

**MCU's Excelsior Cinematic Universe vs. The Downfall of the DCEU:
How Marvel Studios' Pacing and Planning Helped Them Embrace
Transmedia Storytelling to Conquer the Cinematic Universe**

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Introduction

When it comes to superheroes, Marvel and DC are the two companies that shine in that department. Even though both companies share the idea of creating superheroes, they have their differences when it comes to how they want to present these superheroes to the media. Marvel owns respective heroes such as Spiderman, Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, and Hulk. This means that only Marvel is able to use these characters in their works and no other company can use their character as Marvel protected the claim to these characters, and only Marvel has the rights to use these characters in their projects.. This rule also applies to DC with their characters. DC owns respective heroes like Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, and Green Lantern. With these superheroes becoming more and more popular due to their creativity and likeness in the comic books, both DC and Marvel have promoted these heroes in numerous multimedia platforms. Things like merchandise, comic books, animated shows, animated movies, and toys are a few examples of both companies' way of promoting and displaying their characters worldwide to audiences of their superheroes. It was only a matter of time for both companies to promote their characters on the big screen of movies and display them on a worldwide media. Marvel's first ever movie was *Captain America* (Elmer Clifton and John English, 1944) and DC's first ever movie was *Superman and the Mole Man* (Lee Sholem, 1951) and ever since then, both companies throughout the years have created iconic and revolutionary films that helped elevate not only the superhero genre in the world of films, but also constructed a new blueprint of worldbuilding when it comes to their cinematic universes.

In recent years, superhero films have become more iconic to the public's eyes, and boosted up in terms of popularity. According to the article "MOVIE MARVELS" by Ethan Alter,

it states that “As their past successes attest, [Marvel’s Kevin] Feige and his team have apparently found the right recipe for making comic-book movies that please the genre core fanboy crowd while also appealing to a wider audience”. According to the article as well it states that “Under Feige's watch, Marvel Studios has produced two Iron Man adventures that together grossed over \$1.2 billion worldwide and kicked off the 2011 summer movie season with the Paramount release of Thor, which just passed the \$400 million mark”.¹ It isn’t just comic book fans that are attending these films, but non comic book fans also come to watch these films due to their creativity, their unique and revolutionary plots that shine a light on the superhero genre, and these films appeal to both types of audiences. Due to this both, Marvel and DC have created a cinematic universe with their respective superheroes, basically having their superheroes in the same universe as each other and introducing them in films that tie into each other. Marvel started their cinematic universe back in 2008 with the release of *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008) and is still continuing on till this day; going on a 14 year plus journey in the MCU. DC started their cinematic universe back in 2013 with the release of *Man of Steel* (Zack Snyder, 2013). Marvel has created cinematic masterpieces like *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012), *Avengers Infinity War* (Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, 2018), *Captain America Civil War* (Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, 2016), and *Spiderman No Way Home* (Jon Watts, 2021). However, the same can’t be said when it comes to the DC side of things. The DCEU (Detective Comics Extended Universe) is looked down upon, and viewers agree that most of their movies aren’t as creative as the Marvel movies. According to the article “Batgirl cancellation explains why DCEU is such a mess compared to MCU” by Kshitij Mohan Rawat it states that “The film (*Justice League*) was a spectacular failure, grossing about \$650 million on a budget of an incredible \$350 million. The

¹ Ethan Altar, “MOVIE MARVELS”, *Journal Name*, 2011 pg 12.

reason, apart from the tonal mess, was also that audiences did not know most of these characters. Only Superman and Wonder Woman had standalone films. Flash, Aquaman, and Cyborg were known only to comic book fans and those who had seen the animated series on DC's primary superhero team. In other words, DC had not earned a team-up movie yet. It was too rushed, particularly in contrast to the MCU.² The DCEU felt extremely rushed to compete against the MCU and there are a lot of problems that fans are able to see throughout these movies. For example, there are very confusing and wacky plots in their films like in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (Zack Snyder, 2016) when Superman died while fighting Doomsday. When Superman died in the comic book world, it was very impactful because Superman spent years winning the hearts of readers, the city of Metropolis, other fellow heroes and the entire planet. So when an unstoppable man died everyone felt the impact. When they tried to do it in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* it failed to have that same impact because the people on Earth still didn't trust him completely and it was a very young Superman instead of an older and more established Man of Steel. The casting inconsistency is very distracting. We don't know if we are going to get these actors again playing their respective roles and it's always a coin toss whether or not they are coming back. Henry Cavill going back and forth whether or not he is returning as Superman, and Ezra Miller probably won't return as Flash due to the charges against him in 2022 when he was charged with harassment and disorderly conduct at a karaoke bar. The very dark and brooding stories that they present like in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) where Batman was presented more as a brutal and violent anti-hero rather than a vigilante. He blows cars up when criminals are in them, breaks criminals' spine and neck that look lethal, and

² "Batgirl cancellation explains why DCEU is such a mess compared to MCU" elaborates on the productive choices that the DCEU has made and why they are seen as less successful than Marvel; due to their rushed films, lack of origin superhero films, and very messy planning.

proceeds to kill Superman without any remorse; everyone has something negative to say regarding the DCEU.

Fans don't even compare the DCEU films to the MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) because of how bad it is compared to the MCU. Fans believe that the DCEU has made a lot of poor choices that decline their potential of being a competition to the MCU; except for a few exceptions. How come that is? How come DC can't make successful films in their extended universe even though they have just as if not more popular characters. This is what I want to explore regarding my paper; I want to ask why do people believe the DCEU is less successful than the MCU? With the help of fans of these films and other critics, I will investigate the differences regarding both companies and how the steps they laid out contributed to their cinematic universe. I also want to explore both companies' pacing and planning when it comes to their creation of their cinematic universes and how Marvel structured it well, and how their usage of transmedia helped them elevate their popularity and how they managed to increase the superhero genre to being one of the most watched genres in theaters. According to the article "Transmedia Storytelling 101" by Henry Jenkins, it states that "Transmedia storytelling reflects the economics of media consolidation or what industry observers call synergy." The article also mentions that "Consider, for example, the comic books published in advance of the release of such films as *Batman Begins* and *Superman Returns* by DC (owned by Warner Brothers, the studio that released these films). These comics provided back-story which enhanced the viewer's experience of the film even as they also help to publicize the forthcoming release"³ I want to identify all of these factors plus more on why DC is looked down upon and why Marvel is the

³"Transmedia Storytelling 101" by Henry Jenkins explains the usage of Transmedia and what it is. It also elaborates on the purpose of it and the multiple factors that are tied into transmedia.

more successful superhero company in terms of its financial and popularity among comic book fans and cinema fans as well.

Chapter One: Pre MCU/DCEU

Marvel wasn't always the titan when it came to their films; there was a time where DC actually was making more successful films and Marvel was struggling to put their foot in the door steps. The start of iconic superhero films dates all the way back to 1978 with the release of *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978). Director Richard Donner created a very vivid masterpiece and Christopher Reeve did a fantastic job at capturing Superman's compassion and heroism that was displayed in the comic books on the big screen. *Superman* (1978) was a blockbuster that was building on the success of films such as *Star Wars* and *Jaws*, and really shined the light on what was the potential that a superhero movie can produce. There were other DC and Marvel films before this one such as *Superman and the Mole-Men* (Lee Sholem, 1951), *Captain America* (Elmer Clifton and John English, 1944); but this was the first film that felt like it held some real weight behind it due to its creativity and the impact in the cinema world at the time. *Superman* (1978) is considered one of the best superhero films due to what it brought to the table and how much it influenced other superhero films; especially other Superman films. According to the article *Why Richard Donner's Superman Is Still The Best One "In Movies AND TV*, it states that "audiences and critics fell in love with *Superman: The Movie*"⁴ The film earned \$300 million worldwide (equal to \$1.9 billion today) and *Superman* holds a 94% Fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes." The article also points out that the film *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006) was a direct sequel to Donner's movie that starred Brandon Routh who continued the role originated by Reeve.

⁴ *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978) is considered the first superhero film that started the rise of superhero films due to what it accomplished.

DC then produced three other Superman movies such as *Superman II* (Richard Lester and Richard Donner, 1980), *Superman III* (Richard Lester, 1983), and *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (Sidney J. Furie, 1987). The bar was now extremely high for superhero films and these directors knew they had to do something different and new besides these TV movie films. No superhero film was able to match up against Christopher Reeve's Superman's films. That was until 1989 when Tim Burton directed *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989). *Batman* (1989) was the second DC film and superhero film that was able to hold the same amount of weight as *Superman* (1978) had in terms of its popularity, impact on the cinematic aspect, and being a big blockbuster film. Marvel at the time was still struggling to grasp that weight that *Superman* (1978) and *Batman* (1989) were able to have and in 1989. Marvel only had two non-TV films under their belts, that being *Howard the Duck* (Willard Huyck, 1986) and *The Punisher* (Mark Goldblatt, 1989). These two Marvel films failed to do what DC was able to do; have films that capture weight in terms of making an impact in the superhero world when it comes to cinema and making comic book and non-comic book fans intrigued by the film. Also by displaying iconic and popular superheroes that comic book and non comic book fans are aware of, and open the world for more multimedia opportunities for these movies.

Batman (1989) was able to accomplish the popularity that *Superman* (1978) was able to grasp with the very dark and brilliant mind of Tim Burton, and the amazing job of Micheal Keton and Jack Nicholsan for playing their respective roles as Batman and Joker. *Batman* (1989) held so much weight regarding multimedia that it influenced one of the greatest comic book animated shows being *Batman the Animated Series* (1992-1995). The film was able to put comic book panels to life and was able to express these characters in a revolutionary way. Also producing three other Batman films *Batman Returns* (Tim Burton, 1992), *Batman Forever* (Joel

Schumacher, 1995), and *Batman and Robin* (Joel Schumacher, 1997); DC was ahead in terms of superhero films until the late 1990's. The late 1990's is when Marvel was finally in competition in terms of producing films that were successful and was able to feud with DC projects.

Marvel was finally able to have their films hold value and weight in 1998; that being *Blade* (Stephen Norrington, 1998). *Blade* (1998) finally did good for Marvel and was able to compete with DC films due to it creating a creative and fun origin film of a character that no one is really aware of unless you are into comic books. Films like *Blade* (1998), *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000) and *Spider-Man* (Sam Rami, 2002) were making Marvel more popular and seemed like legitimate competition for DC. These films were able to capture that rich feeling of these characters and were able to tell straightforward yet compelling and interesting stories of these iconic or lesser known superheroes. After 20 years of DC dominating Marvel in terms of their films, Marvel looked like an actual competition; and maybe the superior superhero company when it comes to their live action movies. However, during the early 2000's, there seemed to be a decline in terms of superhero movies. Superhero films felt less impactful and lost that meaning behind what makes a good superhero movie; that being a compelling story for the characters and their journey on why they became a superhero in the first place. Both Marvel and DC films such as *Daredevil* (Mark Steven Johnson, 2003), *Elektra* (Rob Bowman, 2005), *Catwoman* (Pitof, 2004), and *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006) were examples of the decline of superhero films. *Daredevil* (2003) was a bad film due to every character feeling way too corny or not presenting their characters from the comic book well, *Catwoman* (2004) had way too much bad GCI and the story was extremely silly to follow, and *Elektra* (2005) was about a film no comic

book or non-comic book fan wanted to see due to how non popular the character was.⁵ There were a few exceptions however, *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005), *Spider-Man 2* (Sam Rami, 2004), and *X2: X-Men United* (Bryan Singer, 2003). It wasn't until 2008 where Marvel was able to have a consistency in their films and revolutionized the meaning behind what makes a good superhero film; even more revolutionary than what DC did in the 1970's and 1980's.

⁵“Flashback: Halle Berry Accepts Razzie Award for “Piece of Shit” “Catwoman Movie” explains how *Catwoman* (2004) was so bad that the lead actress Halle Berry won the “Razzie Award” due to how bad the film was received.

Chapter Two: The beginning of the MCU

In 2008 Marvel came out with *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008), which not only did a fantastic job at giving a high standard for origin movies and Iron Man himself as a character, but it also was the starting point of creating a cinematic universe; which meant that any movie that tied into these films was considered part of the MCU. The MCU was going to be a cinematic universe that had all the movies tied into each other and these films were going to tell a story that bounced off another film that was in the MCU. This was revolutionary because until 2008 superhero films were solely for that superhero. Other comic book characters weren't presented in other superhero films, so to be able to see this was mind blowing and held that weight that superhero films were able to have because this was different. These superhero films felt impactful and affecting and it felt like the world was coming together. We got to see Iron Man team up with Captain America to fight against Loki, no longer heroes going to fight the odds by themselves. Instead if they needed to, they were going to get some help from other superheroes. Marvel wasn't afraid to tell the audience these superheroes lived among each other and showcased it in their films. This was a step forward for transmedia storytelling because Marvel was making their own universe; heroes and villains on Earth, heroes and villains in space, heroes and villains in the universe, everything and everyone in Marvel was connected and breaking the barriers of a solo superhero film with only one hero is presented. And it wasn't superheroes that had sidekicks as well like Batman with Robin or Captain America with Bucky; it was one superhero like Spider-Man that was able to have a character like Iron Man in his movie. Marvel exceeded the bar with superhero films and revolutionized superhero films; making superhero films one of the most watched genres in the realm of cinema due to the MCU.

It wasn't just the fact that Marvel introduced a cinematic universe that made them more successful, but it was also their presentation as well. According to the article "Corporate communication: Analysing Marvel and DC" by Marinus J.J. Van Den Anker and Piet Verhoeven⁶, it talks about the difference in how Marvel and DC films present themselves. The article states that "In both ads and tweets, DC consistently communicates about comic books more than Marvel does, while Marvel consistently communicates more about various other domains. This fits Marvel's positioning when it comes to how they promote themselves as an "entertainment" company and DC's positioning as a "comic book" company". The article also mentions "the content and promotional attention to comic books in the different serves the company and the conglomerates that include them; the analysis shows that media entertainment companies within the same landscape of superheroes make different strategic communication choices in promoting various superhero media content and superhero merchandise". This article shows that Marvel and DC both promote their companies differently and how Marvel prioritizes other things instead of their comic books. DCEU films try to be as similar as their comic books while Marvel explores others and tells other stories that relate to the viewers by not strictly following a specific comic book as reference, but rather change the story or alter bits and pieces of it to have their own voice regarding the films. In the early work of superhero films like *Superman (1978)* and *Batman (1989)*, the films tended to be corny and more kid friendly by showing scenes like Batman pulling out a Bat credit card in *Batman and Robin (1997)* and Superman throwing a giant cellophane S in *Superman II (1980)*. Even though they were revolutionary in terms of superheroes and cinema, they were still kid friendly and weren't taking themselves too seriously. This wasn't until the 1990's where superhero films shied away from the

⁶ "Corporate communication: Analysing Marvel and DC" talks about how both companies promote themselves and what they focus on more in terms of their merchandise, pages 126-127.

corny aspect and were taking themselves seriously. This was shown in *Iron Man* (2008) and other MCU films where the film had a more realistic tone behind them and were taking themselves more seriously in terms of the setting, and the story and the characters as well. For example, *Iron Man 3* (Shane Black, 2013) addressed people with anxiety, *Captain America: The First Avenger* (Joe Johnston, 2011) addressed the impact of war and the effect that it has on people, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, 2014) addressed about a man out of time and how that man has to become accustomed to a different era due to him being away from his hometown for so long. So not only was Marvel building a cinematic universe but they were also talking about real life problems that ordinary people might be going through as well; making these films more relatable for the ordinary person.

DC at the time was delivering serious and impacting films as well just as The Dark Knight Trilogy. An example of this was in *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008) where the film was talking about terrorist and post 9/11 and subsequent government politics by displaying the Joker causing terrorist attacks against Gotham City by blowing buildings and city structures up and causing a city wide panic with his schemes and attacks. Even though The Dark Knight Trilogy was able to talk about serious tones in their films, told a very compelling story in them, and had actors such as Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, and Aaron Eckhart do outstanding and revolutionary tasks by bringing the characters to the big screen from the comic books; Marvel was still ahead due to the world building that they had created. The Dark Knight Trilogy is considered one of the best trilogies in superhero history with possibly one of the best superhero movies out to date, that being *The Dark Knight* (2008). According to the article *Why "The Dark*

Knigh” is the best superhero movie of all time⁷, it states that “With Christian Bale in the starring role, “The Dark Knight” provides a more mature, more advanced Batman than “Batman Begins.” And that means more advanced villains and a higher-stakes plot, too. Between incredible acting performances from the entire cast, tension grounded in real life and an ending no one could expect, “The Dark Knight” establishes itself as the untouchable best on-screen comic book adaptation. Despite my diehard love for Marvel, I’m highly doubtful anything can beat it.” Even though this is considered one of the best superhero films, DC was still quite behind competing against Marvel due to not processing a cinematic universe and it is a singular superhero film versus a film that is proceeding to bring every Marvel character together.

The MCU didn’t just help establish Marvel characters, but it also helped establish lesser-known superheroes that didn’t seem as important to characters like Captain America or Thor. Non-comic book fans were presented with these heroes and shined a light on the potential that they could have. Characters like Black Widow, War Machine, Hawkeye, and Ant-Man were being presented well and were given depth in terms of their characters. War Machine⁸ was no longer a copy and paste Iron Man and was his own character in the MCU. Black Widow and Hawkeye were seen as useful and were presented as actual importance in these films, and Ant-Man wasn’t seen as a joke character and stood out as his own hero instead of just that one guy that was in the original Avengers in the comic books. Each film had a more serious tone to these characters and were paced well in terms of their trials and tribulations. Even though some

⁷ Shannon Moore, *Why “The Dark Knight” is the best superhero movie of all time, 2022* explains how *The Dark Knight* is one of the best superhero films of all time and probably the best DC film out to date due to what they were able to accomplish and put a high bar in terms of Batman films and DC films as well.

⁸ War Machine aka James Rhodes was in the Marines. He was saved by Iron Man when his helicopter was shot down and eventually Tony Stark offered Rhodes a job as his pilot for Stark International. When Tony Stark was fighting his personal demons he took on the mantle as Iron Man and due to his impressive work, Tony Stark told Rhodes he can keep the suit and later changed it to War Machine.

films could be funnier than the others like *Ant-Man* (Peyton, Reed, 2015), the film still showed a depth and importance to that character and why they belong in this universe as well. These lesser-known heroes weren't only presented as cameos or as characters to have more heroes in these films, they were in it for the long haul. Sure, most of them didn't have their own films but they were a focal point for other superhero films. Black Widow was a recurring character that was in most of the Captain America films and in *Iron Man 2* (2010), and War Machine was in every one of Iron Man's films. More widely known heroes like Captain America, Iron Man, Hulk, and Thor had their own solo films to introduce these characters; but eventually they would all share the spotlight and be presented together in the big blockbuster that being *The Avengers* (2012). These heroes weren't just thrown in the big team up film, Marvel respected these characters to the point that we got to know them and understand them in their own films or we saw them recurring in other films so that we got to know them throughout these films. Before *The Avengers* (2012), each main hero in the MCU got their own film to establish them. According to the article "Marvel vs. DC: Mergers, Acquisitions and Corporate Rebranding in the New Millennium"⁹ by Caitlin Foster, it mentions how the reason why Marvel is very successful is due to the fact that it has a nice balance of drama of their own stories that they apply in these films in regards to their heroes and bringing comic book action from the pages to the big screen. Marvel doesn't just put comic book panels on the big screen, they also bring some of their ideas into these films. Unlike DC that tries to follow a comic book for majority of the film, Marvel isn't afraid to shy away from the comics and branch in ideas and stories of their own. Marvel is allowing other transmedia factors into their films. Things like comic books, video games, and the

⁹"Marvel vs. DC: Mergers, Acquisitions and Corporate Rebranding in the New Millennium" elaborates on how Marvel's pacing helps elevate their popularity and their characters as well. If you weren't a comic book fan you probably didn't know characters like Black Widow, Hawkeye, or Scarlet Witch. But thanks to these films giving these characters spotlight and importance to the MCU, these characters are becoming more well known page 16.

internet are a few examples of things Marvel was considering while making these films; unlike DC where their primary source was comic books. Marvel branched every idea and transmedia to elevate their stories in their cinematic universe and every film and character felt like they were important and had a purpose there. They planned their stories well to the point where lesser known comic book characters became more popular and probably as popular as the more known Marvel superheroes like Scarlet Witch, Vision, and Falcon.

Chapter Three: The beginning of the DCEU

By 2012 Marvel had made 6 films for their MCU, that being *Iron Man* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (Louis Leterrier, 2008), *Iron Man 2* (Jon Favreau, 2010), *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011), *Captain America: The First Avenger* (Joe Johnston, 2011), and *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012); yet DC was still making solo films. In 2012 DC made the last film in The Dark Knight Trilogy (*The Dark Knight Rises* [Christopher Nolan, 2012], and *Green Lantern* (Martin Campbell, 2011); but those films were in their own respective universe and not making a cinematic universe for the DC characters. This all changed in 2013 with the release of *Man of Steel* (Zack Snyder, 2013). At first *Man of Steel* (2013) seemed like a stand-alone Superman film, and it wasn't until later that audiences found out that it was the start of the DCEU (Detective Comic Extended Universe). DC had finally done it in terms of making a cinematic universe with their respective characters and it was time to see if DC was able to take back its title of being the superior superhero film creator that it once was in the 1970's and 1980's. Films such as *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (Zack Snyder, 2016), *Suicide Squad* (David Ayer, 2016), *Wonder Woman* (Patty Jenkins, 2017), and *Justice League* (Zack Snyder, 2017) were DC films that tied into their respective universe. It looked like DC was finally coming back for the throne of being the superhero company that had the better superhero films.

Things were looking good for the DCEU and it was presented as a legitimate competition towards the MCU. The DCEU was having actors such as Henry Cavill playing as Superman, Ben Affleck playing as Batman, Gal Gadot playing as Wonder Woman, and Ray Fisher playing as Cyborg; we were going to receive actors that looked the part in the characters they were playing. But what was the story, world building, and most of all who was going to direct this world

building? The DCEU was going to be led by Zack Snyder who had worked on a previous superhero film before. Even though it was one superhero film, the film he directed was a big one in terms of its complexity due to its different route at displaying superheroes and it wasn't your standard superhero film like a Marvel or DC film; that being *Watchmen* (Zack Snyder, 2009). The DC universe is different from its tone compared to Marvel. Marvel is more light hearted, where DC is darker with its stories and sinister with its characters. The *Watchmen* franchise fits in that very dark and sinister category, and Zack Snyder did an amazing job at capturing that and portraying that on the big screen. "The *Watchmen*" "heroes" were more like anti-heroes than heroes because they weren't shy away from killing people, participating in the Vietnam war, and taking the extreme precautions for their beliefs. Zack Snyder was able to display their anti-hero aspects in this film and displayed these character justice. So with that, fans were excited that he was going to direct the DCEU and capture that dark tone that DC is known for. The only issue with that was that the films felt a little too dark and neglected these comic books characters.

It isn't without saying though the dark and gloomy aspect for DC films can work; just look at *The Dark Knight* (2008). *The Dark Knight* is as dark as the DCEU and not as light-hearted as the MCU; but it is considered one of the best DC movies of all time. The reason behind this is because the film doesn't neglect or change the characters around their setting. Batman in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) is a murderer; he breaks people's necks that looks like he didn't just immobilize a man but also killed him as well, shoots a goon's tank that was connected to his flamethrower which made him blow up, almost killed the Man of Steel himself, and was blowing up cars that still had goons in the car. However, Batman in *The Dark Knight* (2008) is still Batman at the end of the day. The film isn't changing his character and he is still that icon that everyone is aware of and loves. The film captures Batman's dark and

brooding attitude perfectly; having him fighting off multiple goons and injuring them, interrogating goons and putting fear in them, and never allowing himself to cross that line. Even though in *The Dark Knight* (2008) Batman had every right to execute the Joker after he had killed his love interest Rachel Dawes, he still captured the Joker instead of killing him. Batman in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) isn't Batman and acts extremely differently. He brands goons with a steaming Batagrang, and kills everyone in his way. There is dark and there is too dark, and that is why both films are completely different yet having the same character.

Chapter Four: The issues revolving around the DCEU

Like I mentioned earlier, Zack Snyder's DCEU projects were a bit too dark and neglected these characters for who they are and what they stand for. That being what most people say is one of the issues regarding these films; the DCEU is way too dark. Now I know I just mentioned that DC is supposed to be dark and gritty, that is what shies away and makes it different from Marvel; but in the DCEU it goes a bit overboard with it. A big example is Superman. Superman is supposed to be a character that stands out from all of the rest with his actions and his beliefs. He is supposed to be the last bit of hope the world can depend on. As a kid I couldn't stand Superman because for me he was always corny and never broke free from that good guy attitude; it basically felt like Superman was a Marvel character in the DC universe. Always light hearted and never shifted into that dark persona that most characters have in the DC universe. But as an adult I started to respect and enjoy Superman for what he stands for. You have to have a character like Superman in the DC universe. Characters like Batman, Mr. Freeze, and Reverse Flash are all dark and make the situation more hostile than it has to be. But then you introduce Superman into the picture it automatically changes. He is the beacon of hope, the last source of good if everything seems lost, always sees the good in the situation; so, when you have that character killing someone it kind of defeats all he stands for and defeats his character. Towards the ending of *Man of Steel* (2013), Superman kills the villain of the film that is General Zod and that isn't something Superman would do. Maybe Batman, or Green Arrow or Wonder Woman would do that, but not Superman.

Another example is Batman. Batman is meant to be dark and brooding, but the way it was portrayed in the DCEU was a bit too much for fans to tolerate. In the DCEU universe Bruce

Wayne has been portrayed as the cape crusader for a few years already, he has lost the life of his sidekick Robin, already has established super villains like Joker and Harley Quinn, and is known in the world of the DCEU. Unlike Superman, who has got his own origin film, Batman is an already established character and we are thrown right in the middle of his journey. Now this isn't an issue to have an already established Batman in the DCEU, it works actually because everyone knows who Batman is and his backstory. Even if they don't read comic books, they still know who Batman is because of his popularity and impact on the comic book world; they did this with Spiderman as well in the MCU in *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) where they just threw Spiderman into the picture without giving him an origin story film. This is because everyone knows these characters so it wouldn't make sense to give them an origin story due to their popularity. However, the Batman they used in the DCEU films didn't seem like Batman and made no sense in terms of his characters. This established Batman was using guns, killing goons off, being unreasonable, and let his temper get the better of him. This isn't how an established Batman should act, instead he should be aware of a situation and understand the situation. Maybe a younger Batman with less experience could use guns and kill people, but not an older version of Batman that has been Batman for years now. Batman is on a kill spree in these films and made him look like a lunatic instead of the Batman we all know and love.

Another issue people have regarding the DCEU films is that the films' storylines are a bit difficult to follow and the pacing of these storylines are wacky and not consistent. The film that really shows this is *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016). This film was every comic book fan's dream coming to life; the big superhero fight between Batman and Superman. Everything was set into place, and it looked like it was going to take the superhero scene by storm, however it did the complete opposite. The first mistake that was made was that it came

out the same year that *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) came out. *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) was released on March 25, 2016; two months before *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) came out. *Batman v Superman; Dawn of Justice* (2016) had to compete with the 13th release of the MCU while this was only the second DCEU movie that was released. Marvel obviously had an idea with the route they wanted to go for, while DC was still understanding how to direct themselves with their extended universe. Even though it was coming out two months before, the amount of pressure that they had was extremely high and there was a lot riding on this film. If it came out a year prior or after *Captain America: Civil War* (2016), I feel like it would have been more suitable for them because this Captain America film was going to be big in terms of excitement and popularity. “Civil War” in the comic books was a big issue due to having all of the Marvel characters fighting amongst themselves on either Captain America’s team or Iron Man’s team. The world felt unsafe due to all of these superpower people roaming around freely and even though they are superheroes and saving the world, the fact that they have these superpowers and can convert to the dark side scares civilians. So the government made a plan to have superpowered beings work with the government and not be independent so they can always have an eye on them and keep them in check. Iron Man thought this was a good idea due to having order and making the people feel safe while Captain America thought this was a dumb idea because he believed that superheroes should be independent and go where there is trouble instead of the government telling them where to go. It was team Iron Man that was for the government and being an employee versus team Captain America that was against the government and being an independent superhero.

The second issue with *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) was that the story was all over the place and the pacing was not consistent whatsoever. *Batman v Superman: Dawn*

of Justice (2016) had three comic books tied into it. It had *The Dark Knight Returns* which is a comic book that displays an older version of Batman coming out of retirement, *Trinity* which is when the big three of the Justice League; Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman come together to join forces, and *Superman: Doomsday* where an alien called Doomsday comes to Metropolis and fights Superman. In the process, Superman dies defeating Doomsday and protects Metropolis. *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) crammed three comic books into this film, and it felt very rushed. There wasn't a nice blend of arcs in the film and instead they would just jump from comic book to comic book, and it was very noticeable. Their late arrival towards the DCEU was shown in this film primarily and it was not a good film. Marvel at this time had five years experience when it comes to their cinematic universe and seven films under their belt; so they knew the directions they were taking and they knew the proper way of elevating their cinematic universe. However, the DCEU had one film under their belt and they weren't taking their time and wanted to compete against Marvel; thus their second film was a Batman and Superman fight instead of another origin film and were taking reference from one of the best DC comic book *The Dark Knight Returns* (Frank Miller, 1986) The thing that made the comic book *The Dark Knight Returns*, which this film took a huge inspiration from, so popular and rich was that it made sense towards the setting and the characters. It had an old Batman coming out of retirement and donning the Batman costume once again due to him seeing that the world still needs a Batman. An older Superman that now works with the President forces Batman to stop because the world made a deal that every superhero retires due to them feeling scared and unsafe with all these superheroes roaming free causing more harm than good. Everyone agreed, but throughout the years Batman realized that this deal wasn't benefiting anyone and felt like it was his responsibility to dawn the cape again. Superman was ordered to stop Batman and they

fought. It makes more sense because Batman and Superman now have history, one is working with the government while one is working against it, and there was a story to tell. However, for *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* there wasn't a story holding the fight together. Instead, it was Batman being paranoid of Superman's power and that was it. *The Dark Knight Returns* had two icons fighting for what they believed in, and they were both right in their own way, but in the film the fight lost its value and made no sense.

Another issue that the DCEU has is that their casting inconsistencies are way too distracting. Unlike the MCU, the DCEU has been having issues with their cast. Henry Cavill who plays as Superman has been on and off in terms of his stay with the projects. There were rumors that he will not return to his role after the release of *Justice League* (2017), then fans believed that we got him back after his cameo in *Black Adam* (Jaume Collet-Serra, 2022). But now it is confirmed that Henry Cavill is officially not going to return to his role as Superman. According to a tweet he wrote on Twitter¹⁰, it states that "After being told by the studio to announce my return back in October, prior to their hire, this news isn't the easiest, but that's life. The changing of the guard is something that happens. I respect that. James and Peter have a universe to build. I wish them and all involved with the new universe the best of luck, and the happiest of fortunes." James Gunn who is now the new co-chairman for DC Studios' pointed out that he is going in a new direction and wants to focus more on the superhero's younger years. James Gunn is restarting the DCEU after the release of the upcoming Flash movie and has different directions that he wants to attend to.

¹⁰ DiscussingFilm (@Discussing Film) "Henry Cavill says he is no longer returning as Superman", Twitter, Dec 14, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DiscussingFilm/status/1603208103805452288> Henry Cavill tweeted to fans that he had a meeting with the new head of the DCEU James Gunn, and stated that James Gunn is going in a new direction with the cinematic universe revolving around the DCEU and they don't need Henry Cavill.

It isn't only Henry Cavill, it is also actors like Ben Affleck and Ezra Miller. Ben Affleck is perhaps not going to reprise his role as Batman but might continue to work in the realm of the DCEU. James Gunn stated, "Met with Ben yesterday precisely because he wants to direct, and we want him to direct; we just have to find the right project." He is still going to be in the new Flash film, but it looks like either as a cameo or this could be the last film we see with Batflect before the restart of the DCEU. Also, there was the whole disorderly conduct and harassment situation that led Ezra Miller to being arrested and charged. Ezra Miller who plays as the Flash was arrested for ripping a microphone away from one woman and lunged at a man who was playing darts in a karaoke bar in Hawaii¹¹. This could be a big factor in his departure but also due to James Gunns' different vision of the DCEU. Marvel never had this issue and locked actors in their extended universe without a worry that they might leave. The only main issue they had was when they replaced Terrence Howard for Don Cheadle to play as James Rhodes and replaced Edward Norton for Mark Ruffalo throughout the MCU. Other than that, actors have been consistent in the MCU and were displayed in films that weren't even for their character. These actors and actresses were very dedicated to these projects and there was really no big issue regarding any of the Marvel films, yet the DCEU was consistently finding themselves with constant issues.

These issues I believed to be the biggest issues revolving around the DCEU. They try too hard to be too dark and it ruins characters that aren't supposed to be dark like Superman or The Flash. James Gunn who worked on both Guardians of the Galaxy films *Guardian of the Galaxy*

¹¹Khon 2 (@chelsee.yee@khon2.com) "Actor Ezra Miller keeps getting in trouble in Hawaii", Khon 2 News, Apr 19, 2022, <https://www.khon2.com/hawaii-crime/actor-ezra-miller-keeps-getting-in-trouble-in-hawaii/>
The seven margin explains the case revolving around Ezra Miller and what he did in Hawaii.

(James Gunn, 2014) and *Guradian of the Galaxy Vol 2* (James Gunn, 2017) worked on *The Suicide Squad* (James Gunn, 2021) and did a fantastic job and showing the potentially not only he can bring but a new DCEU. The film wasn't too dark, it was hilarious, and it told a very rich story. James Gunn showed that the DCEU doesn't have to be as dark as their comic books. James Gunn even showed that the DCEU has the potential of competing against Marvel due to what he was able to accomplish regarding the film. *The Suicide Squad (2021)* was able to do what every MCU film accomplished; that being pace and plan the film in a consistent and fun way. Even though the film shares the same title as *Suicide Squad (2016)*, the film technically isn't a sequel to the original film; James Gunn made his own version of the second installment. Killing off a lot of the "Suicide Squad" members in the very beginning of the film, having each character have their own arc and purpose in the story, and it was a fun and gory experience. *The Suicide Squad (2021)* was a enjoyable film and felt like it was paced well to the point where I was never confused on the story, I enjoy every minute and nothing seemed too out of place through the film. According to the article "James Gunn Agrees Superhero Fatigue Is a Problem-But He Knows How to Fix it" by Lee Freitag, James Gunn stated a quote saying "I think it doesn't have anything to do with superheroes. It has to do with the kind of stories that get to be told, and if you lose your eye on the ball, which is character. We love Superman. We love Batman. We love Iron Man. Because they're these incredible characters that we have in our hearts. And if it becomes just a bunch of nonsense onscreen, it gets really boring."¹² Joss Whedon tried to perform this miracle in *Justice League (2017)* but failed due to it feeling forced and not authentic. But thanks to James Gunn and his genius operation towards *The Suicide Squad (2021)*,

¹² "James Gunn Agrees Superhero Fatigue Is a Problem-But He Knows How to Fix it" talks about storytelling and how important it is regarding these comic book films. Like I mentioned how powerful storytelling is, non comic book fans didn't know or care about characters like War Machine or Black Widow, but due to the stories that they told their value grew in popularity.

there seems to be hope for the restart of the DCEU due to him being the head of the DCEU projects as of 2022. There are hopes that James Gunn can redirect the DCEU into a successful competition towards the MCU, and the live action films aren't negatively portrayed towards fans.

Chapter Five: DCEU vs. DCAU/animated films

Even though the DCEU seems dull and unsuccessful, that doesn't mean that all DC projects are the same. There are DC animated films that are able to capture the feeling of authentic storytelling, usage of transmedia, and are able to express interesting stories that comic book and non comic book fans can appreciate. And the thing is that they are not like the MCU in terms of being light-hearted and having jokes revolving around their movies, but able to capture just the right amount of darkness that doesn't have it consume the film and tell a story that isn't dull and makes no sense. There are two sides to the animated DC films; there are the DCAU (Detective Comics Animated Universe) and DC animated films that they make that aren't a part of the DCAU. Films like *Batman: Under the Red Hood* (Brandon Vietti, 2008), *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths* (Sam Liu and Lauren Montgomery, 2010), *Justice League: Doom* (Lauren Montgomery, 2012), and *Superman/Batman: Public Enemies* (Sam Liu, 2009) are not a part of the DCAU. Films like *Justice League War* (Jay Oliva, 2014), *Son of Batman* (Ethan Spaulding, 2014), *Batman vs Robin* (Jay Oliva, 2015), and *The Death of Superman* (Jake Castorena and Sam Liu, 2018) are a part of the DCAU. These animated films either were an original story or animating based off a comic book, and were able to capture these superheroes straight from the panels and present them in a way that mimics the comic books with a few tweaks. Superman wasn't killing people in these animated films and he wasn't as dark as the rest of the DC cast, Batman wasn't killing people, Flash wasn't presented as a kid and even though he is the comic relief of the Justice League and presented as the little brother, he still had his maturity intact in these animated films; these animations were able to capture what made these characters popular in the first place. I don't mind changing the character a bit, but you can't change these characters

to the point where they aren't even recognizable anymore like in the DCEU; and this is where these DC animated films exceed in.

The thing about DC animated films is that they can capture the comic books extremely well but also be able to have unique stories, better and beloved story arcs, and form more of a world building; like what the MCU does with their stories in their films. Where the DCEU failed to do in terms of world building, creating a complex universe for all the DC characters part of the DCEU, and making enjoyable films; the DCAU did all of that and emphasized on their transmedia where they used more than comic books as their references. They referenced animated shows, games, the internet, comic books, TV shows; the DCAU captured so much transmedia in their universe and didn't limit themselves to one primary thing. They do what the MCU can do in the animated world. There is nothing wrong with DC films being dark, but the way that the DCEU does it is too much and ruins characters' morals. A film like *Batman: Under the Red Hood* (2008) is about a mysterious criminal coming to Gotham City and killing off other criminals. Batman believes it to be Joker due to this mysterious criminal donning the same costume that the Joker wore before he became the Joker but later found out it was the second Robin who was killed in battle. The second Robin, who is Jason Todd, comes back to life after being killed by the Joker and starts killing off criminals to "save" Gotham City. Batman and Jason Todd have an emotional and impactful confrontation regarding their way to save Gotham and why Batman didn't kill Joker after he killed his partner, Robin. Batman explains that he can kill any criminal that he wants and thinks about doing so just like how Jason Todd is doing, but he fears that if he crossed that line and killed one criminal then he will never come back and just continue on killing. Sure killing the Joker would be more beneficial for Gotham and easy for Batman to do so, but then what lesson is he expressing to the people of Gotham, how is he better

than the criminals that he locks up, and what if he never stops just killing everyone that commits a crime? The story is extremely compelling about a son wanting an answer from his father and how he feels abandoned by the only person that he felt that he could truly trust. The story is dark, but it was told in a way that hits hard and explores the different aspects of Batman and the character associated with him. The story was consistent, paced well, and had an interesting and compelling plot through the film.

Another film that isn't part of the DCAU that was able to capture the DC characters so well and display a very creative story is *Justice League: Doom* (2012). The premise of this film is that the Justice League is getting attacked by the Legion of Doom, but this time the villains are actually winning. The villains are hitting the heroes hard and attacking them in ways that expose their weaknesses. They attack Superman by using kryptonite, they attack Flash by planting a bomb which explodes if he isn't constantly moving, they attack Green Lantern by using Scarecrow's fear toxic due to his ring being the enemy and weakness of fear. All of these attacks were aiming at their physical and psychological weaknesses which the team later finds out that this wasn't a plan from one of their enemies, but instead one of their own that being Batman.. One of the members of the Legion of Doom found Batman's contingency plan against the Justice League and altered them so that they can finally kill the Justice League.

Batman explains to the team that his plan was to neutralize any member if they ever join the dark side. Batman explains that even though the Justice League are the world's greatest heroes, they could easily become the world's greatest threat due to something in their lives breaking their morality to the point of no return or someone mind-controlling them. With a world of superhero powered beings, anything is possible; thus Batman needed to make sure that he was able to stop them if that was ever the case. After going after the Legion of Doom and resolving

their issues they discuss if Batman should leave or stay in the Justice League. Batman expresses that he wouldn't change a thing and would make these plans again and leaves the Justice League due to them not understanding the threat that they bring to the world. Before leaving Superman talks to Batman to tell him that he is stubborn due to having contingency plans towards everyone but himself and Batman explains that his plan is the Justice League and he mentions to Superman that he believes the Justice League will be able to take him down if he ever became evil. The story in this film was extremely well made and elaborated on these characters as a whole. Batman truly believed what he did was right and the Justice League felt like they were betrayed by their very own. Both sides are correct in their own way and both believe in their hearts that they are right; Batman believing they need a contingency plan to be able to defeat the Justice League if necessary, and the Justice League believes they don't need those plans due to them knowing deep down that nothing will ever force them to join the dark side. The story does a great job at showing both sides and showing that even though these heroes are shown as Gods they all have physical and emotional limits like your ordinary person.

Now if I am proclaiming that these non-DCAU animated films are well made with creative, impacting storylines, and stories that display comic book characters justice in terms of nostalgia and complexity; how about the DC animated films that are associated with their extended universe? I could say that the DCAU does the job that the DCEU fails to do. The DCAU has 14 projects under their belts and each film is able to elaborate something about not only the world building but also the characters themselves. The first film being *Justice League: The Flashpoint Paradox* (Jay Oliva, 2013). The film shows a parallel universe of what would happen if one thing changes in history. The Flash goes back in time to save his mother's life and in doing so Bruce Wayne dies instead of his mother and father, and his father becomes Batman

and his mother becomes the Joker, Superman is dropped in the middle of Metropolis instead of Smallville and is under the government's control, and Wonder Woman and Aquaman are going to war. The film elaborates on what a selfish act can do and most of the times when it comes to these heroes, they have to do things that are right instead of what they want. The Flash before the world ends due to the war between Aquaman and Wonder Woman goes back in time and prevents himself from saving his mom's life thus creating a Flashpoint; which is basically a restart of the timeline.

Justice League War (2014) is a film that shows the beginning of the Justice League and how these heroes have to form a team even though their personalities are completely different and they don't correspond with each other. Even though most of these heroes can't stand each other, they need to put their differences aside for the greater good and defeat Darkseid. *Son of Batman* (2014) is a film that shows the relationship of Batman's son Damian Wayne and how they behave towards each other even though they act similar and their mentality towards how to save their world is very different. Damian Wayne is just as confident and arrogant as Batman, so it was cool to see how Batman could have a son now that acts just like him and now how he can be a father of a child that is just a spitting image of himself. *Batman vs Robin* (2015) shows the departure of Batman and his son and how they are slowly growing apart. Batman and Damian Wayne both have different beliefs in this film on how to save this world and shows a real life issue of a son and father arguing and departing from each other. It has its shine on a real life aspect and really enhances the emotions of both of these characters and how their relationship will turn as father and son. And finally the last film in the DCAU is *Justice League Dark: Apokolips War* (Matt Peters and Christina Sotta, 2020). The film is about Darkseid being the ruler of the world and finally defeating the Justice League, killing most of them off, controlling

or sparing heroes that he believed needed to be, and some heroes that are on the run and surviving. He enslaved Batman due to his genius, The Flash due to his speed being a good source to powering his world with energy, Cybor to have a more technical advantage, and Superman just to basically rub salt on the wound and embedding his blood with kryptonite so that he can see his failure. Eventually the heroes that are left build a rebellion and find a way to defeat Darkseid, but it doesn't matter due to all Darkseid has made these heroes lose. Then Flash runs back in time to prevent this future of these heroes and creates another flashpoint, creating a new timeline for these heroes but ending the story of the heroes that we got to grow up with since 2014.

Needless to say, the DCAU and DC animated films that don't tie into the DCAU do what the DCEU failed to do. These animated films were able to create a cinematic universe with their respective heroes with compelling and interesting stories. The DCEU made every character way too dark and serious, told very confusing and rushed stories, and felt out of place with their pacing in movies. I understand why they felt rushed because in 2013 Marvel already had 7 films in their projects, but both the DCEU and DCAU started at the same time in 2013. The animated films were paced well, understood the route they wanted to go, and respected each character to the point that we as the audience understood their moralities, and didn't have Marvel's cinematic universe make them rush to compete against them. They were able to take the baby steps that the DCEU failed to do and Marvel did well. I feel that what worked with the DCAU was the understanding of the characters. In a sense these were the origins of these DC superheroes and we as the audience weren't rushed in their journey, instead we were there with them from the beginning. I feel that really growing with these heroes was the beacon of having a fun time watching these movies. We got to understand why they do certain actions, why they act a certain way, and really understand them for who they are.

Superman in the DCAU is very confused and conflicted on whether he should tell Lois Lane his secret identity. He asks advice from The Flash about what to do and we can see he is really struggling to fit in a world that he doesn't belong in. Flash is struggling with the death of his mother and really wants to reunite with her; it is the only thing he wants in his life. He does this but risks the world to almost be destroyed and learns that it is better to do what you have to do rather than do what you want. Batman lost his parents at the age of 8 years old, and now has himself in a situation where he needs to be a father to his son Damian Wayne. Bruce Wayne now has to become a father even though he never had his real father at a young age. So he needs to adapt and learn the ropes of being a father. These animated films told personal stories and really shined a light on the human aspects of these characters. We got to see these characters' stories from beginning to end and I feel that these movies are extremely well made. Just like Marvel we got to see these characters grow; sure the story of the films helped and also the action, but it was more or less these characters that helped the action and story. If we had very bland and generic characters then the story would fall flat and not be as successful. However these characters are what made the story and really helped elevate their respective universe. Even though the DCAU managed to display character growth and character development, the same can't be said for the DCEU because we just got rushed into the action. We were rushed into Batman's journey and were confused due to him killing people and acting the way he was, we haven't gotten a Flash origin film and never understood the character Barry Allen, until now with the recent Flash film that is coming out, and after *Man of Steel (2013)* we didn't really get scenes about Clark Kent but instead we got scenes mostly for Superman. The DCEU focuses more on action than story and when they do present the story it feels very boring or dull. The DCEU doesn't display those

scenes that have that nice blend of the superhero and their real life aspect unlike in Marvel and the DCAU.

That is why I feel that the DCEU right now is going in a spiral. They do have potential and interesting characters but they need to take it at their own pace if they want it to work. *The Suicide Squad* (2021) is probably one of the best DCEU films because they knew what they were doing. They had a nice blend of serious moments, comedic moments, action, and scenes about learning these characters. The film felt very well paced and it shows. According to the article Yes, “The Suicide Squad Is Miraculously As Good As You’ve Heard” by Paul Tassi, it states that “The film is, of course, extremely funny, given Gunn’s area of expertise. Sylvester Stallone voicing a terminally dull but adorable King Shark is stellar. John Cena’s Peacemaker is equal parts hilarious and horrifying. Just looking at Polka Dot Man will make you laugh. And one of the most lighthearted characters of them all, Harley Quinn, is finally, finally given a chance to let Margot Robbie shine in the role with a proper script and direction.”¹³ The film had direction and there was no character that felt dull, anytime a character was on the screen they had their highlights. Now that *The Flash* (Andy Muschietti, 2023) film is coming out and this is the last film before they reboot, I hope they learn their lesson. You don’t need consistent action and fighting to have a good film, sometimes a scene with the person under the mask is better than seeing the actual superhero. Films like *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) where the Avengers were slowly growing apart about if they should work with the government or still be independent, *The Batman* (Matt Reeves, 2021) where Bruce Wayne was talking to Carmine Falcone and learning about the truth about his parents, and *Spiderman: No Way Home* (2021) where all 3 Peter Parkers were talking about their life as Spiderman and kind of growing that

¹³ Yes, “The Suicide Squad Is Miraculously As Good As You’ve Heard” shows that the DCEU doesn’t have to be so dark and it could have its light heart but violent moments; like the MCU has.

brotherly vibe toward each other. Having compelling scenes with the person, not the hero, works well for the films. When these characters talk or express how they feel it feels rich and compelling. Getting to see the person behind the mask is as important as seeing the superhero because we as the audience need to see both sides of their character. Spiderman, Batman, Superman, Iron Man; what makes these characters so iconic was getting to see both sides of the same coin. We get to see the wise cracking, always light hearted Spiderman, but we also get to see the poor, non popular, relatable Peter Parker. Not everything is about the superhero and it is those scenes when they are ordinary people that we get to see them for who they truly are. This is what the MCU and the DCAU exceeded in their films. The MCU and DCAU weren't afraid of showing scenes with the person behind the mask. The DCEU didn't do this for their heroes and when they did it felt very dull or uninteresting. The DCEU wanted to display these heroes and show them in this godlike setting by defeating the odds and overcoming incredible odds, yet the MCU and DCAU weren't afraid of showing that these are people at the end of the day; and they can lose the fight at any moment. They aren't presented as gods like how the DCEU does with their characters, they were presented like your everyday person that happens to have powers; even with these powers these Marvel characters still struggle with everyday life problems. Even though the DCAU have the same characters as the DCEU, the DCAU presents their characters with human attributes and presents them with stories of these god-like characters trying to fit in with the human world with human problems. We get to see the other side of the mask and understand that character. The DCAU and the MCU doesn't just focus on the hero aspect of these characters, there is more usage of transmedia behind it. Getting to have scenes with their secret identity, seeing more than what the comic book shows, these companies exploring more media like video games or shows; we get to see more with these characters and really understand them.

We as the audience get to go on this journey and connect with these superheroes in a way that we never thought we could. They have similar beliefs, conflicts, issues, problems; so it is nice to see human aspects of these heroes. We are with them in their journey and we get to see what makes them as a person, and as a superhero.

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Filmography

DC (Pre-DCEU)

- *Batman* (Leslie H. Martinson, 1966)
- *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989)
- *Batman Returns* (Tim Burton, 1992)
- *Batman Forever* (Joel Schumacher, 1995)
- *Batman & Robin* (Joel Schumacher, 1997)
- *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005)
- *Superman and the Mole Man* (Lee Sholem, 1951)
- *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978)
- *Superman II* (Richard Lester, Richard Donner, 1980)
- *Superman III* (Richard Lester, 1983)
- *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (Sidney J. Furie, 1987)
- *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006)

Marvel (Pre-MCU)

- *Blade* (Stephen Norrington, 1998)
- *Captain America* (Elmer Clifton and John English, 1944)
- *Captain America II: Death Too Soon* (Ivan Nagy, 1979)
- *Daredevil* (Mark Steven Johnson, 2003)
- *Elektra* (Rob Bowman, 2005)
- *Howard the Duck* (Willard Huyck, 1986)
- *Punisher* (Mark Goldblatt, 1989)
- *Spider-Man Strikes Back* (Ron Satlof, 1978)
- *Spider-Man: The Dragon's Challenge* (Don McDougall, 1979)
- *Spider-Man* (Sam Raimi, 2002)
- *Spider-Man 2* (Sam Raimi, 2004)
- *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000)
- *X2: X-Men United* (Bryan Singer, 2003)

Marvel (MCU)

- *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012)
- *Avengers: Infinity War* (Anthony Russo, Joe Russo, 2018)
- *Captain America: Civil War* (Anthony Russo, Joe Russo, 2016)
- *Guardian of the Galaxy* (James Gunn, 2014)
- *Guardian of the Galaxy Vol.2* (James Gunn, 2017)
- *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008)
- *Spiderman: No Way Home* (Jon Watts, 2021)

DC (DCEU)

- *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (Zack Snyder, 2016)
- *Justice League* (Zack Snyder, 2017)
- *Man of Steel* (Zack Snyder, 2013)
- *The Suicide Squad* (James Gunn, 2021)

DC (DCAU)

- *Batman vs Robin* (Jay Oliva, 2015)
- *Justice League War* (Jay Oliva, 2014)
- *Son of Batman* (Ethan Spaulding, 2014)
- *The Death of Superman* (Jake Castorena and Sam Liu, 2018)

Non DCEU/MCU films and animated films

- *Batman: Under the Red Hood* (Brandon Vietti, 2008)
- *The Batman* (Matt Reeves, 2021)
- *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths* (Sam Liu and Lauren Montgomery, 2010)
- *Justice League: Doom* (Lauren Montgomery, 2012)
- *Superman/Batman: Public Enemies* (Sam Liu, 2009)
- *Watchmen* (Zack Snyder, 2009)