

Editors' Note

This issue would not have happened ten years ago.

Prior to the year 2000, comic book superhero films were largely dismissed as infantile, B-movie pulp. However, in the past decade the filmic superhero has increasingly grown in presence, to the point of becoming synonymous with the Hollywood summer blockbuster. Initial releases such as Bryan Singer's *X-Men* (2000) and Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* (2002) demonstrated the genre's potential for nuanced and complex resonance amidst populist entertainment, drawing upon both comic book backhistories and socio-political subtext alike. Since then, the genre has exploded in mass popularity. Noteworthy examples such as Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy (2005-2012) and Marvel Studios' intertextual approach to adapting their own comic book properties (beginning with *Iron Man* and building into the much anticipated *The Avengers*, with a steadily growing number of new releases) have unearthed unprecedented critical and commercial success. Contemporary superhero films have redefined audience expectations and industry practices alike, reinforcing the genre as a salient site for both socio-cultural capital and industry innovation.

As Hollywood's output of superhero films remains ever expansive (it is telling that three of the features in this issue pertain largely to films released this year), superhero scholarship is, by necessity, particularly vibrant. While considerable critical attention has been devoted to the genre of late, such discourse remains active and evolving, with several pertinent venues remaining for further scholarly investigation: representations and ideologies of gender within superhero texts, the seemingly fundamental role of American iconicity, identity, and industry in the superhero narrative, and the integral role of cutting edge cinematic technology in infusing comic book subject matter with cinematic life. This issue of *Cinephile* strives to expand the burgeoning scholarly discourse in regards to the superhero film, contributing to and extrapolating from such engaged discussions.

To begin, Travis Wagner theorizes allegories of disability in the *Iron Man* trilogy. Wagner explores how protagonist Tony Stark could have served as a proactive representation of a disabled body, and how the trilogy ultimately

undercuts such potential. Following this, Caitlin Foster examines economic, marketing, and branding strategies employed by the two main entertainment companies dominating the superhero genre, Marvel and DC, arguing that Marvel Studios' more uniform brand identity has translated into greater financial and critical success. Barna William Donovan then investigates the evolution of Superman in film, with an emphasis on the character's latest incarnation in Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel*. Donovan explores the film's subtextual interplay with religion and the contemporary United States military, thereby analyzing how *Man of Steel* addresses trends in audience cynicism by reinventing Superman for a contemporary climate. Next, Dru H. Jeffries interrogates the impossibility of fidelity in adapting the superhero costume from comic book origins to live action, emphasizing the potential for audience disconnect between the superhero in and out of costume, and how techniques of editing and technological shifts foster suture in this transition. Finally, drawing upon queer theories of resistance, Lee Easton re-reads filmic supervillains as disrupting or rejecting the ideological project of 'productive' heteronormative masculinity.

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—Kevin Hatch & Kelly St-Laurent