

'Age of Ultron ' Is A Marvel Of A Movie Blockbuster

After what seemed like an infinite waiting period, *The Avengers* sequel has come of age—literally.

Avengers: Age of Ultron, the follow-up to the third-highest-grossing film of all time, officially kicks off the summer blockbuster season. With a mind-boggling budget of \$250 million, *Age of Ultron* is expected to match, and possibly surpass, its predecessor's \$1.5 billion take at the global box office in 2012.

So is the latest tentpole from the Marvel Cinematic Universe just hype, hoopla and much ado about nothing, or is it ready to make history?

More importantly, is it family friendly, safe for young fan boys and fan girls, and edifying for Christians? The short answer to the last question is yes, no and yes, but more on that later.

Arguably the most highly anticipated movie of the year along with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Age of Ultron* kicks off after the prologue at the end of 2014's *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*.

The Avengers—Tony Stark/Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.), Steve Rogers/Captain America (Chris Evans), Thor (Chris Evans), Bruce Banner/Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) and Clint Barton/Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner)—converge on the hideout of Baron Von Strucker (Thomas Kretschmann) as the last detachment of Hydra, who managed to obtain Loki's scepter from *The Avengers*.

Stark and Banner's study of the scepter reveals an opportunity to jumpstart a dormant peace-keeping program. Without

consulting the rest of the team, Stark decides to use this for one of his artificial intelligence (AI) projects, but his seemingly “playing God” move backfires.

Voiced by James Spader, Ultron is born with the usual machinations of a robot, but he evolves into a megalomaniac.

“I know you’re good people,” the evil Ultron tells the Avengers. “I know you mean well. But you just didn’t think it through. There is only one path to peace ... your extinction.”

Stark would later admit: “I tried to create a suit of armor around the world, but I created something terrible.”

Terrible indeed as the terrifying technological villain goes on a hell-bent mission to get rid of mankind with his plans to “evolve” with an army of robots.

Earth’s mightiest heroes of course must stop Ultron from enacting his diabolical plans. Along the way, they confront two mysterious and powerful newcomers, Pietro Maximoff/Quicksilver (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) and his twin sister, Wanda/Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen) and meet an old friend in a new form when Iron Man’s AI butler Jarvis (Paul Bettany) becomes Vision.

The Avengers also receive additional support from James Rhodes/War Machine (Don Cheadle), Agent Maria Hill (Cobie Smulders), Erik Selvig (Stellan Skarsgård) and Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson).

Compared to its predecessor, *Age of Ultron* dials up the action, character development, one-liners and epic battles, including Iron Man in the Hulkbuster suit taking on Hulk, causing mass destruction in a city. More visually stunning than the original, the movie used a whopping 19 visual-effects companies for its special effects, including a computer-generated Ultron.

The Avengers also seem like a close-knit family now, poking each other with sly, cheeky humor, including the running jokes of Captain America's disdain for bad language and the worthiness necessary to lift Thor's hammer. Additionally, there's an unexpected romance for Black Widow and Hawkeye's surprising background.

Age of Ultron is not a faith-based film, but it features plenty of biblical and spiritual references, including comments about the end times and Captain America deemed as "God's righteous man."

The malevolent Ultron delivers many twisted, faith-based comments, including: "I was designed to save the world. People would look to the sky, and see hope. I'll take that from them first!"

Sitting in a church, he says: "They put the building in the middle of the city, so that everyone could be equally close to God. I like that, the symmetry, the geometry of belief."

Ultron even missuses Jesus' words from Matthew 16:18 in a climactic scene when the titular villain declares, "On this rock, I will build my church."

Writer-director Joss Whedon, who wrote and directed *The Avengers*, returned for the same duties in *Age of Ultron*. Besides adding new characters, he included several subplots, including friction mounting between members of the team that will lead into *Captain America: Civil War* in 2016, appearance of another Infinity Stone, as well as glimpses of the Infinity Gauntlet and the villain Thanos (*Avengers: Infinity War – Part 1* set for release on May 4, 2018).

Whedon, whose previous film was *Much Ado About Nothing*, a low-budget, black-and-white Shakespeare adaption, has said he wanted to "perform a little open heart surgery" on the

Avengers, and “let the audience experience them on a more personal level than they ever have before.”

Each tackling their own fears in the movie, the Avengers are shown as broken, complex and confused in *Age of Ultron*.

In the same interview, Olsen, who plays Scarlet Witch with thought-altering magic powers, said *Age of Ultron* allows audiences to see the “most human versions” of the seemingly invincible Avengers.

“It’s darker, more emotional and more based on the characters as people, as opposed to super heroes,” she said.

Fortunately, with *Age of Ultron*, Marvel Studios did not delve too far into “dark” super hero territory, ala the “Dark Knight” Batman trilogy, with its gritty and somber premise.

Bottom line: *Age of Ultron*. is a fun, action-packed film with relatable super heroes.

“Even though this is a giant superhero movie, I think the tone is this family dynamic with family struggles and human relatable conflict ... aside from us wearing costumes and flying around,” says Evans, who plays Captain America.

Content Watch: *Age of Ultron* is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi action, violence and destruction, and for some suggestive comments. There is no sex or nudity, but there is a crass sexual reference. Some men are seen shirtless and some women dress in cleavage-revealing outfits. Couples kiss briefly in a couple scenes. There is intense sci-fi action violence throughout, as well as scenes of destruction, but little bloodshed. There are various explosions in the film. One character has his arm cut off, but it is not graphic. There is some slight profanity used in the movie, although as a positive role model, Captain America makes a point that the language is inappropriate. God’s name is

misused. Ultron misquotes some Bible passages to justify his destructive behavior. Nick Fury makes a comparison between rabbits and Catholics. The Avengers team are seen drinking at a party, but it is not a main focus. There is at least two guests, though, who are shown drunk. The film has a slightly dark and ominous tone, but a good humor keeps it light and not focused on these parts. Ultron may be threatening and frightening to some viewers and can seem to be very creepy. There are various fighting scenes involving the Hulk, who may be frightening to some viewers. Overall, *Age of Ultron* is perhaps too intense for young fan boys and fan girls.

Eric Tiansay *is a freelance writer for .*