

'Black Panther' – Film Review

The best Marvel movie yet



OLLY RICHARDS 🕒 9th February 2018



T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman) faces off against N'Jadaka (Michael B. Jordan) in Marvel's 'Black Panther'

This needed to be good in the same way *Wonder Woman* needed to be good. If the latter, the first major superhero movie with a female lead, had been bad – say, as bad as a current-era Superman or Batman movie – it would have been easy evidence for the dull-minded 'audiences just don't want female superhero movies' team. Then back to the straight-white-guy template. *Black Panther* is the first *major* superhero movie with a predominantly black cast (not to erase *Blade* from history, but it's a different league). After a wait of far too long, it needed to make its moment count, to be a beginning and not an ending. It's not just *good*. It's the *best* Marvel movie yet.

Black Panther, unlike most films in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*, stands alone. It doesn't play as a chapter in a larger saga but as its own contained story. You can show up without seeing any of the previous 17 MCU instalments and be completely fine. It takes place almost exclusively in the fictional African nation of Wakanda. To the outside world it looks to be a "country of farmers", but it is in fact incredibly wealthy, thanks to an abundance of a super-metal called vibranium, which has allowed Wakanda to develop technology that far exceeds anything else on Earth. It keeps its success secret to avoid war with other nations and protect its way of life. Ruling over Wakanda is T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman), who is given superpowers by a magic plant and bestowed the mantle of Black Panther. T'Challa's reign looks potentially short-lived when an outsider (Michael B. Jordan) threatens to expose Wakanda's truth.

Director/co-writer Ryan Coogler (*Fruitvale Station*, *Creed*) is the most talented filmmaker Marvel has hired, creating a film that's as smart as it is energetic. In the same scene he can meld hilarious jokes, creative action and bold cultural commentary. He's full-hearted in the film's Afrocentricity, with astonishing production and costume design that pull from countless cultures, and some pointed political moments (when Jordan's character is challenged in his attempt to steal Wakandan artefacts from a British museum, he asks how its 'owners' think the museum got them). It's a joyful, chest-voice statement that there are other voices to be heard in blockbuster cinema and new worlds to be seen. This is a vitally important film and an absolute, watch-it-again-immediately blast.

- **Director:** Ryan Coogler
- **Starring:** Chadwick Boseman, Michael B. Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o, Daniel Kaluuya
- **Release date:** 13 February 2018

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