

The Rise of the Superhero

It all began with the *Superman and the Mole Men* motion picture which hit the cinemas in 1951...



This film was followed in 1966 by the first *Batman*, and the 1978 hit *Superman* properly kicked off the era of superhero movies. Since then, with few exceptions, there has been one or more superhero film launched every year up until present day.

The popularity of these movies, which are all action and fantasy crossovers taking place in a parallel universe, shows the audience's need and wish to dream themselves away in a spectacular world where all is possible. These parallel universes, represented in large by the comic book giants DC and Marvel, all contain people susceptible of gene mutations and/or of great talent or fortune— plus a good sense of morale, so as to use their talent for good and not evil.

The great appeal of Superhero movies is the wide variety of genres they come in. Everything from action-specked badassery to comedy based adventures. Anti-Heroes exist alongside great Heroes with superpowers, and normal people with a

special talent are allowed to figure together with those exposed to radioactive radiation or mutated genes. All in all Superhero films have something which appeals to all audiences. There is simply something about them that makes the viewer envy the little children running about with their Batman lunchbox, and Spider-Man backpack. That superhero films exist allows the viewer to daydream about a world which is the same as ours, but allows for the fantastic to happen.

This summer the movie theatres have been packed with Superhero titles like *The Avengers*, *The Amazing Spider-Man* and last but not least *The Dark Knight Rises*. Both *The Avengers* and *The Dark Knight Rises* have been hugely popular worldwide, grossing over and close to one billion euros respectively.

A Team of World Saviours



The Avengers is a film which almost everyone has seen – be it in the movie

theatre or at home. Being the sequel of *Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Iron Man 2*, *Thor* and *Captain America: The First Avenger*, it appeals to almost any viewer. The film is a great symbiosis of action, humour and friendship which picks the best of all the sub-genres of Superhero films, and ties it all together with a common purpose and a shared world in grave danger.

There is a very good reason for the popularity of this film and that it that it harbours aspects of the superhero genres that appeals to every viewer; Thor the Norse God alongside the main antagonist Loki bring magic and mystery to the movie, where Mr. Tony 'Ironman' Stark bring wit and dry humour together with his ego. The classic Superhero is represented by Captain America, the Hulk is the mandatory science project gone wrong and luckily for the viewer there are also two other, more mundane, character who rely on their talents rather than their superpowers: Black Widow, and Hawkeye.

It is a bit obvious that this film is made to appeal to greater audiences, where all the heroes get about equal screen-time regardless of how crucial they are to the plot. The effect of this leaves the progress of the film a bit unnatural, but the plot does not suffer all that much. The morale of the story is made very evident: uniting together under a common banner is the best thing to do – especially if the fate of the world is in peril, and all depends on you and your buddies. In the end, the viewer is invited to witness how the best team of crime-fighting superheroes was made, and what drove them together in the first place – leaving the viewer with a taste for more.



A Modernized Spider



The Amazing Spider-Man was, to me, a surprising film, especially since this new approach to the Spider-Man stories has a whole new cast. Gone and forgotten are all of Tobey Maguire's awkward portrayal of the "friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man" when introduced to Andrew Garfield's bad-boy-attitude. The whole saga and the "making of" is re-introduced in the same lines, but with different details – tying it up to this all new Spider-Man. The movie is action packed from beginning to end, and is continuously exciting. Some may argue that the focus on the whole "high-school experience" weakens the plot, but it is picked up excellently by the amazing job Rhys Ifans does in portraying the kind professor/villain of the story. There is also hinted at a bigger, underlying, evil force, but that line is kept hanging – maybe it is saved for the sequel? The mandatory love interest is a tad flimsy, but heck – one does not go to a Superhero movie expecting an epic romance.

Overall the Spider-Man saga is not at all hurt by a fresh adaption. And the new

cast does an excellent job in making the viewer forget the past trilogy – and readily anticipate the sequel to their production.

The Last Adventure of Our Favourite Knight



As Christopher Nolan's Batman is an absolute favourite of mine, this movie was the highlight of my cinema experience this summer. I admit I might be a bit biased favouring this film over the others, but I firmly believe I have all right to maintain my Fan-girl mentality. This was the only film I saw this summer which made me exclaim "Can we go again?" right after the credits had finished and the teaser to a possible renewal of the Batman franchise was revealed.

The Dark Knight Rises is the final film in Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight Trilogy, and is a spectacular ending to an action packed series of films with the power to baffle and surprise the viewer at every turn. All the special effects and sound effects are expertly tailored to suit the cinema, and I hope it comes across as amazingly on Blu-ray at home.

Tome Hardy is an extremely convincing villain and criminal mastermind. His signature mask and proper-gentleman-accent with a politely questioning intonation makes him a super villain which is also easy to remember. Anne Hathaway's Catwoman is also very successfully executed, and all her former girly-princess-movies are made a thing of the past. All the characters come together in an epic finale of the trilogy, and the ending is beautifully made so that the viewer feels that even though this is the final film in the trilogy, the Batman legend is not about to end anytime soon. Hurray!

A Taste of Future Pleasures

For the Superhero film enthusiasts I am pleased to disclose that several great titles are anticipated in 2013 and 2014, including a sequel to *Iron Man*, *Thor*, *Captain America* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*. *X-Men* has also hinted at, as well as an all new *The Avengers*. I know I will start saving for movie-tickets already.

Benny Baumann