

“I see liking that growing spirit and team unity,” Hanson said.

The team is looking forward to executing new offensive and defensive systems this season, along with a new style and tempo that Hanson believes will work well with his team. He expects this season to bring depth that the team has not been able to have before. The team will have to compete night in and night out while still staying fresh on the court and building team unity and camaraderie off the court.

“I don’t know what we get record-wise, but I just hope that we continue to grow and develop and just keep giving it our all,” said sophomore Ben Tiemersma.

The men’s volleyball team plays in a hybrid conference that combines the American Midwest Conference, the Great Plains Athletic Conference and the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference. Out of all those teams, this conference has three teams ranked in the nation’s top-5. Brian Coble and Mount Saint Mary’s join Dordt to represent the GPAC in this conference.

Dordt kicked off its season against Missouri State this week and will face Lindenwood-Belleville on Friday, both in the DeV. Wind gymnasium.

The mentality of the players is to put God first, the team second and the sport third. Hanson says he looks forward to seeing how his players can grow physically, mentally and spiritually over the course of the season.

The team hangs out in the offseason and Tiemersma credits getting to know his teammates is just as important as improving in the sport.

Hanson is confident that the team can get a conference record of at least .500 or better than one match win overall. However, it’s the most competition the team has faced yet. As Dordt is still playing best-of-three, Hanson is happy about that.

“It’s a hefty match,” Hanson said. “We play each [conference] team twice, so we need to perform well against the conference overall.”

Both Hanson and Tiemersma have positive outlooks for season ahead. The program is still young and getting built up, but this might just be the best season Dordt men’s volleyball has seen yet.

With only a couple of games left, the Dordt Blades hockey team look to finish their season on a high note.

The Blades copped a rough first half of the season with a 0-6 loss to Missouri State in Springfield, MO, on Dec. 9. Sophomore David Burns was in the net and had 57 saves on 63 shots on goal.

The Blades came back strong after Christmas break, shutting down South Dakota State with back-to-back wins on Jan. 19 and 20. The first game of the weekend against SDSU in Sioux Center was not one to miss. The Blades won in overtime after freshman center Mark Schuster scored the winning goal just under two minutes into overtime.

With the two wins after the break, the Blades improved to 5-17 on the season and 0-6 in conference play. Despite the rocky first half of the season, the Blades are confident as they enter their last couple of games of the regular season due to several players returning from injury.

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Dordt College Dance Camp has been a tradition for the past three years, allowing the youngsters to interact one-on-one with dance team members in an energetic day camp. For several hours in the morning, the girls learned a routine, went home for a short lunch break and returned to perform at halftime for the Dordt vs.

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Northwestern edged Dordt earlier in the year by a final score of 111-116 in overtime in Orange City. It could be a different story in front of a home crowd in the DeV. Wind this time. The game is expected to live up to the hype in this fiercely competitive rivalry. Tip-off is at 6:00 p.m. in the DeV. Wind for the men.
People cheered as the words on the screen rolled once again. The world of light sabers, the force, and the rebellion is back. The night movie in the Star Wars franchise, “The Last Jedi,” debuted on screen on Thursday Dec. 14, following a line of chronological release dates, and already had thousands of sold tickets in the box office on opening night. The 2 hour and 32 min movie, said by some to be as good as “The empire Strikes Back,” was annoying to watch. Furthermore, just before the movie, how the jokes were told, and when they were told reminded me of the same feelings I had when I watch Marvel movies, the movie style mirrored each other (at serious moment, please turn the comic to something funny.) The comedy movie is different from past Star Wars movies.

A huge difference in the movie is with the Force and what you can do with it. Some fans smartphones were happy with the new things in which the Force is used, others may raise question about the change in the attribute in the force does not like Star Wars is enjoyable. For fans who wish to embrace the change, it is a great movie.

“Star Wars” is a whole, begins slow and was annoying to watch. Furthermore, just before it hits its stride, there are many questionable scenes and story paths that seem irrelevant, and don’t make sense. Sadly, I can’t explain what paths I had problems with because it may ruin the movie for some. While watching it, I had a lot of questions, I hope that I will be answered in the next Star Wars film.

However, towards the end it picks up speed and is filled with lots of action. The action often comes with gasps and laughter from the audience. The ending of the film, for a person who does not like Star Wars is enjoyable. Altogether, the movie will be loved by some fans, and leaving others in a difficult position. The ending of the film, for a person who does not like Star Wars is enjoyable. For some the change did not seem to bother them. For others Star Wars gamer would have trouble keeping up with. The changes in the characters are not what frustrates fans, but the story and how it is told does. There are noticeable changes in the movie that will leave some fans wincing, asking why and others people pleased. Some of the noticeable changes are: with the humor. When watching “The Last Jedi,” the style of the movie, how the jokes were told, and when they were told reminded me of the same feelings I had when I watch Marvel movies, the movie style mirrored each other (at serious moment, please turn the comic to something funny.)

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People cheered as the words on screen rolled once again. The world of light sabers, the force, and the rebellion is back in theatres. It’s almost an annual ritual at this point, ever since the Walt Disney Company purchased Star Wars—and the entire Lucasfilm studio—in back in 2012. The latest installment, the nineth movie in the Star Wars franchise and the eight in the saga, debuted on Dec. 15 and has already grossed over a billion dollars worldwide.

“The Last Jedi” takes place immediately after the events of JJ Abrams 2015 smash hit, “The Force Awakens”. At long last, fans finally get to witness the return of the legendary Mark Hamill to his equally legendary role as Jedi Master Luke Skywalker. But does it live up to the impossibly high expectations of the enormous and diverse fan base? That, of course, depends on who you ask. From a filmmaking standpoint, director Rian Johnson, a newcomer to the franchise, has delivered a visually stunning, emotionally captivating and edge-of-your-seat entertaining spectacle of lights, lasers, and spaceships. The action is fast paced and exciting. The story is FULL of twists and unpredictability, action is fast paced and exciting. The story is FULL of twists and unpredictability, with more questions than answers. It certainly sets the stage for an exciting sequel: the yet unnamed Episode IX, which will conclude the sequel trilogy in 2019. There’s plenty of story and character decisions that will delight some fans and disappoint others.

For starters, there’s longtime (questionable) protagonist Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill). He’s aged, certainly, but with that age has come some jaded cynicism, a surprising new take on the farm boy turned hero of the original trilogy. Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) faces an inward struggle, and internal conflict between good and evil, as he finds himself trapped between his desire to be the perfect Disney fashion. The latest installment, the ninth movie in the Star Wars franchise and the eight in the saga, debuts on Dec. 15 and has already grossed over a billion dollars worldwide. Yes, we are so far gone these days.

Overall, “The Last Jedi” brings Star Wars (Carrie Fisher) returns as the wise, experienced, and determined leader of the Galactic Resistance, and provides the story with some of its craziest twists that are simultaneously confusing, amusing, and... well, you’ll just have to see for yourself. It’s not what you think. Under Leia’s leadership are the returning “bromance” duo of ex-stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega) and hot headed pilot Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac), who, along with newcomer Rose (Lupita Nyong’o) go off on a largely irrelevant side mission involving mutiny, undercover work, and, of course, a pointless love story, in perfect Disney fashion.

Perhaps the most noticeable change, however, is the humor. While the Star Wars movies are no stranger to laughs, the departure of longtime series scriptwriter Lawrence Kasdan leaves this particular installment straying from the witty, snappy and sarcastic humor of “The Force Awakens” and the beloved Original Trilogy... and instead replaces it with cheap, uncharacteristic one-liners. The humor of “The Last Jedi” is not very different from that of the Marvel cinematic universe. Whether this change is intentional or not, the similarities are striking (especially as both franchises are now part of the Mouse House) and outright cringe inducing at times. A very strange choice for a movie that is otherwise dark and serious in tone. Overall, “The Last Jedi” brings Star Wars somewhere completely new. The character development is surprising, the humor is different, and the lore of the mystical Force (and its capabilities) is greatly expanded upon. It’s fun, confusing conglomerate filled with more twists and turns than the flightpath of the Millennium Falcon.

There’s a fine line between subverting expectations and delighting fans. Whether or not “The Last Jedi” crosses that line will completely change depending on one’s point of view. But overall, “The Last Jedi” is exciting, captivating, and at the very least, worth seeing on the big screen.

Zachary Sanford – Staff Writer