

MARVEL

CINEMATIC
UNIVERS

The Drink Tank



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THE FIRST AVENGER CAPTAIN AMERICA

MARVEL
STUDIOS

Editorial

by Alissa McKersie



I had seen most of the MCU films in the theatre when they were released. With the arrival of Disney+ came some new MCU releases. The one everyone talked about was *WandaVision*. My partner had not seen very many of the MCU films, so we decided to approach them in chronological order. It was a great time! We saw character evolution, we saw plot lines unfold, I'm telling you . . . it was a new way of looking at it all! We ended with *WandaVision*, with Andrew knowing who and what everyone was. It was FAN-tastic! And, leave it to Disney, they just released yet another series on the back of that for us to watch: *The Falcon and Winter Soldier*, another story in the MCU saga. That being said, they are two very different styles of shows . . . and over the years of the MCU movie releases, you can definitely see the differences in the storytelling/direction/vision along the way. It's really interesting to watch in quick succession.

We hope you enjoy our MCU issue!

Comments?

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Why the MCU?

We were waiting, you know.

The 70s gave us a Superman. The 80s a Batman. The 90s more Batman, more Superman, and a Fantastic Four. The early 2000s gave us a Hulk, Spider-man, some X-Men, but it was 2008 and Iron Man that we were waiting for.

We'd been waiting for the technology to catch up so we could give the world the comic book movies we'd been wanting. There had been great effects in many of those films of the past, but to do the kind of film comic book nerds of the modern era wanted, you needed CGI to be to the point where you could create an entire universe much like you would do in a comic.

Iron Man did that.

Thor did that.

Guardians of the Galaxy did that.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe came about and made incredible use of effects, and budgets, that allowed them to cast big stars and put them in the world where the effects were often mind-blowing. The casting of Robert Downey Jr. was perfect for Tony Stark and Iron Man. There was no better human for the role of Thor than Chris Hemsworth. Every single choice made for *Guardians of the Galaxy* was perfect as far as casting.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is rich and varied, with films like *Black Panther* going in directions that a lot of folks said would never work. *Captain Marvel* turned out amazing! It was a great idea, but more

An Editorial by
Christopher J. Garcia

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importantly, it was done incredibly well, with an eye towards doing the entire thing right!

My faves? *Iron Man*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Doctor Strange*, and the first *Avengers* movie. Of the TV Shows? *Jessica Jones*, *WandaVision*, and most impressively, *Daredevil*. I also have a special place in my heart for the pre-MCU *Daredevil* movie. It might be because Joey Pants isn't the heavy!

I hope y'all enjoy these pieces on one of the most important of all film franchises!



The Centers of My Marvel Cinematic Universe

An Editorial by
Chuck Surface



My excellent friend Mortefina and I have a standing deal. When watching movies together, one of us must bring tissues. If we're watching something from the Star Wars universe, I bring the tissues for Mortefina. If on the other hand we're viewing something from Marvel, she provides them for me. Guess who winds up teary-eyed more often...you got it. I do, especially when watching Chris Evans portray Captain America. That scene toward the end of *Captain America: Winter Soldier* when Hydra has infiltrated SHIELD, and no one can tell who's working for who. Then over the public announcement system comes that voice: "This is Captain America . . ." All the agents begin to relax. You see them loosen up, not much, but just enough. Captain America is addressing them, and no one defines trustworthiness like Captain America. I was still weeping as I pulled up into my driveway.

So when we saw *Captain America: Civil War* together, and Captain America says, "I know we're not perfect, but the safest hands are still our own," and then the scene switches to Peggy Carter's funeral, yes,

Mortefina yanks that tissue out of her purse before I'd completed the first gasp. What a friend, my Mortefina, and what a friend, Chris Evans, for so deeply investing himself in that sacred role. Honestly, I can't imagine anyone else as Steve Rogers.

I feel similarly about Charlie Cox who plays Netflix's Daredevil. Although part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Netflix's portion of that franchise seems multiverses away. The films involving individual heroes who become Avengers deal with would-be world beaters and the ultimate nihilist himself, Thanos. Epic battles unfold against cosmic backdrops until that final clash when everyone shows up ... except those heroes from Netflix. No Jessica Jones, no Luke Cage, no Iron Fist, no Punisher, and no Daredevil. Their absence really speaks to the chasm between the Avengers and these heroes, most of whom gather loosely for the mini-series, *The Defenders*. While not lacking superpowered entities, the Netflix neighborhood is ... neighborhoods. Luke Cage keeps things tight up in Harlem, Iron Fist and the Punisher move about New York City and the world to some extent, while Jessica Jones and Daredevil operate throughout Hell's Kitchen. Daredevil indeed is the Devil of Hell's Kitchen. No Thanos or Red Skull for these champions, but their adversaries are so much more frightening. Mortefina reports that David Tennant's Purple Man kept her awake for days. I wouldn't ever want to face off against Vincent D'Onofrio's Wilson Fisk. But Charlie Cox's Daredevil does. Bruised, bleeding, spiritually broken, he stands up, this man without fear.

Thanks to Evans and Cox, Captain America and Daredevil are the centers of my Marvel Cinematic Universe. These actors' dedication to their roles reignites lessons that their comic-book equivalents taught me: courage, might for right, and how to succeed through the worst times, whether the wars occur inwardly or outwardly. Their operating fields are different, their modus operandi are different, one shines before the world while the other strikes from the shadows, but at heart both characters work toward justice, and they inspire others to do so as well.

Now read further to see what inspires others within this magnificent cinematic universe.

Letters of Comment

sent to

**Drinktanked-
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And now, the words of Mr. Lloyd Penney!!!

Dear Chris, Alissa, and Chuck:

Thank you for *The Drink Tank 428*.

Bad doctors, hm? With this pandemic, and the need for competent doctors today and tomorrow since the pandemic will drive a lot of them away, we don't need bad doctors, but we will need new doctors. Even-tempered patients would help too. More in the next paragraph . . .

My letter . . . we both now have a shot of Astra Zeneca in us, and we will be asking shortly when we might have our second shots. We figure not until the middle of summer, but if we could get it sooner that would be great, thank you! Trump seems poised to return in some format, and I am hoping that when he does reappear, it will be such that the whole world laughs at him, and he gets to slink away back to Mar-a-Lago. He may not have such a return, for I think it would be tough to campaign and promote himself from a jail cell. There is a Mormon genealogical facility a short drive away, and I can see a Kingdom Hall from my balcony. No matter the aim or the ideas, belief is strong,

and these days, it has gone corporate. Our friend Joe has certainly made a fresh difference in Washington. 200 million vaccinations in 100 days is impressive. He's sent extra vaccines up here and may send more.

Yvonne and I had a family doctor in our old town of Brampton for a total of thirty years. He was busy, involved in many places, including late night clinics, and we had a good time with him, as we found he was taking his young son to comic cons, and when I worked registration at various medical conferences in Toronto, he'd often show up, and I'd make sure to get him his badge and red package. Even when we moved back to Etobicoke, we'd drive up to Brampton to see him. He started getting impatient with us and others, and it was rumored that he was considering retirement, so we looked for another doctor. We actually went through three doctors in rapid succession until we found our current one. Across the street from us, right by the highway at One Eva Road, is a pharmacy that just happened to be taking new patients, so here we are, instead driving up to far to Brampton, we can now walk across the street to see our new doctor. He gave me my Astra Zeneca shot too. Changing doctors is generally no problem here, but we were lucky enough to see that One Eva Medical was accepting new patients.

You might know from the news that Ontario has probably been in the longest lockdown on the continent, with it coming up on five months. We are getting about 3,500 cases a day here on average and recording about thirty deaths a day. It's been rough, I need a haircut! It's long enough now that I can be a mad scientist without effort (eat that, Rick Sanchez), and soon, being a Centauri will be effortless. After having more hair on my head than I ever did as a kid, perhaps I should just get the brush cut my father always wanted me to have.

Done for the moment ... have a wonderful weekend. Variants of COVID-19 are so easy to catch. Stay safe!

Yours,

Lloyd Penney

A Character Definition MasterClass

by Helena Nash



I won't bang on about

The Avengers: Age of Ultron film overall, save to say that I enjoyed it very, very much. However, I would like to examine one tiny scene quite a long way into the film, which is an excellent example of efficient storytelling.

Here's the situation: a new character is introduced a long way into the story. Said character is an artificial being in a movie awash with villainous robots bent on destruction. In fact, the new character is the creation of evil 'bot Ultron himself. The themes of betrayal, suspicion, and switching sides are threaded throughout the movie. The various (Avenger) protagonists have every reason to suspect this android newcomer and bog the film down in tiresome "How can we possibly trust you?" interplay, consuming minutes of valuable screen time.

So how does the filmmaker efficiently subvert that expectation and establish the character's credentials, short of a lame "No wait, I sense his good intentions!" declaration from the nearest empath?

Simple, you let the character

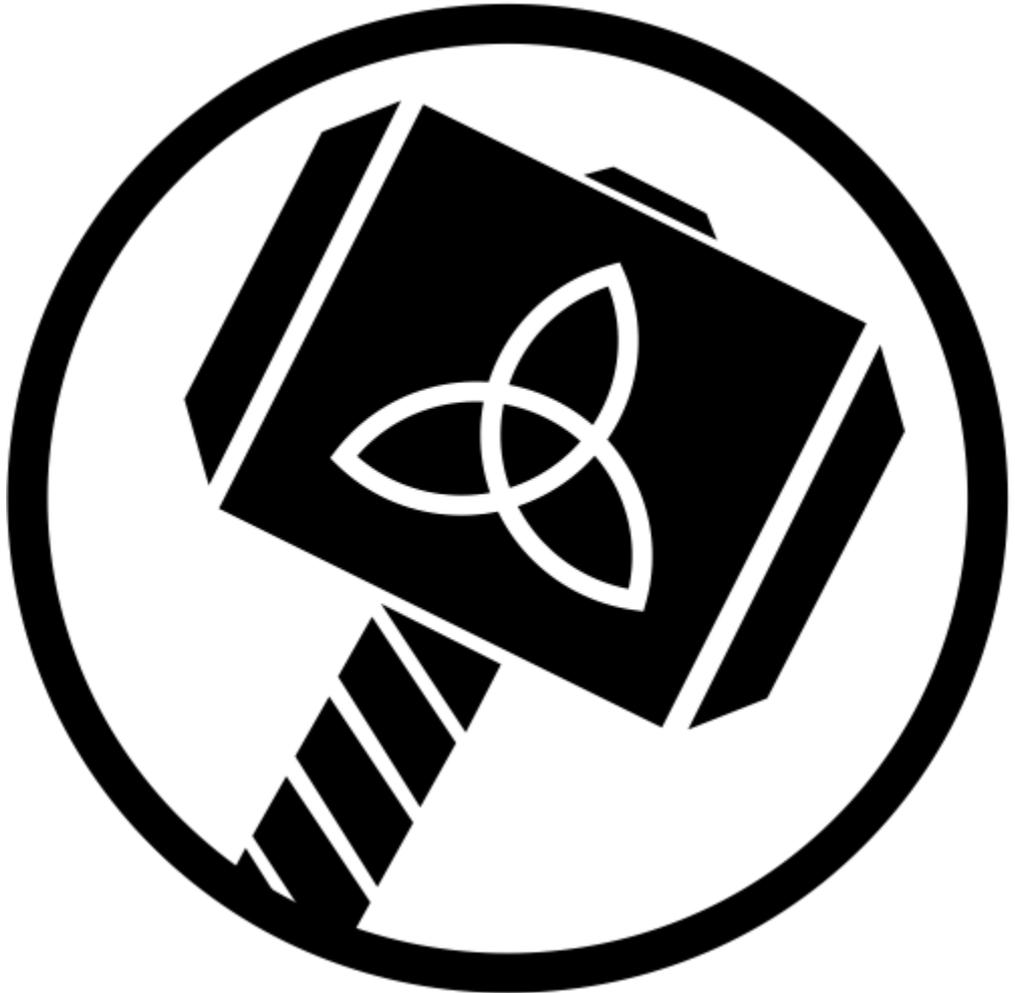
casually pick up Thor's hammer and hand it to him.

Perfect. They've already established earlier on that only the worthy can lift the hammer, and even Cap can only shift it a smidge. So simply having the Vision pass it to Thor -- without even realising the significance of his action -- has this incredible effect both on the other characters and the audience (there was a ripple of collective whoas when I watched the film).

He Is Worthy. Now move on.

Excellent use of the existing mythology to keep the story moving forward at a pace.

Also, Paul Bettany in a cape with Thor's hammer. What's not to love?



Tony Stark's Race Against Death

by Derek McCaw



At the beginning of April 2021, a billboard popped up on Sunset Boulevard: “Bring Back Tony Stark!” Some fans just didn’t want to accept that a cinematic hero, whose adventures we followed for a decade, would die at the end. But Tony Stark, as played by Robert Downey, Jr., was always fated to die. It just didn’t happen the way various writers and directors had laid the clues that it would.

You can’t blame these fans. In comics, almost no hero stays dead. The line used to be “how dead is the character? Bucky dead,” until Ed Brubaker and Michael Lark retconned *that* death, giving us The Winter Soldier. And from Tony Stark’s origin as Iron Man, Death breathed down his neck more than any other character than Thanos. He was always on the edge, with his heart kept beating by his armor. The only Marvel Comics superhero now that we can point to as permanently dead (though he’s popped up a couple of times outside his natural timeline) is Captain Marvel of the Kree, who famously died in

Marvel's first official Graphic Novel, *The Death of Captain Marvel*.

In that story, it was revealed that a battle years in the past had exposed Mar-Vell to carcinogenic vapor, and no matter how hard he fought against evil (and Thanos), cancer was the one enemy he could not defeat. It's a beautiful story written and drawn by Jim Starlin, made all the more powerful by its refusal to cheat even in the fantastic setting of the Marvel Universe. Mar-Vell had incurable cancer, and then he died.

For the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Mar-Vell was recast and reimagined as Annette Bening, because by 2018, few movie fans would have any idea there had been a Captain Marvel in the comics before Carol Danvers. And besides, that tragic arc was already being lined up as the fate of one Tony Stark.

No, it didn't actually happen that way. Tony almost had a happily ever after but sacrificed himself defeating Thanos instead. It was triumphant. It was redemptive. And he had come so close to it many times before.

Take the first *Iron Man*. Yes, like the comics, he's basically an arms dealer who never thought about the consequences of his inventions, spending most of his time as a billionaire playboy. Babes, booze, and bombs would be his unofficial motto until the Ten Rings terrorist organization attacked and his heart was damaged in the process. That's his first known brush with death, overcome by his cobbling together the prototype of the arc reactor which kept his heart beating and powered his greatest weapon – the Iron Man armor. By the end of that film, though people didn't take it as a negative, his ego was healed and despite S.H.I.E.L.D.'s admonition, he had to take the credit and tell the world that Tony Stark was Iron Man.

(You may note that later in *Marvel's Avengers*, Nick Fury doesn't want Stark because he's not a team player – a side note that plays into my belief there was a deep, sad interior subplot that never really burst through to the surface, and I'll admit maybe was discarded.)

By the somewhat muddled *Iron Man 2*, the arc reactor has turned on Tony, slowly poisoning him. Rather than be honest and seek help, he falls further into the billionaire playboy behavior. Though the script never quite calls it out, we're seeing a parallel to the comics started by the famous "Demon in a Bottle" arc. Tony Stark is an

alcoholic, an addict, and his arrogance keeps him from confronting his own self-destructive behavior. It's also not a leap to say that the arc reactor has not so much poisoned him as caused cancer to germinate deep in his cells.

Through some hand-waving and an improved arc reactor, Tony bounces back and learns almost nothing from the experience. As far as he's concerned, his brilliance allows him to continue to be a lovable train wreck. His money, his technology, and his mind will overcome any challenge. But the Avengers proved him wrong, and he had no tools to deal with it.

For the first time, Tony Stark sees there's something bigger than himself – not the warm embrace of a team of superheroes, but the reality that we're not alone in the universe, and whatever's coming may be more powerful than we can handle. It's fitting that later in *Age of Ultron*, Tony *isn't* privy to the Vision (Paul Bettany) and Ultron (James Spader) having their final conversation that reveals yes, humanity can't protect itself and will fade away; we just have to appreciate the moments we have now. Because that's a lesson Tony can't ever accept.

After finally being willing to sacrifice himself at the end of the first *Avengers* film, our next view of him is a man unable to handle the idea that he has PTSD. That's in *Iron Man 3*, in which Tony's seen as sort of starting to open up a bit except he keeps having these panic attacks and still a bit of an arrogant death wish. Why else would he challenge the ersatz Mandarin (Ben Kingsley) to attack him in his own home? He's a man subconsciously grappling with the implications of his own mortality.

Tony gets stripped down to his basics, rebuilds, and at the end even has heart surgery so he's not dependent on the arc reactor. It should be a happy ending and were this not a larger narrative instead of a trilogy, it would have been – though with plenty of personality flaws still intact.

It's in *Age of Ultron* that Tony's next steps in the journey towards death begin. The malevolent A.I. that becomes Ultron is formed because Tony wants to make sure Earth is protected if he can't do it himself. (But in a way that people would still think Tony Stark – and maybe Bruce Banner – saved the world again.) He's always convinced he's right; he doesn't pause for self-reflection or brook counter arguments. If he did, the Ultron project wouldn't have gotten

so far. JARVIS could have just run a shield, perhaps.

Tony butts his way into Captain America's initial trilogy, showing up in *Captain America: Civil War* and immediately siding with Thunderbolt Ross (William Hurt) on the Sokovia Accords. Superheroes shouldn't interfere in political issues without government approval. Except that's *exactly* what Tony Stark has done in every one of his appearances up until now.

And it's in that argument that he has a key throwaway line, referring to a magnetic resonance headache. He gets them from time to time. It has no build up, and in the exciting fury of pitting Iron Man against Captain America while introducing Black Panther and Spider-Man, it's never referenced again. But it's clear: at least at some point, somebody in the room at Marvel Studios thought that Iron Man's armor might just be killing him... again.

Tony never sees the error of his ways. He brings a 15-year-old kid into the fight with Captain America. In *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, he poorly parents Peter Parker (Tom Holland), angered and disappointed when the kid acts like a kid in his earnest attempts to make things better – which, really, had been the heart of Stark's own daddy issues. Tony Stark is brilliant, but emotionally a child, passing along the cycle of emotional gameplaying started by his father Howard. When you're powerful enough, even if you think you're good, you don't accept no for an answer.

(Any resemblance to current billionaire technological geniuses is purely coincidental unless you want to infer otherwise.)

At least by the end of *Homecoming*, Tony finally grows up enough to ask long-suffering Gal Friday Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) to marry him and, unspoken, share what's left of his life. In *Avengers: Infinity War*, Tony fails spectacularly and tragically, marooned on an alien world after watching the characters co-created by Steve Ditko turn to dust. He does manage to get back to Earth in *Endgame*, and in that strangely structured film, after defeating Thanos but not really saving the day, Tony does the unthinkable for a superhero; he gives up.

Oh, it's presented otherwise. He fought hard. He'd given his time. But it's also clear that in the intervening five years since "The Snap" that wiped out half of all life forms in the universe, the only other hero to "give up" was the extremely depressed Thor. (Even

Hawkeye went rogue as Ronin.) Tony could deny his depression, perhaps, but he'd basically faced the only fate worse than death for him – failure – and so walked away.

Of course he returned. Of course he restored the status quo but died in the process. Cancer didn't take him and was not mentioned in those Avengers films as a possibility at all. The Marvel Cinematic Universe instead chose to make something more mythic out of Tony, more resonant. The last sound effect we hear before the end titles of *Avengers: Endgame* is the sound of a hammer on an anvil. Yes, it's from *Iron Man*, the sound of Tony forging the initial armor. And at his funeral, we'd seen the young boy he bonded with in *Iron Man 3*. But it really signals the coming, now confirmed by Marvel Studios head Kevin Feige, of Riri Williams, Ironheart. Tony's influence now is more important than Tony Stark himself.

And ultimately, that's the lesson he should have learned, and was learning in *Endgame* – the legacy is nothing if it's not inspiring others to be more and do more. Back to that graphic novel, *The Death of Captain Marvel*. It ended tragically, sadly, and we all accepted it. Mar-Vell inspired many more – with at least three characters at Marvel using the name afterward.

So bring back Tony Stark? No. He was fated to die. He had to die. For the Marvel Cinematic Universe to have an impact on the culture in the way the comics no longer can, it has to face reality. We grow older. We try to lay the groundwork for the next generation to not just succeed us but exceed us. Once Tony Stark figured that out, his time was done.

Long live Ironheart.



The Avengers . . .

You're Welcome

by Lon Lopez



Now I'm not going to pretend that any of this is the real reason that the world was able to witness the sum of Marvel Comics' best superheroes on the silver screen in *The Avengers*, but I will say that in my personal, twisted, alternate reality that it just might have been the catalyst. And everything written past this point is one hundred-percent true.

It was the summer of 2001, and I was a young upstart filmmaker with hopes and aspirations of breaking into the film industry. I was also a lifelong comic book fan, but more importantly a true Marvel Zombie. The Wesley Snipes' Marvel

vehicle, *Blade* had been out for a couple years, director Bryan Singer's *X-Men* was a box-office smash and Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* was on deck to be a big hit, and I wanted to get involved in the whole enchilada.

I had heard of this strange event held every year in San Diego called Comic-Con and that year they were doing a Spider-Man presentation with Sam Raimi. The screenwriter of *Blade* David S. Goyer was going to be there too. It sounded like the perfect place for an over enthusiastic wannabe comic book film creator to be. And lucky for me, I had just the idea to make the next big comic book film.

Being a Marvel comics guy my whole life, I had followed many of their characters and their marvelous stories. Ask my mom. She'll tell you how the first words I ever spelled were, "Captain America."

So, of course, I was going to lean towards Marvel's collection of superheroes, the Avengers. Composed of the company's heavy hitters, Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, Captain America and so forth, *The Mighty Avengers* was the publisher's flagship comic book, aside from *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Uncanny X-Men* of course. I knew the Avengers. I loved the Avengers. And if there was ever to be a movie version of a Marvel property I could pitch, it would be them.

So even before I knew about Comic-Con that year, like every young auteur that age, I'd share a pint with my mates, and we'd discuss what movie we'd make and who we'd make it with. So, it was one night that I got to thinking about an Avengers live action movie.

I won't go into the whole premise, but you have to understand that I thought I was quite a savvy filmmaker. I knew back then what it took to make movies and how expensive they were to make. I also understood how Marvel hadn't successfully translated the costume hero over to film yet and since *X-Men* was such a hit with basically all of their characters in leather jumpsuits, that for the Avengers to work on film they might have to go down that path too.

So, I tried to think about the Avengers team in a more realistic approach. The team had always had government ties, so I tried to think of them as an elite team of agents. I also tried to focus on characters from the team that didn't rely too much on big CGI

effects like powers and armor. I was kind of thinking I'd write my Avengers movie after a real Avengers movie came out. Except my movie would feature the supporting team members and not the big guns. More like the Avengers B squad.

Perhaps the West Coast Avengers?

For the sake of your curiosity and for posterity on my end, the gist of my story had the main group of Avengers sidelined by an epic throwdown with Ultron and a second team of Avengers hastily assembled to keep up the public appearance of national security. They'd then be assigned a basic prison transfer of the Radioactive Man to the Vault in Colorado.

My team (and cast) featured The Black Knight (Originally, I wanted to make it a hothead like Hawkeye but figured he'd be on the A team), Black Widow, The Black Panther, Falcon, and Hank Pym and Janet Van Dyne. The team dynamic was hotheaded blade expert Knight (think Sean William Scott), Wakandan King and martial-arts bad ass Black Panther (Think Michael Jai White), expert pilot and agent Falcon, scientist Hank Pym (attempting to redeem himself after creating the Ultron robot that took out the A team) and his wife Janet all under the leadership of former Russian spy, the Black Widow. Knight and Widow have obvious tension/chemistry, and the team is always at odds because of their differences.

Their first and only mission is to just supervise the prison transfer, and it's mainly just a ride along, much to the chagrin of the whole team who thought they were actually being brought on to do much bigger things. Things go wrong, however, when the transfer convoy is hit by an upstart terrorist organization led by German nationalist Helmut Zemo and his team known as the Masters of Evil.

Once the convoy is decimated and the Radioactive Man is set free, the B team is reprimanded and benched as the government works to pursue Zemo and his gang. The team assembles on their own to avenge their defeat and discover that not only was Radioactive Man being transferred to prison, but the remnants of the defeated Ultron were there as well. The Avengers then go rogue and steal a quinjet to thwart the Masters of Evil before they can assault the vault and revive the Ultron technology.

So yeah, that was basically it.

I was pretty stoked on it, because as a fan myself, I'd read that.

I started drawing up character designs, I wrote up a basic treatment and had a step outline written up. I held back from writing an actual spec script because everything I was ever taught about in screen writing class was to NOT do that.

I just figured if I had a blueprint that might help convince them I was the guy to actually write the script. A boy can dream, can't he?

So I put all my papers and drawings into a big yellow envelope, packed up a travel bag and convinced a couple dopey friends to come with me on this epic adventure to pitch my Avengers script to whoever would listen in San Diego.

That's how it works right? (It does in the movies . . .)

2001 was my first Comic-Con, and it wasn't as nearly crazy as it is today. You could actually walk on the floor and talk to your favorite comic creators and personalities. There were still long lines, but the biggest presentations were still held in small-panel rooms near the pavilion. There was no such thing as Hall H back then.

We got to see the *Spider-Man* Panel with Sam Raimi and that was awesome. However, I missed the person I was driving all that way to see, David S. Goyer. I figured, he wrote *Blade*, he writes movies, he'd help me out. But I couldn't find him, or I missed his appearance time. But all was not lost, because dammit, I went down to San Diego with a purpose, and I was going to get it done. So, I headed to the Marvel booth to find somebody, anybody, with some pull. I got to the Marvel booth and looked around. I recognized some comic creators and various people but nobody up the right alley to help realize my dreams. I turned the corner and found the lead I was looking for.

Just casually hanging out in the booth giving an interview off to the side was *X-Men* director Bryan Singer. This was good because about a year prior I had a friend, let's call her Stacy, that lived in L.A. and mentioned that her and a gal pal had lunch with this director guy named Bryan Singer. She had no idea who he was, but I was going nuts asking her if she had any idea who she was dining with.

So, I had my in.

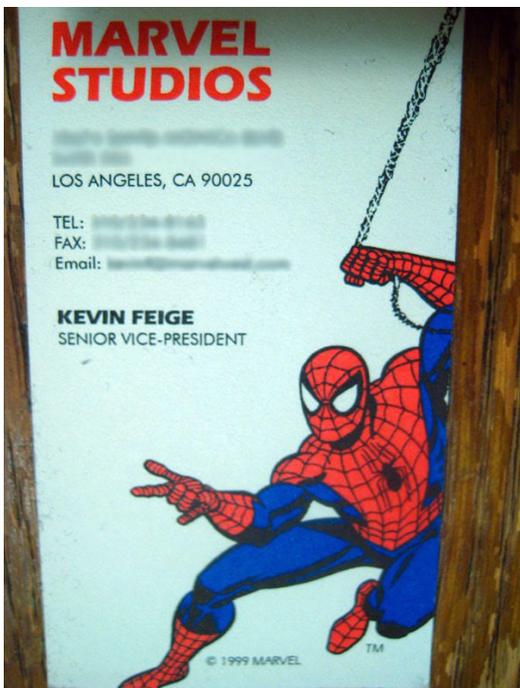
I waited for him to finish his interview, and I quietly approached him, told him how much I dug the *X-Men* and then ask

him if he remembered Stacy. We chatted about who she might be and had a good laugh. Bryan Singer was very cool. Then I got to business.

I told him I had an idea for an Avengers film and if he'd take a look at what I had written. Bryan politely declined citing that he couldn't take anything for legal reasons, (which makes perfect sense) and not accepting defeat I asked him if he knew anybody there I could talk to. He pointed me in the direction of a gentlemen standing off to the side with his kid. I was told his name was Kevin.

I cautiously strolled over as Kevin was finishing his conversation, and when he was finished, I politely asked if he had a minute and that Bryan had sent me over. (Hey, it was true!). I mentioned that I tried to tell Bryan about my Avengers movie and asked if I could give him my materials.

Kevin, God bless him, I'm sure just wanted to take his kid around Comic-Con and have a good father/son day, took a minute to hear me out but he just looked at me and said basically to the effect that "there'll never be an Avengers movie. It's just too hard to get all the properties together in one film."



Not accepting defeat, I returned with, "Well, I kinda had figured that and that's why my idea featured second tier characters like the Black Knight and Black Widow ..."

Kevin paused for a split second, then reached into his front pocket and handed me his business card and told me to email him on Monday. I thanked him for his time and walked away towards my dopey friends looking at the

card.

**Marvel Studios:
Kevin Feige,
Senior Vice-President**

I went home that weekend feeling accomplished and the eight-hour drive home was a victory lap because in my head, I went down with a mission to make a contact and I did.

Of course, I emailed the future president of Marvel Entertainment the following Monday, and, of course, I never heard anything further from him or his people. I never got to show my materials to anyone at Marvel and I never shared my plot synopsis until now.

However, a couple years later, Marvel Comics came out with their Ultimate line of books, which featured a title called *The Ultimates*, which was basically a cinematic retelling of the Avengers story in a brave new world. It wasn't similar to mine at all but it did share the same spirit of my story in the fact that it looked to set the Avengers into the real world with more realistic/real-world costumes and identities.

It's firmly believed by a lot of fans in comics that *The Ultimates* made the upcoming Avengers movie even possible by laying the ground for a cinematic approach to the property.

Also, a lot of work was being done by Marvel Studios to keep all their properties under one umbrella so that one day ... they might put them all in one movie.

Something that someone said couldn't be done.

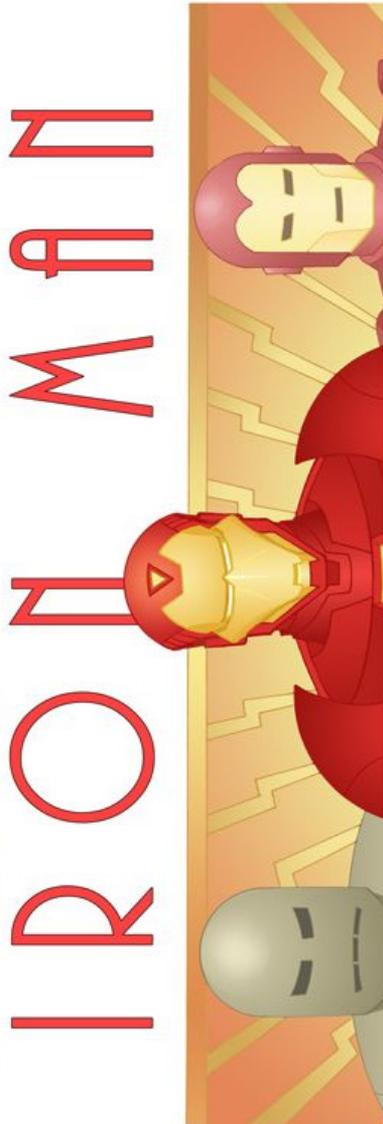
So, sometime after, a personal dream came true -- I was able to watch an actual live-action Avengers film on the silver screen. All the credit goes to Kevin Feige and all the hard-working people at Marvel Films. And I'm not going to say that I had ANYTHING to do with it. But who knows? Maybe a seed was planted that day.

Maybe if I didn't say anything to the future president of Marvel Studios that day, the Avengers movie doesn't get made. I'm not saying you can thank me for the Avengers movie ... BUT ... you're welcome.



The Iron Man Saga: So Often Delayed

by Christopher J.
Garcia



As many of you know, I find myself surfing timestreams to see where the most interesting stories exist, and it was on Earth-KRS1 that I found a most fascinating reality. It was a world where Hollywood went weird, that time travel had led to the introduction of superhero comics in the 1890s, and that film rights purchasing was so complicated that it was near impossible to get a series of movies made within a proper amount of time.

Thus, when American Mutual Keystone Pictures of America first purchased the rights to Iron Man in 1920, it was expected to be for the long haul. Delays, rewrites, and other annoying issues led to what is still called the Original Trilogy, almost a hundred years after the first of the three films were released.

In a universe where the production cycle for films is insane (and where the full version of Greed was actually released and is still available on the dominant LaserDisc format) Iron Man was one of so many multi-ogies that end up being made across decades. In fact, the Matrix films were made between 1972 and 2009, with Burt Reynolds as Neo)

These snapshots – made possible by a ripped page from Gene Siskel’s Movie Almanac 2010 brought back through a small portal I found in a closet behind the fridge in my third hotel’s ante-chamber – show what it means to be in development hell for a long, long time between sequels.

Iron Man (1925)

138 minutes, B+W with Two-Strip Technicolor segments

Directed by King Vidor

Box Office: \$7,055,205 (top grossing film of 1925)

After suffering an injury while taken prisoner, wealthy Industrialist Tony Stark, develops a body-worn electro-magnetic generator system that keeps shrapnel from tearing his heart open. Returning to his high-techmechanical studio and his automaton assistant Jarvis, he builds an iron suit of armor with built-in weapons that allows him to help people. After announcing that Stark Industrial Concerns will no longer sell weapons, he is betrayed by his father's former righthand man and must defeat his own technologies!

Starring:

John Gilbert as Tony Stark/Ironman

Noble Johnson as James "Rhodey" Rhodes

Renée Adorée as Virginia "Pepper" Potts

Hobart Bosworth as Obadiah Stane / Iron Monger

Ernest Torrence as Ho Yinsen

Tully Marshall as Jarvis

Nida Nita as Christine Everhart

Lon Chaney Sr. as Raza

Erich von Stroheim as Happy Hogan

Stan Lee as Child at Tech Fair (uncredited)

Review:

"A visual feast handled by the masterful eye of Vidor. Gilbert's charm is not lost, even when in his armored suit. The interplay between Adorée and Gilbert makes the scenes without the flying fun nearly as enthralling."

Iron Man 2 (1935)

144 minutes, B+W

Directed by Henry Hathaway

Box Office: \$1,788,005 (third highest grossing film of 1935)

Tony Stark must deal with the power he wields as Iron Man along with the exceptional danger of his technology getting out into the wider world. A Russian scientist with a long-standing grudge against Stark joins with another tech rival of Tony's to make this the most dangerous of all challenges for the Iron Man!!!

Starring:

Clark Gable as Tony Stark/Iron Man

Eleanor Powell as Virginia "Pepper" Potts

Charles Laughton as Justin Hammer

Laurence Olivier as the voice of Jarvis

Anne Shirley as Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow

Rex Ingram as James "Rhodey" Rhodes

Franchot Tone as Ivan Vanko/Whiplash

Erich von Stroheim as Happy Hogan

Buddy Ebsen as Agent Coulson

Louis Jordan as Nick Fury

Harold Lloyd as Howard Stark

Eddie Cantor as Senator Stern

Stan Lee as Paperboy (uncredited)

Review:

"Perhaps a step behind the first in this series, Gable cuts a striking figure, and Laughton seems to revel in the role of Justin Hammer. Perhaps it is Franchot Tone who makes the most disturbing character, the only one who seems to be tacked on needlessly. It is obvious that young Anne Shirley will make a great mark with this role."

Iron Man 3 (1945)

140 minutes, B+W

Directed by William A. Wellman

Box Office: \$4,055, 355 (fourth highest grossing film of 1949)

Iron Man must fight an extremist, a technological terror, and his own demons in a battle to save the world – as usual.

Starring:

Van Johnson as Tony Stark/Iron Man

Jeanne Crain as Virginia “Pepper” Potts

Paul Robeson as James “Rhodey” Rhodes

Laurence Olivier as the voice of Jarvis

Errol Flynn as Aldrich Killian

Irene Dunne as Maya Hansen

Erich von Stroheim as Harold Happy Hogan

Jose Ferrer as Vice President Rodrigues

William Holden as President Elias

Vincent Price as The Mandarin/Trevor Slattery

Lana Turner as Ellen Brandt

James Johnson Edwards as Nick Fury

Stan Lee as Cameraman (uncredited)

Review:

“While it does still maintain some of the all-out frenetic action of the silent original, but not the charming character interactions of the sequel, it does close out the Iron Man story with a certain wit. Johnson’s Tony Stark is slick, while his Iron Man is rough and tumble. Flynn and Dunne prove an exceptional pairing, and Vincent Price, in what is sure to be his most outré role, steals several scenes while enigmatically chewing the scenery.”

– Film

Comment, July

6th, 1949

Casting Captain Britain

By Helena Nash



As long as there has been fandom, there have been people speculating about who they would like to see playing their favorite characters on screen. Back in the early 90s, my friend Ian and I spent many an hour debating and honing our dream cast for a live-action X-Men film, though we never came to an agreement about Wolverine (I favored deadpan anti-hero actor Michael Ironside, while Ian wanted Bruce Weitz who played the semi-feral Detective Mick Belker in *Hill Street Blues*).

I've always enjoyed doing that sort of thing – finding just the right actor for just the right role – but of course it was pretty much a thought-experiment only back in the twentieth century. I mean, nobody was actually going to *make* a decent Marvel superhero film, were they? And even if they did, *and* it didn't completely suck, no studio would then be so suicidal as to venture far from the relatively safe shores of “basically an action movie with people in dark leather” (take a bow, *Punisher*, *Blade*, and *X-Men*) and into the scary, wide blue ocean of “unashamed actual superheroes with masks and bright outfits.” Would it?

Jump-cut to the 2010s. In the intervening years, Columbia's *Spider-Man* (2002) came out and was a proper bloody Marvel superhero

film, with Spidey's loudly proud red-and-blue costume, a decent villain, and amazing web-slinging SFX. The sequel in 2004 was even better, with (in my opinion) one of the finest, most sympathetic supervillain portrayals on-screen, in the form of Alfred Molina's Doctor Octopus. But the real game-changer was Marvel Studios' own *Iron Man* (2008), which could have been just another *Daredevil* (2003) or *Ghost Rider* (2007), were it not for two bold moves right at the end of the movie. First, Tony Stark subverts the secret identity trope by announcing to the assembled press that "The truth is . . . <awesome pause> . . . I am Iron Man." And second, there's that momentous end-credits scene where Samuel L Jackson steps out of the shadows, introduces himself as Nick Fury, and announces the Avenger Initiative. With those two scenes, the Marvel Cinematic Universe was properly born. And I couldn't have been happier.

So here we are, post-*Avengers*, *Guardians*, *Cap* and *Thor*. Post-*Panther*, *Strange*, and *Captain Marvel*. I now live in a world where there is a fair to middling chance that any Marvel character I care to think of might actually find his, her, or their way into a movie or TV show (Agatha Harkness, anyone? Batroc even?). Now that I can walk down the street and expect with a high degree of probability that half the people I meet could do a passable Groot impression, who knows what other hero might make it from the page to the live-action screen? Maybe the Sub-Mariner (pleeeeeease)? Maybe the Unbeatable Squirrel Girl? Maybe even . . . my favorite character, Captain Britain?

* * *

For those of you who don't know who he is, imagine Captain America but make him British. And take away his shield and make him fly. And a bit magical. And drawn by Alan Davis, no, not comedian Alan Davies, Alan Davis.



There was a little frisson of social media activity back in 2016 about a possible Captain Britain TV series in production. Needless to say, I got a little excited by the TV show rumors, but I also became exceedingly worried, with the sort of near-religious ownership that gives fans a bad name, that they would Get the Casting All Wrong and Ruin It. This is because I am exactly *that* sort of obsessive superfan.

Now it's 2021 and a Captain Britain show is still yet to appear, so my fears and hopes must hang in there a while longer. But in the meantime, to cushion any possible blow of disappointment, I've spent a ridiculous amount of time racking my brains – and rifling through IMDB – to create my own best possible cast for my favorite Marvel superhero. That way I can pretend that in some alternate world (possibly Earth-238) my ideal version of *Captain Britain: the TV Show* exists and is a total hit.

I had a couple of soft rules for casting:

1. The actor has to be an actual real-live actor of the correct age. None of that “Hey, Sidney Greenstreet would have been perfect to play Hurricane!” nonsense.
2. The actor can’t be a massive movie star, since this is a TV show (Golden Age of TV notwithstanding). So, no Tom Cruise as Inspector Dai Thomas. Although I should admit that I’ve broken my own rule a bit for the good Captain himself, coz I’m allowed.

So, here’s my cast. What do you think? Who would you cast as the good captain and his assorted allies and enemies?

Tom Hardy as Captain Britain / Brian Braddock



Once upon a time I’d have chosen Rupert Penry-Jones from the BBC’s *Spooks* (aka *MI-5*), but now I think Mr. Hardy would be just spot on. He has the build and the acting skills (hammy old Bane notwithstanding) to play the buff but troubled hero Brian Braddock. Failing that, I’d go for Bradley James - Arthur from the BBC’s *Merlin*.

Natalie Dormer as Betsy Braddock



To be honest, I wanted to cast Natalie Dormer as Roma or Meggan too, but decided she'd be great as Brian's plucky twin sister, telepath, and occasional CB stand-in.

Abbey Lee as Meggan



Casting a shapeshifting faery/traveller/child-woman was a tricky one. MyAnna Buring (*Ripper Street*) would have been great in the role of Brian's lady love, but perhaps a little too grown up, so I've gone for *Lovecraft Country*'s ethereal Abbey Lee.

Tom Wlaschiha as Merlyn



Watching *Game of Thrones*, it struck me that the curiously unearthly Jaen H'ghar actor would be just right for the CB incarnation of the smooth, ageless, manipulative Merlyn. If not Tom Wlaschiha, then *Penny Dreadful's* Reeve (Dorian Gray) Carney.

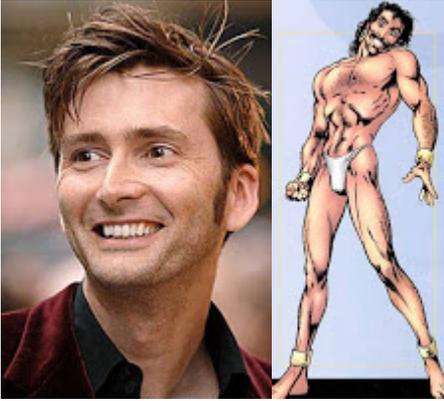
Jameela Jamil as Roma



You know, I kind of struggled with casting Merlyn's regal daughter, Roma. For a while it was Montserrat Lombard (*Ashes to Ashes*). Then it was Stephanie Hyam (from the 2015 *Jekyll & Hyde* TV series). But in the end, I settled on *The Good Place's* Jameela Jamil, who has just

the rights combination of classiness and bone structure for the role.

David Tennant as Jamie Braddock



Brian's older brother is a tricky one to cast. In the comics he starts off as something of a cypher, then becomes a human-trafficking bastard, then a super-powered nutbag and lately a goodish guy again. Who could possibly fulfil the varying characterizations? After seeing former timelord David Tennant as the charming creep Kilgrave in *Jessica Jones*, he's the ideal choice.

Owen Teale as Dai Thomas



The erstwhile Ser Alliser Thorne (*Game of Thrones*) simply is the irascible Scotland Yard detective. Owen Teale has previous form for

playing coppers (see *Line of Duty*), and he's proper Welsh too.

Riz Ahmed as Slaymaster



This was one of the hardest roles for me to cast, but Riz (*Rogue One*, *Sound of Metal*) Ahmed's magnetic role as proto-jihadi Omar in *Four Lions* shows he has the intensity to portray the master assassin. Failing that, the excellent Kayvan Novak (*SunTrap* and *Four Lions*) has both the build and mimicry skills to pull it off.

Karen Gillan as Captain UK



Linda McQuillan, Brian's alternate-Earth counterpart, is an important part of a classic plotline in the comics, so getting someone who can

play both tough and damaged is important. And what would a fantasy cast be without a liberal sprinkling of *Doctor Who* alumni? Not only that, but she also gets to be in a Marvel production without shaving her head and being painted blue for once.

MyAnna Buring as Saturnyne



As the seductive, short-tempered, utterly pragmatic omniversal majestrix, Saturnyne requires an actor with class, poise, and backbone. MyAnna Buring (TV's *Ripper Street*) can play all of those, and she has amazing cheekbones too.

Linda Henry as Vixen



I went through an awful lot of mature British actresses trying to

find someone who can carry off the hard-nosed, domineering crime lord. I'd worked my way through every Linda La Plante series and thirty years of soap operas before settling on *EastEnders*' Linda Henry. Failing that, *EastEnders*' Letitia Dean would do. Other hard-bitten blondes from *EastEnders* may also apply!

Enzo Cilenti as Mad Jim Jaspers



I first saw him as the Poldark manservant Childermass in the BBC's *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell*, but it was his appearance as the razor sharp, moustachioed Captain Dance in the 2015 TV series *Jekyll & Hyde* that showed me how good Enzo Cilenti could be as the insane, reality-warping mega villain, Mad Jim. Failing that, the ever-reliable Reece Shearsmith (*Inside No. 9*) would do a fine, creepy job.

Marvelous Looks by Michelle Mendes Vazquez



MARVEL STUDIOS GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2

Since my family is still social distancing, it's been challenging coming up with ways to stay entertained. For the last month I've been trying to do makeup looks inspired by strong Marvel women. The first look I did was more of a direct copy of the original. Hela has a dark sultry style and is able to pull off a messy/smokey eye with nude lips. The hardest part of this was washing off all the black paint afterwards. The second look was inspired by WandaVision. I've loved watching all the wardrobe choices they've made and how the fashion has changed with each episode. While I wasn't going for a direct a mimic of the original look, I was inspired by the tighter ringlets, red lips and clothing design of the era in which the first episode takes place. A classic charm. The third look was inspired by Mantis from Guardians

of the Galaxy. It's hard to tell from the picture, but she has a warm burnt-red eyeshadow that smokes out in the edges to a dark black cat-eye. Dressing up can be fun even if I'm not leaving the house. I enjoy being creative and I'm excited to try more looks. I might even do one based off of Jeff Goldblum's character The Grandmaster.



