

“Black Panther”

By Helen Lutz

After much reflection I realize that I was deprived by my parents as a child. Let me explain. Kids loved to read since our ‘screen time’ consisted mainly of black and white televisions playing the ‘Ed Sullivan Show’ and the news if we were lucky enough to own a television. When I’d go to the store with my mother, I’d always look at the comic books, but rarely was allowed to buy any (my family didn’t have much extra cash). Instead we spent a lot of time at the library and I was encouraged to read ‘good books’; I was *deprived* of learning about and appreciating all the comic book heroes. It’s no wonder that when I did have the opportunity to watch television, I really enjoyed George Reeves as Superman because he was “faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound” and he had x-ray vision and could fly – my imagination would take flight right alongside him.



For the last 20 years or so I’ve been blessed to have had an extraordinary mentor, the late Bob Polunsky, and an excellent working relationship with the movie studios learning to appreciate the art and creativity that goes into the making of movies. Each genre offers its audience something special, however, among my favorites is the comic book hero movies whether watching Thor or Iron Man or Batman or the new Wonder Woman, my imagination again takes flight with them.

The newest comic book hero introduced to theater audiences is the Black Panther. In director Ryan Coogler’s “Black Panther” we watch as a group of little boys play basketball on the playground with an old milk crate acting as the hoop. Inside the low rent apartment T’Challa (Chadwick Boseman), prince of the African nation of Wakanda along with “Two Grace Jones–lookin’ chicks—with spears!” pay a visit to one of the apartments. The visit doesn’t bode well for the inhabitants or eventually for one of the little guys outside playing basketball.

Wakanda is a magical country hidden from the world by an illusionary rainforest. To the outside world it is nothing more than another third world African country, however, a meteor blessed the country eons ago with an abundance of the strongest metal on Earth, vibranium, thus creating a society far advanced to any other on the planet without war or colonialism – no one outside of Wakanda knows about it.

When his father is killed by a terroristic blast while at the U.N., T’Challa (aka the Black Panther) finds himself serving as king and protector of his country and protect he must as some of the precious vibranium has fallen into nefarious hands outside of the peaceful kingdom. The bad guys, of course, are using its valuable properties to wreck havoc upon an unsuspecting world and must be stopped.

All comic book stories must have a villain and “Black Panther” has a dilly. Remember that little boy playing basketball with the milk crate? Well little boys tend to grow up, and angry little boys who violently lose their father tend to grow up angry and tough and seeking revenge. Meet Erik Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan) who has grown up into a fighting American black ops killing machine specializing in assassination and nation destabilization. While King T’Challa considers options to use the bounty of Wakanda’s vibranium to assist the world, Killmonger sees things differently. Finally the opportunity to raise the black man out of his depths and rule the world is at hand; all he has to do is challenge and overcome King T’Challa.

The “Black Panther” offers an intriguing vision of the world as well as the new comic book hero and is beautifully portrayed from start to finish. We have a strong hero with integrity and character; we have smart and capable men and women at his side and imaginative technology that keeps us glued to our seats. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “Black Panther” THREE 1/2 HARTS. This is one comic book hero movie that should be seen on the big screen with big sound and will keep you guessing through the end, but you might want to pass on the 3-D. As with all Marvel Comic Book movies, be sure to stay through the end of the credits – it doesn’t disappoint.