



Member Picks

Hulk

Hulk

Director: Ang Lee

©: Universal Studios

Presented by: Universal Pictures

Presented in association with: Marvel Enterprises

Production Companies: Valhalla Motion Pictures, Good Machine

Executive Producers: Stan Lee, Kevin Feige

Producers: Gale Anne Hurd, Avi Arad, James Schamus, Larry Franco

Associate Producers: David Womark, Cheryl A. Tkach

Unit Production Manager: David Womark

Production Supervisor: Michael Malone

Production Co-ordinator: Jennifer Campbell

Production Accountant: Kathy Petty

Supervising Location Manager:

Laura Sode-Matteson

Post-production Supervisor: Lisa Rodgers

1st Assistant Director: Artist Robinson

2nd Assistant Director: Deanna Stadler

Script Supervisor: Jayne-Ann Tenggren

Casting: Avy Kaufman

Screenplay: John Turman, Michael France, James Schamus

Screenplay: Michael Tolkin *, David Hayter *

Story by: James Schamus

Based on the Marvel Comic Book Character

Created by: Stan Lee, Jack Kirby

Director of Photography: Frederick Elmes

Aerial Director of Photography: Hans Bjerno

A Camera Operator: Daniel C. Gold

B Camera/Steadicam Operator: Tommy Lohmann

Video Effects Supervisor: Matthew Morrissey

Stills Photography: Peter Sorel

Visual Effects Supervisor: Dennis Muren

Visual Effects Producer: Tom Peitzman

ILM Visual Effects Producer: Janet Lewin

ILM Visual Effects Co-supervisor: Ed Hirsh

Visual Effects Editor: Gary Levy

Visual Effects Co-ordinator: Christopher Raimo

Special Visual Effects and Animation by:

Industrial Light & Magic

Special Effects Supervisor: Michael Lantieri

Graphic Designer: Susan A. Burig

Video Graphics Co-ordinator: Dave Henri

Animation Supervisor: Colin Brady

Editor: Tim Squyres

Production Designer: Rick Heinrichs

Supervising Art Director: John Dexter

Art Director: Greg Papalia

Art Department Co-ordinator: Kirstin Mooney

Set Designers: Roy Barnes, Jim Bayliss,

Todd Cherniawsky, Al Hobbs, Luis G. Hoyos,

Kristen Pratt, Patte Strong-Lord, Don Woodruff

Set Decorator: Cheryl A. Carasik

Property Master: Jerry Moss

Costume Designer: Marit Allen

Costume Supervisor: Pam Wise

Key Make-up: Dennis Liddiard

Special Animatronic/Puppet Effects:

KNB EFX Group Inc

KNB Supervisors: Robert Kurtzman,

Greg Nicotero, Howard Berger

Key Hairstylist: Jan Alexander

Opening Sequences & End Title Design: yU+co.

Opticals: Howard Anderson Company

Music: Danny Elfman

Featured Vocalist: Natacha Atlas

Orchestra Conducted by: Pete Anthony

Supervising Music Editor: Ellen Segal

Sound Design: Eugene Gearty, Gary Rysdrom

Production Sound Mixer: Drew Kunin

‘One of the finest superhero films ever made, infused with complexities of comic book mythology, it remains a misunderstood epic that was ahead of its time.’ – Samrat M, BFI Member

At first glance Ang Lee’s mature career (together with his long-time producer and screenwriter James Schamus) divides neatly into two halves. First there are bittersweet family dramas with a growing air of tragedy and disappointment: *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and *The Ice Storm* (1997). Then there are large-scale, action-packed epics which apparently tail off more and more from tragedy: *Ride with the Devil* (1999), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and now *Hulk*, his version of Marvel Comics’ long-running serial. It would be easy to emphasise the shift in scale from chamber pieces to big-budget blockbusters, and Lee’s extraordinary ability seemingly to master any genre, but what’s more fascinating is the extent to which the same themes and motifs recur in these films irrespective of their tone or genre.

So if *Hulk* and *The Ice Storm* seem in some senses poles apart – one a youth-oriented comic-book adaptation, the other a drama drawn from a serious novel – it’s worth remembering that in the latter the teenage narrator Paul (Tobey Maguire) is an avid *Fantastic Four* fan. He uses the comic’s sci-fi metaphysics (‘anti-matter’, portals to other dimensions) to try to fathom the tangled intricacies of family life. And it’s this experience – the adolescent or young adult’s often mute search for meaning in the face of a chaotic or malevolent environment – that runs through all Lee’s films, lending them the coherence of an oeuvre.

This quiet and troubled perplexity is everywhere in *Hulk*, notably in two extraordinary shots in which characters witness a nuclear explosion and another in which the Hulk, hanging on to a plane in the outer reaches of the atmosphere, gazes into space. What’s at stake could be termed the epistemology of innocence, but it’s explored without naivety: Lee’s films are centrally about innocence, but rather like David Lynch’s and much more so than Tim Burton’s, they know how fragile a state this is.

The figure of the Hulk, as created in 1962 by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in strip form and then adapted for US television in 1978 as *The Incredible Hulk* (with Bill Bixby as the tormented Dr Jekyll figure of Bruce Banner, and the body-builder Lou Ferrigno as his monstrous green-skinned other self), is one of the jokers in the Marvel pack. He (or it) isn’t a superhero as such but a rampaging incarnation of the id – the embodiment of Bruce’s inner beast. Not so in Lee’s film. The Hulk’s face here fills with curiosity or yearning as often as it contorts with rage. Lee underscores the childlike quality with unmistakable references both to 1933’s *King Kong* (when the Hulk cradles Betty, Bruce’s co-worker and ex-girlfriend played by Jennifer Connelly) and to James Whale’s 1931 *Frankenstein* (when he’s entranced by a desert landscape). This computer-generated creature is impulsive and vulnerable in a quasi-autistic manner; in this respect he’s very like Mikey (Elijah Wood) in *The Ice Storm*, perilously alone, seeing the world as no one else does. Whereas Bill Bixby’s Bruce was crushed and melancholy, doomed always to have to break any emotional tie, he was recognisably a mature man. But the Bruce of Lee’s film, played with very little speech or expression by Eric Bana, is a grown-up haunted by the past, still in

Re-recording Mixers: Gary Rydstrom,
 Michael Semanick
Supervising Sound Editors: Richard Hymns,
 Eugene Gearty
Sound Effects Editors: Kyrsten Mate,
 David C. Hughes, Paul Hsu
Stunt Co-ordinator: Charlie Croughwell
Cast:
 Eric Bana (*Bruce Banner*)
 Jennifer Connelly (*Betty Ross*)
 Sam Elliott (*General 'Thunderbolt' Ross*)
 Josh Lucas (*Glenn Talbot*)
 Nick Nolte (*David Banner, Bruce's father*)
 Paul Kersey (*young David Banner*)
 Cara Buono (*Edith Banner*)
 Todd Tesen (*young Ross*)
 Kevin Rankin (*Harper*)
 Celia Weston (*Mrs Krenzler*)
 Mike Erwin (*teenage Bruce Banner*)
 Lou Ferrigno, Stan Lee, Regi Davis, Craig Damon
 (*security guards*)
 Geoffrey Scott (*president*)
 Regina McKee Redwing (*national security adviser*)
 Daniel Dae Kim (*aide*)
 Daniella Kuhn (*Edith's friend*)
 Michael Kronenberg, David Kronenberg
 (*Bruce Banner as child*)
 Rhiannon Leigh Wryn (*Betty Ross as child*)
 Lou Richards (*pediatrician*)
 Jennifer Gotzon (*waitress*)
 Louanne Kelley (*delivery doctor*)
 Toni Kallen (*delivery nurse*)
 Paul Hansen Kim (*officer*)
 John Littlefield (*security NCO*)
 Lorenzo Callender, Todd Lee Coralli,
 Johnny Kastl, Eric Ware (*soldiers*)
 Jesse Corti, Rob Swanson (*colonels*)
 Mark Atteberry, Eva Burkley, Rondra Holeman,
 John A. Maraffi, Michael Papajohn, David St. Pierre,
 Boni Yanagisawa (*technicians*)
 David Sutherland (*tank commander*)
 Sean Mahon, Brett Thacher, Kirk B.R. Woller
 (*Comanche pilots*)
 Randy Neville (*F-22 pilot*)
 John Prosky (*Atheon technician*)
 Amir Faraj (*boy*)
 Ricardo Aguilar (*boy's father*)
 Victor Rivers (*paramilitary*)
 Lyndon Karp (*Davey*)
 USA 2003
 138 mins
 35mm

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Mon 28 Apr 09:45

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thrall to childhood traumas. He's chronically introspective, like Elinor (Emma Thompson) in *Sense and Sensibility* or Jake (Maguire again) in *Ride with the Devil*.

Hulk brings to the fore the pervasively non-naturalistic, fairytale quality of Lee's work – a quality more akin to Dickens or the Brothers Grimm (or indeed Marvel) than any but the darkest Disney productions. Even when, as in *The Ice Storm*, Lee has worked in a naturalistic mode, there's still that sense of entrapment, particularly domestic entrapment, that underpins so many fairytales. The *mise en scène* of *Hulk* makes this palpable: many scenes take place at night or in sealed laboratories and military installations. (When the Hulk escapes captivity and leaps in great bounds across the south-western desert it's accordingly exhilarating.)

The film also foregrounds the fable-like element of Oedipal conflict. Weak, hostile or absent fathers abound in Lee's work, counterpointing the damaged, preoccupied young protagonists. So in *Hulk* there are two fathers, both authoritarian and more or less mad: Bruce's psychopathic parent David, played with relish by Nick Nolte (looking for all the world like the Unabomber), and Betty's father General 'Thunderbolt' Ross (Sam Elliott), who tells her, 'You can trust me to do what I think is right, not what you think you want.' In one scene the two men glare at each other across a huge hangar like two vicious, mangy lions in a stand-off. In Lee's films nuclear families are combustible and destructive, like those bombs that are numbly witnessed in *Hulk*. There's a mythical wickedness at large.

Hulk is also pointedly non-naturalistic in its use of CGI, split-screen, inserted graphics shots and computer-designed dissolves. Despite the now-conventional use of ear-splitting sound effects to disguise the 'weightlessness' of CG monsters, this Hulk is never meant to seem anything other than an animated creation, a digital Pinocchio. So tottering are his movements, on occasions it's impossible not to recall Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion work. The artifice is taken to an extreme in the film's culminating battle, when the Hulk takes on a monster able to absorb elemental power who becomes so engorged it's as if he'll grow beyond the Earth's perimeters. This is CGI in the service of surrealism, recalling the expanding animals in Tex Avery's *King-Size Canary* (1947). Taken together, the various visual devices make up a rattle-bag aesthetic that adds to the overall impression of stylisation.

The paradox of the stylised, fairytale nature of Lee and Schamus' work here and elsewhere is that it's not by any means juvenile. *Hulk* is richly mythopoeic and sophisticated. For all their considerable entertainment value, the two *X-Men* outings and *Spider-Man* (2002) are essentially high-school capers. *Hulk* is no less enjoyable, but it's in another league of complexity and for this reason is the best Marvel adaptation so far. Lee's career is fast becoming the most interesting in Hollywood.

Rob White, *Sight and Sound*, August 2003