

Review: Black Panther

[Jasmine Onstad](#) is full of praise for the MCU's latest offering, and stresses its importance for POC representation in the cinema

Tuesday 20 March 2018



Image: Disney

8/10

Director: Ryan Coogler

Starring: Chadwick Bosman, Lupita Nyong'o, Angela Basset, Danai Gurira

Length: 2hr 15m

Rating: 12A

Ryan Coogler's masterful instalment of the Marvel Cinematic Universe has been smashing up box office records left, right and centre. Unsurprisingly, really. Hype and anticipation have been bubbling over ever since Coogler was announced to helm the project. Now that it is finally released, cinema-goers everywhere have been jumping for joy and breathing heavy sighs of relief. This definitely feels like a seismic cultural movement, not just in the world of superhero films but in Hollywood as a whole. It is resoundingly clear that these are the stories that people want to hear, the stories that can only be told from some specific character backgrounds which have long been neglected in favour of the 'default' straight white male perspective.



Image: Disney

Africa and the richness of African cultures shine brightly through the fictitious setting of Wakanda. The king and spiritual leader of this afro-futuristic utopia is Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther (AKA T'challa) who, in the wake of his father's death, must come to terms with his noble responsibility. He must balance protecting the secret country from the outside threats of Ulysess Klaue (Andy Serkis) and the vengeful Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan) with his duty to help others in need, especially his fellow Africans who bore the brunt of colonial regimes.

Jordan's performance is magnificent as the brooding and anarchic black sheep who returns to wreak havoc on the flock. This is one of those rare superhero films where the villain is almost someone that you would root for. His motivations are developed and complex instead of the two-dimensional cardboard cut-out that we have grown to expect from Marvel and other franchises.

The performances of the women in the cast cannot go unmentioned and they often steal away the spotlight from the main hero in their portrayal of badass African women. The king's guard is made up solely of women, with Danai Gurira's Okoye at the helm, and look incredible in their Massai-inspired costumes. Gurira provided us all with an iconic fight scene moment when she threw her itchy wig at an assailant, creating the greatest gif of all time. Lupita Nyong'o's Nakia is the conscientious love interest, who pushes the plot forward and allows for Panther to grow, as well as looking incredibly stunning in every shot. Hats off as well to Letitia Wright's breakthrough performance as smart-arsed little sister and technological titan Shuri, who has probably had the most unexpected but welcomed impact on audiences. We will all be dying to see the role reprised in *Avengers: Infinity War* where hopefully more brilliant one-liners will follow her ("Don't scare me like that colonizer!").



Image: Disney

The impact of this film will reverberate through time, not just because of its insane box office success but because of the mirror that Coogler holds up to society through the power of storytelling. T'challa struggles with coming to terms with the mistakes of his father's past, which reflects coming to terms with the mistakes of our past as a country and as a global community. In a video for AsianBoss, young Koreans are interviewed in the street about their take on the film. Many said that their perceptions of black people had changed and they were hopeful about a future that is more equal and accepting thanks to minorities securing major roles which are diverse and interesting. Seeing that in countries such as South Korea some of their only exposure to people of colour is through movies, the global reverberation of having major blockbusters which feature real, well rounded black characters in the lead is immeasurable. However, Hollywood can never replace political action and the importance of a film like this should not be overstated.

It may seem strange that I only gave Black Panther an 8/10 as all I have done so far is wax lyrical about its strengths. Though it is a brilliant and important film, there are some flaws. One of these is Agent

Ross's role in the final fight, where he had to stop the planes carrying lethal vibranium weapons from leaving Wakanda. While 'the whole world is at stake' aspect of the 3rd act is standard for superhero films, it seemed inconsequentially tacked on in contrast to the meaty rivalry between T'challa and Killmonger. As well as this, W'Kabi (Daniel Kaluuya)- who is supposedly T'challa's best friend but later his betrayer, seemed to sway to either side of the fight without much thought or consequence and was a waste of Kaluuya's talents.

Black Panther is a huge win, not only for the African-American community but for global perceptions of the African continent and every disadvantaged or minority group. It signals a change blowing through the Hollywood Hills that is long overdue. Most importantly it is a win for the children who will finally get to see themselves as real people on screen, and not just that, but as the heroes of the future.



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Keiwan

27 Mar '18 at 9:15 am

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