

Game of Thrones goes on a Victory Lap—and an Apology Tour



Enlarge / You know nothing, Jon Snow—like, maybe wear a hat when conditions are freezing in the North. Even if it musses up your luscious locks.

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Hey. So, um, remember the end of *Game of Thrones*? If you were a fan of the show, you probably do. And there's a good chance it still stings. Daenerys Targaryen turned into a totalitarian dictator (if that can, indeed, be a thing). Then she died. Then Bran Stark—of all people!—was picked to rule Westeros.

His sister Sansa became Queen in the North. And those are just the major plot points, the top of the crap-heap. It was, well, not beloved.

And the people who made that final season know it. To be clear, they don't entirely agree with the criticisms of the HBO show, they just know there was some blowback. A murderer's row of fan favorites from *Game of Thrones*—Isaac Hempstead Wright (Bran Stark), Conleth Hill (Varys), John Bradley (Samwell Tarly), Maisie Williams (Arya Stark), Jacob Anderson (Greyworm), Liam Cunningham (Davos), Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (Jamie Lannister)—showed up at Comic-Con International to both take a victory lap and go on a quick apology tour. (Showrunners David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, who were originally slated to appear, canceled two days ago.)

"I don't regret starting the petition," Hill joked when asked if he had any regrets over comments he made about his own disappointments, referencing the online petition to remake the show's eighth season. But, he added, "for the record I loved all my 10 years on *Game of Thrones*." Coster-Waldau went further, saying, "You look at the amount of people who are here, and we're here to thank you for watching us for all those years ... I think this is the reality [of how much people enjoyed the show], rather than media-led hate." People cheered.

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Reiterating that people *did* like *Game of Thrones* and thanking the fans were common themes during the hour-long panel. But what was also evident was that the show left many unanswered questions. Some discrepancies were acknowledged and laughed off—the cast all had coffee cups left at their seats—while others, like the choice to have Jamie Lannister die with his twin Cersei, were met with at least one boo. "Every season we had huge controversies," Coster-Waldau acknowledged. "This

show has brought so many people together, watching it, loving it. It's going to piss you off no matter what, because it's the end."

Well, sure. But certainly there were things fans wanted to know, or grievances they wanted to air. (In what might have been the best cosplay of the whole con, one person in attendance came dressed as the Night King, complete with a dagger in his gut that said "Star Wars"—presumably a nod to the fact that Arya Stark killed that Darth Maul-looking-dude in a way not all that different from the move Rey used in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, or the possibility that Benioff and Weiss were distracted by planning *Star Wars* movies during *GoT*'s final season. Take your pick.) Yet folks in attendance—and the panelists themselves—will never get to know if the fans loved them in the end or had axes to grind: The cast didn't take questions. The moderator, James Hibberd of *Entertainment Weekly*, blamed the lack of an audience Q&A on the panel running long. The cast waved for photos and walked off the stage. That was that.

It's a shame. Before it began, the panel was billed as a farewell from the show to its fans. It was a one-sided way to say good-bye. Maybe one day the stars of *Game of Thrones* will answer fan questions about the end of their beloved series. Not today.

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