

'Civil War' Draws Battle Lines And Moviegoers With Marvelous Epic Clash

The Bible says a house divided cannot stand. Jesus' declaration from Mark 3:25 even applies for the superhero family known as the Avengers.

That's the start-to-finish thread that runs through *Captain America: Civil War*. Featuring the tag line "United we stand. Divided we fall," the latest installment of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) pits hero against hero, and friend against friend as Captain America/Steve Rogers (Chris Evans) and Iron Man/Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) square off.

Arguably the most anticipated movie of the year, *Civil War* may not be exactly family-friendly with its coarse language and intense, though, mostly bloodless violence. But the film hits home on a deep emotional level with its themes on sacrifice, moral righteousness, selfishness and revenge.

Additionally, issues about friendship, family and loyalty course through the exhilarating action scenes and deep character development. Despite its serious premise, *Civil War* is loads of fun, funny and an amazing ride to kick off the summer movie season as it showcases two major new characters in the MCU: Peter Parker/Spider-Man (Tom Holland) and T'Challa/Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman).

The movie picks up the pieces from last summer's *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, in which the fictitious Eastern European nation of Sokovia is nearly destroyed in the battle between the Avengers and the killer robot Ultron.

Earth's mightiest heroes' victory produced a lot of collateral

damage, and another incident in *Civil War* forces the Sokovia Accords, a United Nations' bill that would put a federal committee in charge of the Avengers' actions. Iron Man supports the measure after feeling partly responsible for the international incidents, but Cap is strongly against the bill.

Stark tells Cap: "If we can't accept limitations, we're no better than the bad guys."

But Rogers replies: "That's not the way I see it. ... If we sign this (bill), we surrender our rights to choose."

The stance by Cap and Iron Man regarding liberty and law are both deemed right and wrong at the same time, but the film clearly sides with Rogers' point of view.

The battle lines are drawn with Wanda Maximoff/Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen), Sam Wilson/Falcon (Anthony Mackie), Scott Lang/Ant-Man (Paul Rudd) and Clint Barton/Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner) on Cap's side. Siding with Iron Man are Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson), James Rhodes/War Machine (Don Cheadle), Vision (Paul Bettany), Spider-Man and Black Panther—a royalty from the fictional African nation of Wakanda.

Throw into the mix is Cap's estranged best childhood friend Bucky Barnes, who was brainwashed by the evil organization Hydra and is now trying to overcome his evil conditioning as an assassin to have something of a normal life.

Orchestrating things that happen throughout the film is Baron Zemo (Daniel Brühl), a mysterious character who keeps his motivation and plans secret until the film's climax.

Civil War was directed by brothers Joe and Anthony Russo, who also helmed *The Winter Soldier*, the last Captain America film. *Civil War* is "very intense, has more bite and more edge," says the Russos, who will direct the upcoming *Avengers: Infinity War Part 1*, scheduled for release May 4, 2018.

For those suffering superhero fatigue due to the plethora of comic-book adaptations and sequels, *Civil War* re-energizes the genre with its dramatic flair, thematic unity and innovative action sequences.

The massive superhero brawl in a German airport is worth repeated watching alone, and it features everything a fan boy or fan girl could want from a superhero movie plus huge laughs. It includes Ant-Man riding on one of Hawkeye's shot arrows, which is a classic image pulled straight from the comic books. There's even a neat shout out to *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Overall, *Civil War* is a big movie with a big cast, but it feels like every superhero's presence is necessary. Moviegoers who have grown tired of end-of-the-world plot scenarios ad nauseam will be pleasantly surprised at the relative restraint and ingenuity utilized in the film.

It currently boasts a 93 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes. If that holds, it will be the best-reviewed Marvel film to date out of 13 films. It's projected to earn a massive \$200-plus million at the U.S. box office when it debuts this week.

Bigger in scope than the previous Captain America films, *Civil War* feels like an Avengers film. Bottom line: Hold onto your popcorn, get ready to choose a side and be prepared to think about the movie's themes because '*Civil War* is hellacious. Stick around for at least two post-credits, which will leave viewers cheering.

Content Watch: Parents should exercise caution on allowing younger children to watch *Civil War*, rated PG-13 for extended sequences of violence, action and mayhem. The movie has some intense action sequences, featuring numerous implied and mostly off-screen deaths and injuries. People are shown fleeing for their lives throughout the film. There are numerous beatings among superheroes, with trucks and building

debris landing on them as well as large objects being thrown. A man assassinates two defenseless people after causing their car to hit a tree. He beats the driver in the face to make it look like he hit the steering wheel, which is the most graphic violence in the film. The assassin then kills a woman passenger side, but off-screen. A man is tortured while his captors try to break his spirit. A man commits suicide by blowing himself up. A man's metallic arm is torn off. A man's flying suit is damaged causing him to fall violently to the ground, resulting in many injuries. A final standoff results in a violent fight between two men, leaving both nearly incapacitated. There are at least three profanities and God's name is used in vain several times. Alcohol is consumed in one scene. A man and a woman passionately kiss goodbye, but it's not unseemly. {eoa}

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