

Why the Black Panther deserves all of its hype.

Whenever a Black Panther trailer is released one thing is certain: Ryan Coogler did not come to play games. Marvel Studios' Black Panther is already the biggest blockbuster of 2018, and isn't out until February 16th. Directed by Ryan Coogler and starring Chadwick Boseman, Lupita Nyong'o, Michael B. Jordan, Angela Bassett, Andy Serkis and Forest Whitaker, the movie has already broken Marvel's presale records and is now outpacing typical ticket sales in the superhero genre.

Beyond its commercial dominance, Black Panther is a milestone in the film industry's ongoing fight for diversity; it's the largest Hollywood production with a majority black cast. Based on characters created by famed Marvel tag-team Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the synopsis of the film follows T'Challa (the Black Panther) after the events of *Captain America: Civil War* as he returns home to Wakanda, an isolated, never colonized and technologically advanced African nation to take the place of his recently deceased father as King. However, he would also be called upon to serve as Wakanda's guardian - The Black Panther, to defend the country against an old enemy who threatens the peace and well-being of Wakanda and the world.

1. The Cast

Black Panther features a very fine cast of which majority are black actors - a choice that will further buttress the African theme and setting of the movie. Every single member is awesome in their own way: Chadwick Boseman with his regal African accent revives his role as T'Challa (character that was more or less a cameo in *Captain America: Civil War*), and he is flanked by heavy hitters like Lupita Nyong'o, Andy Serkis, Angela Bassett, Forest Whitaker, Martin Freeman, and Michael B. Jordan who appears in a villainous role as Erik Killmonger. Daniel Kaluuya, who starred in *Get Out*, one of my best movies from 2017, and also in *Black Mirror's* Fifteen Million Merits, Danai Gurrira from *The Walking Dead*, Winston C. Duke, Letitia Wright from *Black Mirror's* Black Museum, Sterling K. Brown, Isaach de Bankolé, and a host of other amazing actors are set to appear in the movie.

2. The Costuming

The costume design for Black Panther has an afro-futuristic feel to it. Design accolades go to no other person than veteran designer, Ruth E. Carter. Carter who has been nominated twice for Oscars, and also known for her works on *Selma*, *Amistad*, *Love and Basketball*, *Malcom X* and the History Channel's *Roots* Series among many others. She also celebrates 30 years of being in that role this year. It is very wonderful how she drew inspiration from various African cultures while still remaining true to the comics and still making it look very practicable. It also amazing how she made each character's look resonate their personalities and their roles; Forest Whitaker's Zuri, the Dora Milaje, T'Challa's and Ramonda's regal looks. Nakia's War Dog, the wakandan military and the looks of the wakandan natives are all a

show of Ruth E. Carter's expertise. I can say for sure that the costumes from this movie are bound to cause some new fashion trends. She deserves more than a nomination this time, I believe, she deserves an Oscar for this.

3. The Director

Ryan Coogler is the director after my own heart (after Zack Snyder surely). As some of us know already, I am not really a Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) fan I prefer the DC extended Universe (DCEU) any day any time but that's not the point. I prefer the "darkness" and subtleness of the DCEU to the comical humour freely used in the MCU but this is something Ryan has chosen to step away from and create Black Panther in the way, he deems fit and he has not disappointed us as we have seen from the trailers. You can't help but notice the authenticity of the movie ranging from its compelling storyline, the costuming, excellent special effects and set design.

4. The Themes

From my point of view, Black Panther is the buffet service of movies; it has themes of Afrocentrism, Afrofuturism, Afro-fantasy, Feminism, Family and Science fiction. Simply stated, it's an Afrocentric political thriller intertwined with sci-fi and fantasy with traces of feminism and family. Black Panther created a precedent that kills people's ability to misrepresent and distort the African continent.

The things that check it off: distinct African female characters, African language on a big screen, African characters who are varied in different ways and also heroic.

5. The Soundtrack

The soundtrack for Black Panther is lit. It was produced by Grammy-winning artiste, Kendrick Lamar and has featured some big names in rap and hip-hop - Vince Staples, SZA, Khalid, Swae Lee, etc. Coogler's long-time musical collaborator, Ludwig Göransson was tasked with creating a score that strikes a balance between traditional African instrumentation and the swooping orchestrals that typically mark superhero battles. Göransson, who's worked on everything from *Creed* and *'Community'* to Childish Gambino's *Catalog*, and Chance the Rapper's *Acid Rap*, travelled around the villages of West and South Africa with local musicians for months in preparation.

6. It's an MCU movie

Yes. It is going to be epic also just because it's an MCU movie. The MCU has Black Panther as its eighteenth instalment. The MCU has already made over \$12 billion at the global box office from all its movies since 2008 and so it's only very natural that Black Panther riding on the waves of an already very successful media franchise like the MCU is also something to look out for. We are possibly going to see some of our favourite MCU

characters make appearances (obviously Stan Lee would) and as is the culture of the MCU, we expect to see post-credit scenes which would most probably lead up to *Avengers: Infinity War*, where the Big Bad Boss of the MCU, Thanos makes his first full cinematic appearance and is the most anticipated film for this year.

7. The Production Design

The production design team are the ones responsible for the overall visual look of the production. The set design for *Black Panther* already appears to be amazing. The design combines advanced technology with a country whose African traditions were never influenced by colonization and the fact that there is no existing country to use as a reference makes it even more challenging but Hannah Beachler (who heads the production design team) did one hell of a good job. Hannah previously worked with Ryan Coogler in *Creed* and *Fruitvale Station*.

Already there have been early screenings and special viewings of the film by some of Hollywood's elite and so far all stories we have heard of it are extremely good with most hailing it as the best Marvel movie yet, tagging it the James Bond of the MCU. *Get Out* star Daniel Kaluuya, who plays T'Challa's best friend, says he is still processing what he saw in *Black Panther* and an acclaimed movie reviewer said that Erik Killmonger could be the best movie villain on the big screen since Heath Ledger's Joker. The film's reception- as of February 6th, the day initial reviews surfaced, showed it had a 100% rating on *Rotten Tomatoes*-bodes well for its commercial prospects. *Variety* predicted that it could threaten the President's Day Weekend record of \$152 million, set in 2016 by *Deadpool*.

Its plain truth that *Black Panther* is far more than fifty shades of black excellence, February 16th is the date. Long live the King!