



Heir to the Empire

Timothy Zahn

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It is a time of renewal, five years after the destruction of the Death Star and the defeat of Darth Vader and the Empire.

But with the war seemingly won, strains are beginning to show in the Rebel Alliance. New challenges to galactic peace have arisen. And Luke Skywalker hears a voice from his past. A voice with a warning. Beware the dark side....

The Rebel Alliance has destroyed the Death Star, defeated Darth Vader and the Emperor, and driven the remnants of the old Imperial Starfleet back into barely a quarter of the territory that they once controlled. Leia and Han are married, are expecting Jedi twins, and have shouldered heavy burdens in the government of the new Republic. And Luke Skywalker is the first in a hoped-for new line of Jedi Knights.

But thousands of light years away, where a few skirmishes are still taking place, the last of the Emperor's warlords has taken command of the remains of the Imperial fleet. He has made two vital discoveries that could destroy the fragile new Republic—built with such cost to the Rebel Alliance. The tale that emerges is a towering epic of action, invention, mystery, and spectacle on a galactic scale—in short, a story that is worthy of the name *Star Wars*.

Heir to the Empire Details

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From Reader Review *Heir to the Empire* for online ebook

Markus says

"History is on the move, Captain. Those who cannot keep up will be left behind, to watch from a distance. And those who stand in our way will not watch at all."

Five years have passed since the destruction of the second Death Star and the fall of the Emperor. The New Republic is rising from the ashes of the Galactic Empire. The old Imperial Starfleet is in complete disarray, and the greatest of the Emperor's warlords, the Grand Admirals, are all gone. Except for one. And that lone one will give the leaders of the fledgling government more to fear than all the others combined...

Timothy Zahn is an author long revered among fans of the Star Wars Expanded Universe. Not merely for writing some of the best Star Wars novels out there, but for creating some of the most beloved characters in the franchise. One of those is Mitth'raw'nuruodo, better known throughout the galaxy as Grand Admiral Thrawn. He's a master strategist and a military genius, and one of his greatest strengths lies in simple observation of the enemy. Obsessed with art, he is also capable of understanding a whole species of people simply by studying their artistic legacy. And after the demise of Palpatine and the fall of his government, Thrawn, an alien Chiss who rose through the ranks of the emperor's military hierarchy against all odds, suddenly finds himself as the heir to the empire.

But Thrawn is far from the only wonderfully intriguing character introduced by Zahn. Brick by brick, he's managed to build a whole new setting succeeding that of the original Star Wars movies, and while characters like Luke, Han and Leia remain as protagonists, much of the weight is being put upon a brand new bunch of people. From rogue smugglers to scheming senators to a mysterious survivor of the days of the old republic. And perhaps the most popular character of the Star Wars fanbase: Mara Jade, a woman who once served as the Emperor's Hand and has now sworn vengeance upon Luke Skywalker for the death of her master.

It's not a perfect book, and it certainly has its flaws. The writing could have been a lot better, and Zahn never quite manages to recreate the epicness and scale of the movies. But believe me when I say that he makes a damn good attempt.

Since Disney bought LucasFilm and created a story group responsible for deciding what was official Star Wars canon to be used in future instalments, all the great novels written about it, including this one, were swept under the carpet and turned into the so-called *Star Wars: Legends*. And despite that everything else surrounding that decision was total bullshit, the name kind of fits. This book is most definitely a legend of the Star Wars universe. And it is what the upcoming Episode VII **should** have been based on. It could have been so artistically done. But canon or no, the stories remain, and they're waiting for you to read them.

If you enjoyed the Star Wars movies and want to explore what else this amazing universe has to offer, *Heir to the Empire* is the book to read. Don't allow yourself to be confused by the hundreds of books, games and comics existing out there. While not the first Star Wars novel ever written, this is the real sequel to the original movie trilogy. This, ladies and gentlemen, is where the Expanded Universe begins. And what a universe that is...

Evgeny says

I hope I will not need to tell what happened in the original Star Wars trilogy. I also feel I do not need to use any visuals for my review as practically everybody knows what the main characters look like. So, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

Five years after the events of the Return of the Jedi things seem to go smooth for the Rebel Alliance. What remains of the Empire is driven farther to the remote parts of the space, the territory of the new Republic is expanding and war is replaced by diplomacy. Nobody seems to care much about that is going on in the remaining Empire's corner of space.

It turns out the last surviving Empire fleet Admiral called Thrawn is a military genius who also happened to have a very good knowledge on human psychology. He wants to restore the former glory of the Empire and he sets off on his quest by manipulating the events in the known space - subtly and not so subtly. He has the new Republic exactly where he wants it: it has to react to his manipulations the way he predicted and planned.

What worked: the new characters are good and interesting: Thrawn, Talon Karrde, and Mara Jade. The latter seems to be everybody's favorite, but I strongly suspect where her development goes and I do not like it: too cliché.

The plot of the first book actually reminded me of the first movie of the original trilogy: it was entertaining with enough intrigues and space battles to more than make up for its shortcomings.

What did not work: the author created great new characters, but most of the people from the movies were bland. I can understand this somewhat as he had to work with already established characters within restrictions imposed on him. Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, and Lando Calrissian - they all suffered from this. Admiral Ackbar did not get enough screen time to be anything more than just a name. Han Solo is the one who suffered the most. He used to be a lovable rogue in the movies, now he is a caring husband and father - and this does not work for his character at all. He also lost all of his sense of humor.

I need to mention that the book ended in a nice exciting space battle, but with no plot resolution whatsoever in sight, so for people who hate cliffhangers: beware.

As a mindless entertainment and an easy read the first installment of the trilogy works just fine with 4 stars being its final rating. If you like Star Wars or space operas - go for it.

Apatt says

From the first paragraph of *Heir To The Empire*:

"It's five years after Return of the Jedi: the Rebel Alliance has destroyed the Death Star, defeated Darth Vader and the Emperor, and driven the remnants of the old Imperial Starfleet to a distant corner of the galaxy. Princess Leia and Han Solo are married and expecting Jedi twins. And Luke Skywalker has become the first in a long-awaited line of Jedi Knights."

etc.

Not a bad opening but it works much better when tilted like this:

Not easy reading a tilted book (while scrolling the text upward by hand). Still, gotta get into the spirit of things.

I have heard of this book years ago, it is often included in “Best Sci-fi Books Ever” lists (example list). However, I never really considered reading it simply because it is a Star Wars book. I like the Star Wars franchise but I am not a diehard fan and I am something of a sci-fi literature purist (snob) in that I generally prefer original sci-fi conceived from the ground up by the author. Having said that, certain books just seem to repeatedly bring themselves to my attention. I keep stumbling across articles about this Thrawn Trilogy, especially as Star Wars has just celebrated their 40 years anniversary. This Chicago Tribune article particularly caught my eye: Novelist Timothy Zahn is the man who saved 'Star Wars,' according to fans. What? This Zahn dude saved SW? When was it in danger? Etc. There are, of course, thousands of Star Wars books in print, but this trilogy has been described as “the gold standard for Star Wars Expanded Universe”. OK then, enough hype already, time to put my snobbery aside and find out if Han shot first*

Heir To The Empire introduces Grand Admiral Thrawn who has glowing red eyes and is a strategist so ingenious he makes Darth Vader look like a complete twat. The entire trilogy is about his efforts to destroy “The New Republic”, set up by the rebels who thwarted the Empire at the end of Episode VI - Return of the Jedi. It is now five years after that historic defeat (or victory, depends on your predilection). Thrawn has discovered a species of animal called ysalamiri that nullifies Jedi powers.

Admiral Thrawn with pet ysalamiri

Not only that, he has recruited an insane “dark Jedi” called Joruu C'baoth to join forces with him. Meanwhile, Luke Skywalker and friends are barely tolerating the political infighting among the councilors of the New Republic, worse still, Luke is feeling antsy because there is a disturbance in the Force. Before you can say “These aren't the droids you're looking for.”, the smeg hits the fan. “RAWRGWAWGGR!” as Chewbacca would say.

Working with pre-established characters like Luke, Han Solo, Leia Organa etc. is a double-edged sword. The movies have done all the groundwork but Zahn (now that's an alien name) has to make them true to the original characterizations. This, he does admirably, Han is suitably roguish and snarky, Leia is smart and headstrong, Luke is... well, he is a bit bland really, just like in the movies. I suspect Mark Hamill would have enjoyed a much better Hollywood career if Luke has not been such a bland character ‡. Artoo and Threepio are great comic reliefs as always, Yoda makes an appearance not in this book (alive he is not). Admiral Thrawn is Timothy Zahn's most triumphant creation, since the publication of this trilogy he has been made canon as a major antagonist in the Star Wars Rebels TV show.

The narrative of *Heir To The Empire* is quite fast-paced. I suspect most SW diehards would take to it from page one. It took me a bit longer to settle in and just go along for the ride without thinking about the franchise nature of it. Zahn's dialogue is generally good, and accurately conjures up the mental images of the well-known characters. His prose, however, is a little clunky at times, with excessive use of “wryly” and “dryly” to describe characters' facial expression when they speak. There is also more of a “hard sci-fi” feel to the book than the “science fantasy” of the movies, as Zahn includes some real science into much of the expositions. The narrative culminates in a space battle/dogfight that bored me a little bit. In all fairness, even in the movies I always feel a bit bored by these “pew! pew! pew!” dogfights, I much prefer to read about the

individual characters' struggle against insurmountable odds and hair-raising escapes. At the end of the day, though, I had a good time reading *Heir To The Empire* will surely be back for the other two installments.

Rating: 4 X-Wings

Notes:

* Still no idea. As Harrison Ford says "Who gives a shit?"

‡ Hammill himself is very cool and I am looking forward to his reprisal of Luke in the next SW movie.

- Obi-wan is dead but pops up for a quick natter anyway.
- The 10 Best Chewbacca Quotes
- How Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire* Turned Star Wars into Science Fiction
- The evil Jedi, Joruss C'baoth was originally conceived as an evil clone of Obi Wan, but Lucas nixed the idea. Pity!

Quotes:

Despite his mood, Luke couldn't help but smile. Threepio's attempts to be simultaneously helpful, inquisitive, and polite never quite came off.

"Good day, Master Luke," the protocol droid said in a remarkably prissy voice.

"He'd refused to let them wipe the X-wing's computer every few months, as per standard procedure. The inevitable result was that the computer had effectively molded itself around Artoo's unique personality, so much so that the relationship was almost up to true droid counterpart level."

"Artoo shrilled in dismay; but Luke had no time to comfort the droid now. His straight-line course had suddenly become an arc, a sort of pseudoorbit with the Star Destroyer playing the role of planet at its center. Unlike a true orbit, though, this one wasn't stable, and as soon as the Imperials got another beam focused on him, the circle would quickly degenerate into a tight inward spiral."

Stacy says

Buddy read with my fellow Star Wars fanatics over at Fantasy Buddy Reads.

You guys have **no idea** how excited I was to read about my favorite Star Wars characters. I hyped myself up for two weeks in preparation for reading this book.

So.....it's absolutely crazy that I'm only able to give this three stars. I'm going to try my best to explain this unfortunate three star rating.

What I Liked

Obviously the characters. The new characters that I really enjoyed were Thrawn and Mara. I actually liked Mara's parts in the book over most of the others. She was very mysterious and I love mystery. Artoo and Threepio had their predictable cute banter that made me laugh a few times. Did anyone else find it weird that Threepio and Artoo weren't spelled as C3PO and R2D2?

Those guys are so cute. I think I could read an entire book just about those two.

What I Disliked

I felt like everything was a bit flat. I wasn't immersed in the story like I would have liked. I've never read fan fiction before (I'm assuming that's what this is called) and this may be a normal thing. I wanted to get inside of the characters minds more. Characters always fall flat for me when there's not much character building going on. Even though I know these characters very well, I still need more to stay interested. This may be a thing with fan fiction and for that reason it may not be for me. I really needed a bit more action as well.

Another thing I noticed is that some of the characters seemed a bit off. The best example of this is Luke. Luke didn't even seem like the same person to me. He gave off major wuss vibes. He seemed a bit whiny and made some very dumb decisions.

I think I'll give a different Star Wars author a try. I'm going to start one of the series that has all **new** characters so that I don't have any expectations. There's a ton of books out there, so surely there's something that I'm bound to love.

Werner says

Note, Oct. 16, 2015: I edited this just now to correct a misspelling.

Books that are spin-offs or sequels to movies or TV shows (or sometimes direct fictional adaptations, or "novelizations"), as the Thrawn trilogy is, often don't command much critical respect; it's taken for granted by critics that movies can be made by adapting books, and that the results can be great art, but any inspiration that's drawn in the other direction is automatically discounted and the results classified as hack garbage. Like most unthinking prejudices, this one simply shortchanges the deluded people who believe it. (Most readers aren't in that number --which is why spin-off books are so popular!) Adapting, or building on, a filmed dramatic work is not a canned, easy job that takes no literary creativity or talent; rather, it's a very demanding enterprise that requires the writer to deeply understand (and creatively interpret) the original and convey it's essence in a wholly different medium, and create a vast amount of consistent new content that the different medium demands. (It's no more "canned" and "easy" than writing a historical novel about actual persons.) True, not all efforts of this type succeed artistically (neither do all movie adaptations of books!). But the best of them are as much works of literary art as any other novel or story.

The Thrawn trilogy definitely falls into the latter category. Zahn is a serious literary craftsman, and a master of complex plotting --the way that he weaves multiple plot strands into a perfect tapestry is worthy of Dickens. He's thoroughly expert on the Star Wars universe and characters, as presented in the movies and expanded in the voluminous spin-off literature, and he adds his own contributions to the tradition deftly and seamlessly. And he makes his characters (on both sides of the Imperial vs. Rebel Alliance divide) fully three-dimensional.

Ana says

MAJOR SPOILERS.

This book in a nutshell -

Leia: I'm pregnant.

Luke: Yay!

Chewie: *excitedly* Uuuuuurnur aaaarh urnur arhar.

Everyone: ...Han?

Han:

I jest, of course. Han was his usual awesome self.

Heir to the Empire is considered the best Star Wars book ever written. It is part of the Star Wars expanded universe (known affectionately by fans as EU) and is considered to be the 'true' sequel to the movies.

gets dirty looks from Disney

Sorry, I'm just repeating what I heard.

Apparently there's a shitload of books following the exploits of the Skywalker-Solo clan. And their children. And their children's children. And their children's children's children. You catch my drift. I haven't read the books but thanks to my wonderful group of nerdy friends I know the basic plot.

SPOILERS!

Han and Leia got married and had Jedi twins - a son named Jacen and a daughter named Jaina. They also had a younger son, Anakin Solo. Luke Skywalker got hitched and had a son whom he named Ben, in honor of his mentor ObiWan/Ben Kenobi.

Aww a happy ending.

Right?

Guess again.

Luke loses his wife. Anakin totally dies. Jacen turns against Luke and becomes a Sith.

So... Jacen Solo turns to the dark side, becomes Darth Caedus, and kills a bunch of people, including Luke's wife.

Hmm... reminds me of someone I know.

Ben Skywalker + Jacen Solo = Kylo Ren/Ben Solo

Very sneaky, Disney.

I think there's one thing we can all agree on. Luke is a terrible teacher in every universe.

I've gotten ahead of myself, it seems. About this book...

The Death Star has been destroyed. The empire has been defeated. Darth Vader is gone.

mutters under breath Rebel scum...

I mean, umm, yay rebels. Good job, guys. Yo rebels, I'm really happy for you, Imma let you finish but Darth Vader is one of the best characters of all time. K? #DarthVaderDidNothingWrong

So, it's been five years. Leia and Han are married and expecting babies. (we know how that turned out) Luke is rebuilding the Jedi Order. (we know how that turned out) Seriously, this is like a greek tragedy set in space. Luke, I love you, but you should quit and go back to farming.

Anyway... a douchey warlord has taken charge of the Imperial fleet. His goal: the destruction of the newly formed New Republic.

A lot of shit goes down, and it's up to our heroes to deal with the aftermath.

I must say, I developed a bit of a crush on Mara Jade. That girl is a total badass. I can see why Luke is so taken with her.

But we know how that turned out...

Stephen says

~~A long time~~ 20 years **ago**, in a **galaxy** publishing house ~~far, far away~~ looking to suck the monetary marrow out of a popular franchise and develop the next big income stream.....

.....
.....

~~Episode IV~~ Expanded Universe Novel I

A NEW **HOPE** CASH COW

It is a period of civil war declining profits and brand recognition. A revitalized Star Trek franchise **Rebel spaceships**, striking from ~~a hidden base~~ rival studio Paramount, **have won their first victory against the evil Galactic** LucasFilm **Empire** and its greedy lackeys at 20th Century Fox with the release of the extremely popular Star Trek: the Next Generation, together with a successful line of spin-off novels.

~~During the~~ In response to this threatening franchise **battle**, smart, profit-minded publishing toadies **Rebel spies managed to steal** Paramount's thunder by approaching popular non-hack writer Timothy Zahn with **secret plans to develop the**

LucasFilm **Empire's ultimate weapon, the DEATH STAR** Star Wars Expanded Universe, **an armored space station**, a marketing masterstroke **with enough** built in profit potential **power to destroy an entire planet** any franchise that opposed it...except maybe Marvel Comics.

Pursued by the Empire's sinister agents of Star Trek publisher Simon & Shuster, **Princess Leia races** Timothy Zahn races **home aboard her** listening to Jefferson **starship, custodian of** a lucrative three book deal **the stolen plans that can save her people** the Star Wars franchise **and restore freedom** George Lucas **to the** Forbes Richest American list **galaxy...**

Alejandro says

Unforgettable characters born and even a whole world too!

STRONG IN CHARACTER

When you understand a species' art, you understand that species.

One of the strongest issues on this book are the creation of characters since it's where Mara Jade was first introduced and only for that, it's already an epic moment in the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe, but also you have the introduction of other characters such as Talon Karrde, Gilad Pellaeon, Borsk Fey'lya, Joruu C'Baoth, Winter Celchu, and obviously Grand Admiral Thrawn who is the main villain in the book.

The *force* in all these characters introduced on *Heir to the Empire* lies in the sense that these characters weren't pivotal only in this very book, or even in the trilogy where the novel is part of, but these characters became quite relevant in the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe and they were keep appearing again and again, in critical moments of the expanded universe.

HAVE FORCE WILL TRAVEL

If you don't want to be noticed, you don't use a Star Destroyer.

The novel is pivotal not only in the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe developed in literature, but also in the totally canonical *Star Wars* Cinematic Universe since Timothy Zahn, the author, coined the name for the capital world of the Old Republic/Empire/New Republic, “Coruscant”, that it was widely used since then in novels and comic books, but formally introduced in *Star Wars: Episode One - The Phantom Menace*.

Also, you will have quite a tour on the book, since the characters, Luke, Leia, Han, Chewie, R2D2, C3PO, Lando, along with the newly introduced characters, they just keep traveling from here to there, known popular planets such as Tatooine, Kashyyyk and Dagobah, but also other several worlds. Thanks goodness for the hyperdrives to make possible all this!

DID THEY REALLY WIN IN “RETURN OF THE JEDI”?

You're not the last of the old Jedi, Luke, you're the first of the new.

So, you thought that when they blew up (again!) a Death Star and the Emperor fell (literally!) at the end of *Star Wars: Episode Six – Return of the Jedi*, the Rebel Alliance really won?

Hardly.

True, a lot of people celebrated at once that very night (galactic tweets must be quite efficient then) and certainly losing the second mobile battlestation and even more critical, the death of the Emperor implied that the Rebel Alliance was victorious, you cherished then, and even the Ewoks were clueless why the heck the Rebel Alliance needed 24 years to defeat the Empire, if those primitive care bears were able to beat them in just an afternoon.

However, you have to think that if you are an admiral (even better if you are a Grand Admiral (trust me, it sounds cooler)) with command over a fleet of Star Destroyers and having full local control of several worlds...

...why the heck do you have to surrender over that bunch of rebel scum?

If those rebels want our surrender, they will have to defeat first our Star Destroyers!

And you know how deadly (and insanely cool!) are those Star Destroyers!

So, the Rebel Alliance created the “New Republic” and many planets join, however what was known as “The Remnant Empire” still have considerable regions of space.

And the Grand Admiral Thrawn is starting an ambitious strategy to get back the Empire to its previous glory.

Meanwhile, Luke is beginning to train Leia, to begin a new generation of Jedis, and since Leia is now pregnant with twins (how the heck Anakin and Padme didn't know that?! Lightsabers and hyperdrives but not a dang ultrasound? And if Luke is able to perceive in the Force the Leia's twins, how Anakin didn't?!), it's expected that the Jedi legacy will grow again.

This is the first book in a trilogy, and while there is a lot of travel and the introduction of various cool new characters, the action is quite moderated and the climax on this first book is hardly enough shocking to give it a higher rating, but definitely this is a relevant book in *Star Wars* universe which deserves to be read by fans.

Paul says

I am not going to try to objectively review this as I am a seventies kid so star wars is an immense part of my coming into adulthood.

Zahn has given fans a worthy successor to Vader as the big bad in thrawn.

if I was to nitpick Mars Jades hatred of Skywalker free a little annoying.

overall a great continuation of the mythology of the star wars universe I would give 3.5 stars rounded up.

Ashley says

As a warning, the actual review doesn't start until halfway through this ridiculously large block of text. I felt I should warn you, I'm about to get self-indulgent up in here.

So you know how when you're sixteen, you're an idiot? Well, about some things. I like to think I was an abnormally stable teenager. I certainly gave my parents ZERO trouble, but I feel like that's a thing that happens when parents luck into having extremely geeky children who would rather stay home on a Saturday night and, for example, re-watch *Star Wars* for the millionth time than go to a party. (I was also extremely naïve, and like most teenagers, thought I had all the answers to a lot of things, while simultaneously being cripplingly insecure about others.)

I was always a nerdy child. I read constantly. Like, I would get in trouble for going over to friends' houses and spending more time with their bookshelves than I did with them. I always liked fantasy as well, having developed an early love for the Narnia books, which I discovered in the library. Sci-fi, though, was completely alien to me (hah, pun!). My parents are super old and had absolutely no interest in any kind of story that seemed implausible to them. How two people with basically no imaginations birthed me, I have no idea. Imagination is what I do best. But the fact is, they raised me on Shirley Temple and John Wayne movies, romantic comedies and westerns, old black and white screwballs with Cary Grant and Katherine Hepburn, and a crap-ton of musicals. My favorite movie was *The Quiet Man*, for fuck's sake. I had no idea there was other stuff I could be experiencing.

So when I was at home on of those geeky weekends and *Star Wars* came on TV one night in 2001 and I didn't have any plans, I thought why the heck not. I'd recently within the last year and a half become extremely obsessed with *The X-Files*, and *Star Wars* was something people wouldn't shut up about, and it seemed vaguely interesting and semi-related so I watched it. I came out of that movie thinking to myself, **WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS AND WHY DIDN'T I KNOW I LOVED IT SOONER.** And look, this was fuckin' 2001, pre-*Lord of the Rings*, pre-*Spider-Man* (which I saw on prom night instead of going to prom). I had never seen anything like it. I was immediately consumed by obsession. I went out to rent (and then eventually buy) the VHS special editions of the second two movies, and then proceeded to watch them so much the ribbon in the cassettes wore out. But that was it. Those three movies, over and over again.

So you can imagine my joy when I stumbled upon a copy of Kevin J. Anderson's *Jedi Apprentice* in the library one afternoon. It had a giant STAR WARS label printed all over it, and Han Solo and Leia and the Millennium Falcon, and it seemed . . . official? So I read it. And I was doomed. It wasn't even that good, but it was *Star Wars*. It was the rest of the story. From that point on, I spent almost every single bit of my babysitting money on *Star Wars* extended universe novels from Barnes & Noble. I was by no means discriminating about it, either. If it had *Star Wars* on it, I read it.

Which--FINALLY--brings me to The Thrawn Trilogy. These were actually the second series of books I read in the EU, after Kevin J. Anderson's Jedi Academy trilogy. I remember the clerk telling me when I bought this book, "Oh, that one is really good." But he was wrong. It was EXCELLENT. The old characters, the new characters, the villains . . . everything about it was perfect. It took what KJA was trying to do in the series I'd already read (but which was written after it) and elevated it to something that sort of surpassed what the original movies could do. Sure, the movies were great for spectacle, music and visuals and there is no substitute for a great or engaging actor, but these books had complexity. You could see inside the characters' heads, and have plots that were just a little bit too detailed and involved (and smart) for a major motion picture.

When I came to college, I still read some *Star Wars* novels here and there (the sequels to these books were actually the last two I read, I believe), but when I found my groove as a newly minted adult, I sort of put my old obsession behind me, like it was part of my childhood. For a while, I became embarrassed of my former reading habits, and would never admit to my friends or fellow English/Creative Writing majors that I used to read *Star Wars* books. (Goodreads and CBR have since helped me grow out of this shame, which is a shame very like my also-former romance novel reading shame.) I didn't pick up another *Star Wars* book until last year, which is a lapse of exactly ten years. And when they announced the new *Star Wars* movie coming in 2015, I knew I would have to revisit all these books before that happened, just to get it out of my system, and give the old EU one last hurrah.

But I was actually pretty nervous about it. Some things that you love when you're sixteen are genuinely great, and other things are . . . not. (See previous comments about how when you're sixteen, you're an idiot.) I was very glad to find out upon revisiting this series that, while they aren't the perfect vehicles of pleasure I'd made them out to be the first time around, they most definitely hold up, and I still feel pretty confident in saying that Zahn's version of this universe is definitive, so much so that it basically inspired all the other EU novels that came after it.

The first book in the trilogy--which has by far the best cover, in my opinion--starts out on a *Star Destroyer* in the far corner of the galaxy, where the Empire still holds some influence. The Rebel Alliance, now called the New Republic, has gradually expanded its scope after the explosion of the second Death Star, capturing leaders of the Empire and coaxing systems and planets into the new government system. But in comes the titular Thrawn, a Grand Admiral who is frighteningly intelligent, and very, very, very good at strategy,

predicting his enemy's moves with eerie accuracy. He's quietly been building up the Empire's strength, preparing to re-open hostilities with the New Republic and bring back the Empire, this time with himself at the reins. And he's got a couple of cards up his sleeve that are game-changers.

Meanwhile, you've got our returning heroes. Han and Leia, now married and expecting Jedi twins, play pivotal roles in diplomatic and government relations. Han is retired from military service, and at the moment is engaged in trying to solve the New Republic's shipping problems, but Mon Mothma has Leia running all over the place, mostly because she barely trusts anyone else with her most important jobs. This leaves Leia little time for her own Jedi training, of which she has had some, thanks to Luke. As for Luke himself, he's still the only Jedi in the galaxy, as far as he's aware, and has recently begun worrying about what that means. What kind of training has he missed because he only spent such a short time with Ben and Yoda? How should a Jedi act, spend his days? This is where our heroes are at when Thrawn makes his first move, which begins with a kidnapping attempt while Han and Leia are on a diplomatic mission, and Luke stranded in deep space after an attempted apprehension by the Empire.

And of course, this is where we learn there is another Jedi master out there, an insane man named Joruu C'baoth, long thought dead. He wants Leia and Luke and her twins, and he's willing to bargain with Thrawn to get them. Along the way, they all get mixed up with Lando again, as well as the smuggler Talon Karrde, and his angry and intense second in command, Mara Jade, whose hatred for Luke Skywalker is as intense as it is surprising.

There's a lot going on.

What's great about these books is that even though a lot is going on, and there's surprises and strategizing and characters with complicated loyalties and emotions, it all makes perfect sense. Because this is only the first book in the series, it's a lot of set-up, and the main conflict is more of an opening salvo than a showstopper. It sets up the stakes: how good Thrawn is, how he's changing the game, and how all the pieces in the game (including surprise ones like Mara Jade and Thrawn's mysterious alien assassins) fit together.

My favorite thing about these books is by far the Luke/Mara Jade relationship. Mara Jade is a great character, and her fervid hatred of Luke makes for great drama, especially when she finds herself obliged to help him rather than kill him as she wishes she could do, and *especially* after we learn just exactly why it is she hates him so much. Zahn writes great Luke, and really understands why the Jedi are so interesting as a conceit. He dives into the more sci-fi moral conundrum stuff that sci-fi novels have time to cover and that a movie really doesn't. My only complaint about Zahn's version of all these characters is that his Han has always fallen a bit flat for me.

Heir to the Empire is a great opening novel to the series, and I'd even say that non-Star Wars fans might enjoy it as a stand-alone sci-fi novel. It's fun popcorn sci-fi space opera at its best, and it makes me feel like I'm sixteen and falling in love with this universe again for the first time.

[4.5 stars]

Terence says

Five years after *Return of the Jedi*, the leaders of the rebellion have formed the New Republic and are trying to establish it as well as they possibly can. The Empire is a shell of its former self, but not everyone

considers it defeated. A Grand Admiral named Thrawn has become the leader of The Empire and he intends to crush the Rebellion for good.

Heir to the Empire wasn't very interesting. I wanted to stop reading it multiple times and now that I finished I realized I should have listened to myself. The book was really slow and rather than doing any real character development it simply leaned on the work the movies did. With the vibrant characters of Star Wars I would think that would have been fine, but it really wasn't. I hoped to love this series and I expected to at least like it, so it's incredibly disappointing how uninterested I was throughout nearly the entire book.

Will M. says

"But you must never relax your guard. The Emperor is gone, but the dark side is still powerful. Never forget that."

As we all know, Episode VII came out a few weeks ago. I watched it a few days after the premiere and was amazed. I watched it for the second time a week ago, and was still amazed. I've been a Star Wars fan ever since I was a child, but my love for the series slowly degraded because no new movies came out. I'm back to loving the series now all thanks to the release of episode 7.

I read this novel because all of my friends here who read this recommended this as a starting point if I wanted to start reading Star Wars (Non-canon). I saw that the trilogy garnered good reviews so I decided to read it. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

This novel should've been episode 7, but released years ago, or maybe as another film trilogy. The plot here is great, and I honestly think that it could've been really successful.

The novel consists of your favorite Star Wars cast. Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Princess Leia, Chewie, R2D2, and C3PO. After re-watching the original trilogy for the nth time, I wanted more stories about these characters, and episode 7 only gave the viewers a bit of them. Not enough to satisfy, but I know that JJ Abrams wanted to introduce new characters, and he succeeded in that. This novel gave me the satisfaction of reading more about the characters, and did really well in the process.

I'm a huge Luke Skywalker fan, but honestly he is just my second favorite character in this novel. My favorite is Grand Admiral Thrawn. He portrays what a true villain is capable of, but we see him as a semi-weak figure in this novel. I believe the author did that on purpose for the sake of character building. I feel that Thrawn will further develop in the next novels, and be a real threat to Luke and his friends.

I don't really need to talk about the characters because if you liked them from Episodes 1-6, then you're going to like them even better here. No new set of characters will ever manage to surpass the greatness that the original ones ever portrayed. They can try, but they will always fail, just like the dark side.

"All men want power. And the more they have, the more they want."

That line clearly depicts the dark side. Add in the fact that Thrawn said that line to Pallaeon, the ship captain. Speaking of Pallaeon, he is also one of those characters who seem to hint that he will be important in the future. I liked Pallaeon, even though he seems like a wimp. He's a follower of Thrawn, and he clearly admires him. Just like how Kylo Ren admires Darth Vader.

The plot really entertained me, but it clearly isn't perfect. There are a bit boring moments here and there, but forgivable at best. The most important thing that the plot has is Mara Jade. I already knew who she is, and who she will be, so that sucks. She is only introduced in this novel, so steer clear from family trees on social media. I'm not going to spoil anyone, and hopefully no one gets spoiled.

4.5/5 stars. This is one of those "it almost got a 5" novels. I'm excited to read the next two novels in the trilogy, and then read more about Thrawn because I heard that there are more novels about him. Highly recommended for avid Star Wars fans, you will not be disappointed.

Gavin says

This was my first foray into the Star Wars expanded universe and it did not disappoint. It reads like a sequel to the original movies.

Set five years after the happenings in *Return of the Jedi* this followed well loved Star Wars characters like Luke, Han, and Leia as they and the rest of the Rebel Alliance fought against the remains of the Imperial Empire. Darth Vader and the Emperor might be dead, but the Empire itself is not. A new leader has emerged in the form of the intelligent and ruthless Grand Admiral Thrawn and he plans to turn the tide of the war back in favor of the Imperials!

The story was fun, but not anything special. Importantly it did succeed in *feeling* like a Star Wars book. The familiar characters are all much as you remember them from the movies. Han and Leia are married and expecting twins. Which proved to be problematic for them as elements in the Empire were eager to get their hands on two potential Jedi that they could influence. Luke is recognizable from the movies, but has grown a bit more confident in his abilities as a Jedi, which I liked.

Zahn's real success lay not with the familiar characters, but with his own newly created ones. Pellaeon, Mara Jade, Talon Karrde, and in particular Grand Admiral Thrawn were all fantastic characters who often proved more interesting than the original characters.

If I had to dig for failings in Zahn's version of the Star Wars universe they would be the lack of humor and the slightly boring space battles. Han in particular suffered from Zahn's lack of skill in writing humor. His quick wit and wry humor from the movies was distinctly absent here and that definitely hurt his character.

All in all this was a fun read that ended with an interesting cliffhanger. I'll definitely be reading the sequel.

Rating: 3 stars.

Audio Note: The audio version of this was very well done. The sound effects were used well and helped to really give this the feel of a Star Wars tale. The narrator Marc Thompson was fantastic. He was spot on with his character voices.

Lyn says

“My word, Thrawn, do you mean ... Skywalker??”

“Elementary, my dear Captain.”

Zahn’s Grand Admiral Thrawn channels Sherlock Holmes and steals the show in a 1991 Star Wars expanded universe novel set five years after the end of the canonical film Episode VI Return of the Jedi.

The Ewoks have finished dancing and singing, the fireworks over Coruscant have long since faded and the Darths Sidious and Vader are pushing up daisies. But all’s not yet well amongst the leaders of the New Republic. There is work to be done after the generation of the Empire.

But out in the Empire’s hinterland, a previously unknown Imperial hero has taken the reigns of what is left. Grand Admiral Thrawn is a humanoid alien who seems to know just about all and able to figure out the rest. Zahn, a recognizable talent in the literary world of the Star Wars expanded universe, does a great job in setting the stage for new adventures for established protagonists and introducing new characters and a new storyline. Readers get to visit with Han, Leia, Luke, Chewbacca, Lando, Wedge and the Wookies home planet of Kashyyyk (pronounced Kashyyyk). Aside from the aforementioned Thrawn, Zahn introduces Mara Jade, and Joruu C'baoth.

In a story that could have been Episode VII twenty-five years earlier than The Force Awakens, author Timothy Zahn keeps the force alive for fans between the films.

Kaylin (The Re-Read Queen) says

3.5 Stars

Overview:

I must confess—I’ve never considered myself a huge Star Wars fan.

I watched all the movies multiple times as a child, (who didn't?) but usually only after prodding. But I’m young enough the prequels were already out by the time I was old enough to watch them, and I missed all that hype. I even saw The Force Awakens at a midnight premiere, due to the more zealous members of my family—but still didn’t consider myself a “fan.”

The Star Wars universe is huge. Filled with dozens of planets and characters and all sorts of names I couldn’t pronounce correctly. It was just overwhelming, and didn't seem worth delving into if the initial stories hadn't completely clicked with me.

I mean look at this:

That's a "simplified" version of several timelines. And it doesn't even include all of the branches of the Expanded Universe (and I believe the EU is everything outside of the 9 movies and animated shows). There's even a comic where Han Solo is killed by Native Americans, his remains found by Indiana Jones and Chewbacca becomes big-foot. Yes, really.

So why did I read this?

Simple:

Rogue One made me complete trash for the Star Wars universe.

Was it the strong main character I could relate to? The callbacks to the original films? The diverse and dynamic cast of characters? The near perfect editing? The understanding of how terrifying Darth Vader could be? The overall themes of rebellion and hope? Some combination thereof?

I still don't know. It was far from a perfect movie (but that's a conversation for another time) and I still absolutely loved it. After seeing it in theaters three times, I finally went home and binged the original trilogy.

And it clicked. I finally realized how fun all these characters are. How completely interesting this entire universe is. It contains *so many stories* and there's so many different aspects to the stories that have already been told.

So, still overwhelmed by the Expanded Universe, I started at the most basic point--- book one of the Thrawn trilogy.

While certainly not the highest quality literature, this was pretty close to what I wanted. It was a fun trip through the Star Wars galaxy that introduced new characters and ideas. The original characters stuck close to their characterization, while still allowing for development. All in all, it stayed very true to the feel Star Wars.

(Warning, general nerding below)

Pros:

Mara Jade.

I absolutely love her character and am not sure I can forgive Disney for writing her out of the films. She's headstrong, intelligent and fits into these stories *so well*. Her job as the Emperor's Hand makes *so much* sense in the context of the original trilogy, and actually makes the Emperor a stronger villain.

LEIA ACTUALLY LEARNING THINGS ABOUT THE FORCE YES. I don't know if I'll ever get my childhood dream of Jedi!Leia, but this alone was super enjoyable. And something I'm also mad seems to

have been cut out of the movies. (So far)

This was filled with fun callbacks to the original movies. For instance, I didn't realize until recently that every Star Wars film to date (including Rogue One!) contains some variation of the line, "I have a bad feeling about this." And this did too! There were also references to humorous events on Endor and Tatooine, and to one of my favorite Leia lines, "I am not a committee!" For the most part, these references aren't actual plot points, as much as fun Easter eggs-- but they really made the story more enjoyable!

C3PO impersonating Leia is hilarious. It feels highly plausible and I just loved it.

I'm such a fan of Han and Leia's relationship it's ridiculous. Child-me shipped them before I knew what shipping was. Their dynamic here wasn't quite the same level as their movie counterparts—but it was still great. It was just fantastic to see Leia and Han actually *talking* and working through things, while still remaining in character.

This introduced a large amount of new elements to the mythology, which I loved. My favorite were the Ysalamiri. Which cancel out force powers. (Why isn't this a thing in the movies? Come on, Disney!)

Cons:

This came out before the prequels, so it's a little dated in terms of Star Wars mythology. For example "Dark Jedi" instead of "Sith." It can't really be faulted for that, but it did impact my enjoyment of the story.

The writing is just... not great. I wouldn't say it's *bad* but it's not good either.

Examples-

- "*The cave absolutely tingles with the darkside.*"
- "*Leia shook her head in wonder as they headed for the door. 'Do I really,' she asked, 'sound like that?'*"
- "*Luke let out a breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding.*"

Maybe it's just me. But it seems like the first sentence could have chosen ~~any other~~ a different verb. The second didn't need an awkwardly placed dialogue tag splitting up the end of the sentence, especially since it ends a chapter. The third is just painfully cliché.

Why does everything and everyone have such difficult names? Like 'Kashyyyk'? Really? Did we need that third 'y'??

Thrawn is an intimidating villain simply because he is so intelligent. He figures everything out within seconds to the point it is unbelievable. Other than that... he just doesn't seem to have a real personality or presence?

Why is Han so needlessly pushy about Leia learning to use the force? It felt odd given the way they respected the other's decisions regarding other matters. But on this one he kept insisting to the point it was annoying.

In Conclusion:

Definitely a fun romp through the Star Wars 'verse. Even though it won't be winning any Pulitzers any time soon.

