

Kabeer Chawla

Dr. Gingrich

AP Language and Composition

March 22, 2019

Reviewing superhero movies entails a very formulaic pattern. Virtually every well received comic book superhero film adaptation endeavors to adhere to emulating a very specific set of rules. In my review of Captain Marvel, I will be evaluating how effectively the movie satisfies these rules.

1. Plot, and Act Structure.

- a. Every Marvel movie thus far has had an outlandish premise. None of them are in the least bit plausible, but the structure of the plot follows a logical, and for the most part linear trend within the movie universe. The story each [movie](#) sets up fits almost seamlessly inside the MCU, and helps broaden the context of each of the characters in preparation for Avengers Endgame. This seamless integration of characters in the MCU, is crucial in developing the plot and story arc of not only the broader universe, but also in serving as constraints to the creativity and direction of the constituent films. Wendy Ide at the Guardian pointed this out with her review of Doctor Strange. Doctor Strange was an above average Marvel movie, and the studio's ability to take an obscure and unpopular comic book character, and make it "a mostly coherent... entity" (Ide 2).

2. Faithfulness to the original text.

- a. These movies may seem as their own separate entities, but they derive most of their creativity and plot devices from comic books. This being the case, the movies are expected to hold a maintain a level of adherence to the comics. A few marvel movies have liberally employed their characters, and have deviated or modified several popular comic book story arcs. While a certain level of creative license is indispensable in creating an enthralling and engaging movie, deviating too much can alienate comic fans, and make the movie incoherent. No movie has demonstrated comic book authenticity in the way Thor Ragnarok did. Ragnarok was responsible for transforming the most dull and boring character in the mcu into the most charismatic and comedic one. This was because the movie did not take itself too seriously, and recognized that “they're called comic books for a reason,” (Persall 1). The color pallete of this movie closely matched that of the comics, and their story arcs, and plot devices also paid homage to and drew strongly from the comics.

3. Humor

- a. Being comic book movies, means that a certain level of comedic effect is expected. Similar to the previous rule, marvel movies that are more humorous and more light hearted are better received, and popular. Movie goers do not expect dark toned marvel movies, nor do they want one. They expect marvel movies to retain some of the comedic elements from the comics. In Doctor Strange for example, there's “ a sharp wit to the screenplay, which credits the audience with enough smarts to catch the punchline to a joke that was set up a full hour before,”

(Ide 13). Some movies have been criticized for tonal inconsistencies because of the abundance of humor such as Thor Ragnarok. Still, too much humor (Thor ragnarok) is better received than no humor (Thor Dark World)

4. CGI, Special Effects

- a. Disney has nigh limitless resources with which to create special effects that are both creative innovative and aesthetically pleasing. Almost all MCU movies have demonstrated impressive use of special effects, and have used them when necessary. Very few marvel movies have relied primarily on effects to carry the movies appeal. Dr. Strange perhaps had the most impressive display of special effects that “ nods to the spatial origami of Christopher Nolan’s *Inception* and has something of the baroque enchantment of the Harry Potter series” (Ide 4).

5. Casting

- a. It is important to cast the correct actor for the role of a certain superhero. The actor’s ability to perform cannot be underestimated, and a poor casting choice can diminish what might have been an otherwise great movie. Dr. Strange, an obscure and fringe character was brought into the spotlight almost single handedly by the performance of “Cumberbatch, who makes the least immediately likable of the Marvel heroes into the most unpredictable and intriguing,”(Ide 6).

Captain Marvel: It was Okay

21 MCU movies have graced the big screen over the last decade. Captain Marvel is the latest in this series. This movie like its cohorts is a cinematic adaptation of the comic series of the same name. It follows the same structure as all other stand alone Marvel movies, and boasts the same quality of visual effects as other movies in its genre. Captain Marvel, the latest in the line of Marvel movies is also the first to draw any recognizable controversy as well. This was in large part because of the actions of the titular actress. In spite of the debate however, Captain Marvel is an average Marvel movie, and like all those which preceded it is a worthwhile two hour escape.

Being the latest Marvel movie, Captain Marvel has certain advantages afforded to it. For instance, it has a budget of 152 million dollars which grants it access to some of the finest, most aesthetically pleasing special effects and [CGI](#). The scenes on the Kree Capital Hala are very vivid, and imaginative and pay homage to previous Marvel films. In addition, smaller more subtle instances of special effects were also present. The movie took place in the 1990's, so they have to de-age Sam Jackson's character in order to fit the timeline. Unlike other instances of de-aging like in the Star Wars sequel, this was done near seamlessly. The scenes where Danvers demonstrates her 'binary' abilities were also bright and imaginative. Her glowing aura, and photon blasts look as realistic as can be, and the fight scenes are also choreographed well. The movie is in this aspect very well done, and is quite the spectacle. This is to be expected however, Marvel Studios is an established franchise, and so it has the connections and revenue to pour every available resource into making these movies enjoyable for the viewer.

Special effects are no substitute for good storytelling however. The plot slows down at unreadable times, and it feels often times that it was directed by multiple individuals each with a different vision for the character. The movie also fails to demonstrate any of the personality traits of the character seen in comics. Captain Marvel in the comics is a somewhat authoritarian figure who is willing to forgo due process, and freedom for the sake of security. This was a major plot point in Civil War II. This led to a conflict between her and other factions of superheroes which had a different philosophy. Given that this was her most famous and popular comic, it would stand to reason that her first cinematic replication would at least demonstrate some level of the character's depth. This movie's storyline even included the perfect plot device to demonstrate this. In a world where the enemy (the skrulls) had taken the form of humans, the movie could have developed Marvel's character more thoroughly by creating a conflict between her and Fury. Fury as a quasi law enforcement officer would be more inclined to abide by the standard of due process whereas Marvel would be compelled to disregard freedom for the sake of the safety of the greater good. The studio could have delivered an interesting moral conflict which could have made Carol Danvers a more dynamic character, but they instead gave her the ability to be instantly able to distinguish the skrull from her human allies. Furthermore, given that Captain Marvel is a stand alone marvel movie, it would have been ideal to see a more thorough development of her backstory instead of a profectory overview. The pacing seemed a little rushed, and [underdeveloped](#) in my view.

Another decrement in the quality of the movie was a result of events that transpired even before the release of the movie. Brie Larson was perhaps one of the worst casting decisions the studio has made with perhaps the exception of Edward Norton in the incredible Hulk. This has

nothing to do with her gender. There have been plenty of actresses playing superheros, and none of them have invited the same level of vitriol, controversy, and dullness as Ms. Larson. Her acting was very robotic and emotionless and her level of expression would have been more akin to a more stoic and less flamboyant character. Her acting does nothing to emulate the ostentatious image of the Captain Marvel from the comics. Furthermore, her needless political comments have proven to be [toxic](#). The level of online trolling was nowhere to be found leading up to the release of Wonder Woman, or Alita Battle Angel. Captain Marvel's conflict with internet trolls, and incels seems to be unique to Larson herself. Samuel Jackson's performance was spectacular. His character Sam Jackson is the most dynamic we have ever seen him, and his aptitude for comedy was on display here as well with most of the comedic scenes involving him in some way. The Comedy in the movie was perhaps one of the best aspects of the film. Larson's delivery of verbal quips perhaps isn't as humorous, or enjoyable as Downey Jr's or Hemsworth's, but still there are plenty examples of humor which is to be expected by now from Marvel. Where the movie suffers is when it tries to take itself too seriously. If this movie spent more time emulating Thor Ragnarok instead of Infinity War's sense of grandiose, and importance, it would have made for a better movie. Instead we are left with a quippy, melodramatic action movie which is no different from other mediocre superhero movies except this time with a female lead.

In Spite of the controversy however, Captain Marvel was an enjoyable two hour movie. It was time well spent especially since it did make progress of a kind in introducing a character who is destined to play a salient role in Avengers Endgame. As much as I personally felt satisfied with spending my money, Larson's choice of politicking however was clearly a misstep, and may be a reason for some not to see the movie. The lack of plot and character development

may also be a turn off for more cynical critics .The movie is worth a watch if only because of the character's likely instrumental role in Avengers Infinity War. This notwithstanding, it may be worth to just wait and watch the movie at home, or just read the wikipedia synopsis.