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Everyone's a Critic: My Review of the Reviewer

by Jessie Rigsbee

Avenger's Endgame is the culmination of Marvel's 21-movie saga of action and drama. A film with this much build-up, an all-star cast, and a budget of 356 million dollars is going to have very high expectations. With all those resources, what could go wrong? In *Endgame's* case not everything, but certainly something. Film critic Oliver Jones for the *Observer* makes bold claims about the film's riveting nature. Jones titles his review "'Avengers: Endgame' Puts the MCU in Company with Some of History's Greatest Sagas" and goes as far as to put the series on par with Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The three-hour runtime of *Endgame* should have been enough time to conclude the cinematic arc, but, in my opinion, the film leaves much to be desired. Every action scene feels lackluster compared to the hype critics had set and the 356-million-dollar expectations it created.

In Jones's movie review of *Endgame*, his use of rhetorical appeals detracts from its content rather than support it. Jones loses credibility due to a poor recitation of *Endgame's* plot where he constantly focuses on the wrong content. When Jones chooses to include details of the plot points, they don't seem to have any logic behind them, each argument lacking sufficient evidence to back it. The pathos in his review is barely relevant to the film itself. While many have read his review, its significance is only due to the hype it created for the release date.

The primary failing of Jones's review is that he seems more concerned with explaining why *Endgame* should be good, rather than explaining why he believes it genuinely is good. Jones is painfully aware of the faults of the film and is not afraid to comment on them, but he

never explains why the audience should commit to sitting through the extensive runtime. Despite the review's positive nature, a reader can only begin to doubt the author's true opinions due to a lack of effective ethos.

At the very beginning of the review, Jones introduces *Endgame* by stating that "[o]thers will be perplexed or even angered by the lapses of logic in its pretzel-like plotting and bemoan an epic running time that matches most Major League Baseball games" (para. 2). Jones knows about the movie and often comments on the plot or questionable logic, but it never is a constructive use of ethos. In the review, he only comments on these things in a negative light, making potential watchers wary of the film. The constant restatement of *Endgame*'s faults makes it seem Jones didn't even enjoy the movie himself. Instead, he relies on his opinion that *Endgame* rivals other CGI blockbusters without explaining the reasons why.

It seems that Jones hopes his arguments for *Endgame*'s quality will be supported solely by its association with critically acclaimed Marvel Studios. His review gives the impression it is painfully reliant on the premise that the reader is already a Marvel fan, and that if you are, the movie is a must-see. Unfortunately, for someone who isn't a Marvel fanboy and wants to know if they will enjoy *Endgame*, the review is insufficient because it advocates for the already converted only and not the public as a whole.

Another area that Jones's review falls short is in the logic used to support his conclusions. The facts included in the review are not always valid, and his conclusions do not flow with any logical appeal. One area where the logic is especially weak is in the amount of evidence he provides. There is an insufficient amount of information about the movie and its plot in the review to justify the supportive arguments being made for its grandeur. Like a hometown fan, Jones is extremely opinionated in each of his claims, which detracts from their overall value to

the casual observer. The relevancy of his arguments is not specific to *Endgame* as a stand-alone movie but instead relies on fan-boy appreciation for the genre as a whole. In the closing paragraph of his review, Jones says,

While people's superhero cynicism and exhaustion is well earned, this film has risen above the immensity of its marketing ... It has placed itself and the whole unwieldy series alongside Tolkien's *Rings* trilogy and the original Joe Simon and Jack Kirby Captain America comics, as a fantastical and essential response to and reprocessing of global tragedy. Yes, it's all too much, but it is also exactly what we need. (para. 12)

Even in his closing statements, Jones's ineffective logic stands out. The author states again and again that the film is over-the-top and has an abundance of plot holes. Although Jones believes that *Endgame* is exactly what people need, he never goes into detail about how *Endgame* actually delivers in the film. Due to this shortcoming, Jones is never able to establish efficient use of logic to strengthen and support the opinions in his review.

Pathos is an expected rhetorical device in a critic's movie review. Jones uses it himself to discuss how *Endgame* was exactly what he believes the audience needs. He reckons that there is something cathartic seeing the Avengers, Earth's mightiest heroes, become shells of the people they once were. Jones introduces this idea by saying,

[i]n the years following half of all living things perishing into a cloud of dust—thanks to a snap of Thanos' Infinity Stone-adorned fingers—one hero is a beer-drinking lout who plays video games all day, one leads support groups for survivors in New York City, and yet another has become an ever-vigilant militarist obsessed with the next attack. ... In other words, they are each of us over this past generation, playing roles we have assigned ourselves in a half-dazed stupor, wandering around in a world that resembles our

own—but only in a haunted, ghostly sense. (para.7-8)

Jones uses this point to engage with the reader’s sentiment. He uses charged language to guilt the reader into an emotional reaction, even if it does not align with their true beliefs. The pathos in the review does little to encourage anyone to watch the film. Instead, it feels more like a guilt trip that forces the audience to reflect on the movie with a more sympathetic outlook. The emotional appeal is contingent on hope the reader shares the same perspective on the past generation as Jones.

Jones’s use of kairos is only effective due to its relation to *Endgame*’s release date. Jones uses his status as a movie critic to release a review before *Endgame* was even in theaters. For this reason, Jones had a wide audience for this review because everyone was itching to hear opinions about the pricey blockbuster representing the operatic conclusion to the Avengers franchise. Jones believes that the *Endgame* release was a perfect catharsis for the real-world events going on at the time. Jones states that “there is something both moving and profoundly cathartic to witness Earth’s mightiest heroes being the big hot messes we have all become” (para. 6). This would be a great connection to make in today’s world -- but at the time of the movie release -- people were connected more than ever.

In Jones’s review of the blockbuster *Endgame*, he is adamant that the movie will be regarded as a classic. His review, however, gives little insight into what he believes made this movie so incredible. There are futile attempts at ethos and pathos that, rather than build his argument, only serve to emphasize the review’s faults. Without good use of these rhetorical appeals Jones’s arguments and persuasion are weak. There is an abundance of detail about *Endgame*’s faults, but Jones never fully convinces you that they are not as important as they

seem. Jones makes many outlandish claims in his movie review, but overall he lacked any factual analysis that would support his ideas.

Work Cited

Jones, Oliver. "Avengers: Endgame' Puts the MCU in Company with Some of History's Greatest Sagas." *Observer*, 24 Apr. 2019, <https://observer.com/2019/04/avengers-endgame-puts-the-mcu-in-company-with-historys-best-sagas-review/>.