

Screen Themes — X-Men Apocalypse vs Daredevil season 2

By *John Turnbull*

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Get your spandex on as entertainment editor [John Turnbull](#) takes a look at the big screen blockbuster *X-Men: Apocalypse* and the small screen action masterpiece *Daredevil*.

X-Men: Apocalypse (2016) directed by Bryan Singer

[Bryan Singer](#) has a long history with comic book movies. He directed the very first X-Men movie back in 2000 and the sequel 3 years later, before making the jump to DC to direct the underwhelming *Superman Returns* in 2006. In 2014 Singer returned to the X-Men universe to direct *Days of Future Past*, and he also picked up the job for *X-Men: Apocalypse*. You'd think after this many movies he might do a better job...

If you're one of the viewers that found *Captain America: Civil War* confusing due to the sheer number of different super powered characters, then *X-Men: Apocalypse* may not be for you.

Honestly, I read X-Men comics for over 10 years, including the storyline on which this movie is based, and more than once I found myself wondering: "*Who the hell is that guy?*"

The plot revolves around an ancient mutant called En Sabah Nur (played by Oscar Isaac) who is awoken from a thousand year sleep to terrorise the world. Christened Apocalypse by the media (or possibly the X-Men, it isn't really clear), the villain surrounds himself with four horsemen, based very loosely on the biblical Pestilence, Famine, War and Death. These horsemen are future X-Men Storm, Psylocke and Angel, played with varying degrees of competence by Alexandra Shipp, Olivia Munn and Ben Hardy, and Magneto, played by the always excellent Michael Fassbender.

It is Fassbender that really carries this movie, along with talented supporting players like Jennifer Lawrence as Mystique, Sophie Turner as Jean Grey and Nicholas Hoult as the Beast. Less successful are James McAvoy, who seems bored as Professor Xavier, and Tye Sheridan playing Cyclops, a character so annoying that they turned him into a mass murderer in the comics. Most disappointing is probably Oscar Isaac, so good in everything from *Inside Llewyn Davis* to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, seemingly unable to emote through layers of makeup and prosthetics.

After the breakout success of *Deadpool*, *X-Men: Apocalypse* is a story of missed

opportunities. Aside from the decision not to use the superb Colossus, X-Men: Apocalypse lacks the humour that elevated Deadpool from standard superhero flick to the highest grossing R rated film of all time. In fact, there is only one factor that differentiates X-Men: Apocalypse from the dour but spectacular Batman vs Superman — Quicksilver.

One of the few characters to live in both the Marvel and X-Men cinematic universes, Quicksilver (played by [Evan Peters](#)) made a brief but scene-stealing appearance in X-Men: Days of Future Past. Unfortunately, his screen time is only slightly increased in Apocalypse, but once again his appearance is the joyful highlight of an otherwise joyless film. Strangely enough, it is also the most compelling bit of action, as most of the runtime of this film seems to be characters standing around posing rather than actually fighting. It's somewhat unfortunate that they've taken the best character in the film and licenced him out to sell [energy drinks](#)...

At the end of the day, X-Men: Apocalypse isn't a bad film. Unfortunately, it isn't the turn of the century anymore, and comic book movies are a dime a dozen. Not as entertaining as Civil War, not as cinematic as Batman vs Superman, X-Men: Apocalypse seems destined to be just another movie on the crowded superhero shelf.

Daredevil season 2 (2016) created by Drew Goddard

The story of a blind lawyer who has super senses and dresses up in a red leather unitard, Daredevil has every right to be ridiculous. Fortunately, creator Drew Goddard and show runners Doug Petrie and Marco Ramirez have managed to do the improbable — turn a potential disaster into one of the most compelling drama series on TV.

The first season of Daredevil (reviewed [here](#)) introduced Daredevil/Matt Murdock ([Charlie](#)

[Cox](#)), his partner Foggy Nelson ([Elden Henson](#)) and their legal assistant Karen Page ([Deborah Ann Woll](#)), pitting the fledgling superhero against the Kingpin, played with spectacular intensity by [Vincent D'Onofrio](#). Darker than most superhero series (with the exception of companion piece Jessica Jones), Daredevil took a markedly different approach than the Marvel cinematic universe — slow burn character building and bone crushing violence rather than galactic conflicts and mid-fight quips.

The second season of Daredevil sees the introduction of two fan-favourite characters, quixotic assassin Elektra Natchios ([Elodie Yung](#)) and psychotic anti-hero Frank Castle, better known as The Punisher and played by [Jon Bernthal](#) from The Walking Dead. [Scott Glenn](#) returns as blind mentor Stick, while D'Onofrio makes an extended cameo as the Kingpin, incarcerated but no less dangerous.

In terms of plot, this season sees the rise of ancient crime organisation The Hand, who are using undead ninja warriors to search for a mysterious weapon called [Black Sky](#). As the bodies fall around him, Daredevil is torn between stopping the Hand and keeping his law practice afloat as they attempt to defend Frank Castle against multiple charges of murder.

In a role that has been played on the big screen by [Dolph Lundgren](#), [Thomas Jane](#) and [Ray Stevenson](#), Bernthal absolutely nails the Punisher. He is at turns chilling and sympathetic, angrily refusing to plead PTSD as a defence for his murder of scores of gang members, but later fighting back tears as he tells Karen about the day his family were killed. I can't wait to see how Netflix handle the Punisher spinoff series.

Fans of B-list super teams (like me) will get excited as the foundations of The Defenders start to come together. Including Daredevil,

Jessica Jones, the soon to debut [Luke Cage](#) and the currently in development Iron Fist, the Defenders are like The Avengers with real world problems.

If I have one complaint about Daredevil, it is that most of the fights take place in near-darkness. While this totally makes sense for a blind superhero, it can be super hard to work out what the hell is going on until you remember that you can turn up the brightness on your TV...

Conclusion

X-Men: Apocalypse is a big budget blockbuster that looks spectacular. It has a bunch of big name actors posing intensely in front of a green screen, a wildly entertaining interlude that feels like it should be in a different film, and some heavy-handed themes comparing being a mutant with being gay, disabled or afflicted with a terminal disease. We get it, Bryan Singer. Discrimination is bad.

Daredevil, on the other hand, covers some interesting moral territory, but doesn't let that stop the series from being entertaining, engaging and surprising. The Punisher is a serial killer but any description, but lives by a moral code and takes responsibility for his actions. Matt Murdock makes the decision to fight The Hand rather than focus on the case, and is rewarded by the collapse of his law firm and the loss of his best friend. Most ambiguous of all, the Kingpin sits in his cell, manipulating all around him to build a new power base.

X-Men: Apocalypse: 6/10

Daredevil season 2: 9/10

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