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### Are We There Yet? Where the MCU Is Going and Why Some Fans are Not Excited

The Marvel cinematic universe has been an inspiring universe for many young fans all over the world when it broke on to the scene in 2008. Marvel used to take their time to create these wonderful stories and give fans what they wanted, but that all changed once the movies started picking up traction. Marvel decided to favor more than 2 movies a year starting in 2017. This decision to give the fans more movies couldn't have just been based fan service but with money in mind also. This decision to add more movie and tv shows from Marvel led to the whole cinematic universe slowly declining through Marvel's use of fan cameo service, improper use of characters/miscasting actors, and cast hyping up things that were never going to happen which all lead to insane levels of hype that fell short.

In 2017, Marvel came out with the most content they had ever released with Agents of Shield having all episodes premiered, Netflix's Iron Fist coming out, Guardians of The Galaxy Vol. 2 making its way to theaters, and Spider Man Far From Home releasing after that. This started to give fans a taste for having loads of Marvel content to sift through. Most people had realized "the frequency of additions had become almost overwhelming, with a major new release in nearly every month of the year" (McSweeney 263). While even though this year had a tremendous amount of content, lots of the content that came out like Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 "was even more financially successful than the original and made close to a billion dollars

world-wide” (McSweeney 263). Many of the shows and movies were still raking up money and views which showed Marvel their plan might work. One of the important things to remember is that lots of the shows were not made by Disney because they didn't own the rights to some characters like Iron Fist and Daredevil. I believe therefore 2017 was a good year for them and helped their exposure to the world, but this frequency amount would change when Disney started making their own shows on Disney+. This change of frequency is important because it shows the point where Marvel would soon eventually be in 3 years later due to the same problem. What major changes influenced 2020 and 2021 to be bad years for Marvel?

In 2019, Disney announced they were making their own streaming platform that would include new shows made by Marvel, the first of which being Wanda Vision. This show is the pivotal moment for the MCU that started showing fans that things might be going downhill. Marvel had stated this shows were going to be like mini movies that still had high end action, this set an expectation for many people who wanted a lot out of these shows. A perfect example of how this show brought high expectation is through a character named Ralph Boner. The character was played by Evan Peters, most fans thought he would be the Quicksilver from the Fox X-Men universe. This turned out to be so far from the truth and many fans were upset that the character was underutilized and used for a boner joke. Fan and journalist Scott King had this to say, “I think that bringing in Evan Peters who was part of the Fox X-Men world to play a version of the character he played in the Fox X-Men world only to not play that character in the end and become that Ralph Boner joke, it frustrated a lot of people.” (King). After this show finished airing, many fans took to the internet to voice their disappointment with memes and critical reviews. Having this casting choice led to hype that ultimately fell super short. This starting

point for Disney+ and a new era of superhero content quickly fell through and put Marvel on the chopping block.

Many people have argued that fleshing out these characters instead of just giving them a two-hour movie is good for the characters. People have also argued that we don't need big name superheroes to deliver out satisfaction of content. "You don't have to necessarily start with Wolverine. I think they proved that to us; I mean, they made Ant-Man a popular character and a household name. They made Rocket Raccoon and Groot super popular. Those weren't the original Guardians (of the Galaxy) characters, that wasn't the original Guardians roster in the comics." (King). Scott King is one of those people who argues that starting with the most popular characters isn't always needed. He uses the example of Ant Man, who wasn't the most popular character, but many fans were after seeing his character being portrayed by Paul Rudd. I somewhat agree with this, but I think having big name actors play these characters help these characters become fan favorites. Also having directors and writers who understand the impacts the characters dramatically. These miscasting's and focus on smaller characters are yet another piece of evidence of why the MCU problems are quickly rising.

Fans love Thor and he is one of the biggest characters to come out of the original heroes, but even he wasn't safe from being handled improperly. He is the biggest example of a beloved character that was slaughtered by bad writing in the new Thor movie, Thor: Love and Thunder. Taika Waititi who wrote and directed the new movie, had publicly stated how fans were going to feel about this movie: "If you were to say them: 'Yeah, I'm going to make Thor in love,' it's probably the last thing that a Thor fan really wants to hear." (Waititi). To have the director and writer of a movie to publicly state that people wouldn't want to hear that story is crazy. Waititi

also states how he felt he needed to approach the movie by saying, “For me, it’s good to give the fans something they don’t know that they want,” (Watiti). To have a mindset like this can be a mixed bag for a lot of people. These movies should be made for the fans and not just what some director wants to see since it’s their movie. In another video Watiti also shows that couldn’t touch up many of the VFX shots. This frequency of content now seems like it’s affecting everyone who works at Marvel, with inflation and covid seemingly being somewhat responsible for some of it. Scott King talks a little of how Covid affected Wanda Vision, “if not for Covid, that would have had Dr. Strange in it if plans didn’t change.” (King). Seems like having to push back many of the shows and movies had Marvel looking to change things within it that would help them flesh out characters, but this obviously didn’t work in their favor. If not for covid or prices rising, would the Marvel universe still be good? The answer is still probably not, the last example I’m going to talk about will prove Marvel shot themselves in the foot.

Usually when the cast does interviews, they are refrained from saying certain things because of an NDA contract. During the press for Wanda Vision, “Paul Bettany was saying there’s a big cameo and there’s all these... they made jokes to the cast, but the audience was also taking that seriously.” (King). King seems to think fans were taking it seriously while Paul was just joking but that seems like a stretch. If someone tells you this character is coming and this character is making an appearance, it’s going to get fans excited even if you are joking. Paul Bettany wasn’t joking because we have the information that Doctor Strange was supposed to be in the show. Maybe Marvel didn’t tell the cast how they were going to change things which would still make Marvel look bad on their part. They say they do this to protect spoilers, but I don’t believe that because many plot leaks have been proven to be right with some of them being

out in the public a year before the movie is released. If Marvel was more transparent with certain things and helped clarified material, it would have saved them the trouble of having disappointing shows. Even in the case of this year, She Hulk premiered to mixed reviews, but most people were matching because they teased Daredevil which is a fan favorite character.

Fan service can make or break the Marvel Cinematic Universe and if not probably addressed rightfully will ruin the rest of the universe. Many longtime fans are showing their distaste and it seems Marvel hasn't listened yet. There is still hope for this though seeing that since a lot of information is public about the problems Marvel is facing. The future of the MCU could be in danger seeing as phase four has regenerated the least amount of profit out of all the phases. Warner Bros recent superhero movie Black Adam has already passed two of the phase four movies in less than two weeks. If Marvel were to weed out some shows and movies, I believe they can get back to the glory days of having two or three great movies a year. This would also allow their staff to feel less stressed and put more work into the things that need heavy fixing. The VFX team, writing team, and directors would be able to smooth things over if this was the case. Having time to flesh out ideas and cinematic shots allow these movies to create a discussion that was previously held for these movies. Many people fled to these movies because of the breathable nature of not having to have watched 3 shows that they may not have time for. For people who grew up with these movies, they can hold a special place in their hearts and these fans are the most disappointed but matter a lot to the fanbase. The MCU is one of the most influential set of movies that created a movie renaissance for all superhero movies to come after.

## Works Cited

McSweeney, Terence. *Avengers Assemble!: Critical Perspectives on the Marvel Cinematic Universe*. Wallflower Press, 2018.

This resource is great because it will help me provide general knowledge about the Marvel cinematic universe and why it defined a generation. It also helps my argument about where the MCU is headed.

King, Scott. "The State of the MCU: Where Is Marvel Studios Headed?" *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 31 July 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/scottking/2021/07/31/the-state-of-the-mcu-where-is-marvel-studios-headed/?sh=54d1882d21f8>.

This non-scholarly argumentative text will be perfect to use in my essay. The resource will help me be able to explain where fans think the MCU is going and why. It will also give reasons to why fans are upset at the MCU.

Coyle, Jake. "Interview: Taika Waititi Takes a Hammer to Thor in 'Love & Thunder'." *Preview*, Preview | Houston Arts & Entertainment Guide, 8 July 2022, <https://preview.houstonchronicle.com/movies-tv/interview-taika-waititi-takes-a-hammer-to-thor-17288684>.

The primary research I choose is an interview with the director of the latest Thor movie. This will help me explain how the directors view their work and why they may think different than fans.