

## Film Feature: Five Ways to Make Sure That ‘The Avengers 2’ Doesn’t Suck

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 10, 2012 - 10:15am

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CHICAGO – If there’s one thing that Marvel superhero movies do well, it’s set up extremely-high expectations for the next Marvel superhero movie. “Iron Man 2” got us excited for “Thor.” Then “Thor” got us jazzed for “The Avengers,” And now “The Avengers”, the box-office-busting phenomenon, has the world chomping at the bit to get a look at “The Avengers 2.”

At the moment, all we know is that there definitely WILL be a sequel and that the teaser scene that writer-director Joss Whedon placed in the end credits MIGHT play a role in what comes next for Captain America and his super-powered pals. So, without any real concrete answers in place, fans and pundits alike have begun their expected clamoring to loudly declare their lists of demands and preferences for the inevitable “Avengers” sequel. There have been calls for gigantic cosmic space wars, Spider-Man and X-Men crossovers, turning Agent Coulson into an intangible red-faced robot (no, really), and other wacky and marginally less wacky suggestions.

While I’m not above ranting about my own personal preferences for another “Avengers” movie – “Keep the Sub-Mariner at the bottom of the ocean!” – I thought, rather than a traditional wishlist, I’d offer these FIVE ways, rules, or pieces of advice that, in my humble opinion, could really help make sure that “Avengers 2” doesn’t end up sucking. Because, c’mon, the first one is pretty great, so let’s set the bar high for the sequel and do what we can to keep it from becoming an “X-Men: Last Stand”-esque piece of garbage.

### 1. Pay Joss Whedon a Whole Lot of Money to Write and Direct It



The Avengers  
Photo credit: Disney/Marvel

That one is pretty self-explanatory.

### 2. If Whedon is Unavailable, Don’t Accept a “Francis Lawrence” as the Director



The Avengers

*Photo credit: Disney/Marvel*

I’m not trying to rip on Mr. Lawrence unnecessarily, but, let’s be honest, when it was announced that he would be replacing Gary Ross as the director of “Catching Fire”, the upcoming “The Avengers” sequel, everyone in the world sagged a little bit and went, “Oh. Really?” Lawrence has some chops, but none of his past films – “I Am Legend”, “Constantine”, “Water for Elephants” – were particularly inspired. They’re the definition of “OK.” They’re not great, they’re not awful – they’re just... “fine.” However, one of the big reasons that “The Avengers” was such a hit was because the studio picked a bold, visionary director like Gary Ross to bring the film to life. There’s just no way that moving from Ross to Lawrence could be seen as anything other than a step down.

I mention this because I have a feeling that the EXACT same situation is going to arise with “Avengers 2.” It is such a mega-hit that Disney is going to want a sequel in theatres on a fairly tight timeframe and who knows if Whedon is going to want to sign on for it? Whedon is Hollywood’s new belle of the ball at the moment, and he keeps peppering recent interviews with observations like “I’ve just spent two years writing other people’s characters”, which makes it sound like the guy might not have another “Avengers” movie in him. Ideally, Marvel and Disney should move heaven and earth to get Whedon to write and direct “Avengers 2.”

BUT if they can’t come to a deal or if Whedon doesn’t want to return, then the studio HAS to swing for the fences and try to find a director that is as bold a choice as Whedon was. But that means that the studio IMMEDIATELY has to close the door on the “Francis Lawrence”-esque workman, B-level directors that they always trot out for sequels or underwhelming action movies. That means no David Slade, no F. Gary Gray, no Martin Campbell, no Rob Cohen, no Lee Tamahori, and absolutely, ABSOLUTELY NO, NO, NO BRETT RATNER. Particularly after the original’s record-breaking premiere, the motto for “Avengers 2” needs to be “go big or go home.” And if Marvel can’t find a director whose very presence on set makes fanboys and film geeks “squee” with delight, they shouldn’t even bother.

### **3. Be Extremely Selective About the Quality and Quantity of “New” Avengers They Add to the Line-Up**





Giant-Man

*Photo credit: Marvel*

One of the best decisions that Marvel made when making “The Avengers” was waiting until they had the rights to use the four biggest and most iconic Avengers of all time – Captain America, Thor, Iron Man, and The Hulk – before they made the movie. They didn’t get one famous guy and fill in the rest with second-stringers. They assembled the truly CORE Avengers and that made people very excited about the final product. That being said, while I think there’s a natural assumption that any “Avengers” sequel would HAVE to feature some new team members, really, who are they going to get who’s more impressive than the four core Avengers they have now? Dr. Strange? Namor? The Silver Surfer? None of them are that impressive when compared to the core team and the only other Marvel characters that compare in terms of fame – Spider-Man and Wolverine – are owned by different studios. So, really, “Avengers 2” shouldn’t worry that much about adding that many “new faces” to the team. This should NOT turn into what happened with the later “X-Men” movies where the filmmakers seemingly paid more attention to throwing in mutant cameos than crafting a coherent story.

Personally, I think there are two characters that make sense to add to the team in “Avengers 2”. The first is Janet Van Dyne, a.k.a. the Wasp. She’s a solid choice for several reasons. First, she was an original member of comic book Avengers and Whedon’s film was fairly reverent to the true comic origins of the team (for example, in the comic and in the movie, Loki was responsible for the creation of the Avengers). Second, she’s a woman and the team is a total sausage-fest at the moment. They really need a more diverse cast of characters. And, third, she has a very visually cool power. She can fly, she can shrink, she can shoot a “sting blast” out of her hands – her method of fighting and her character (she’s a socialite scientist) are very, very different than the Black Widow, the other token lady on the team, so I think she’d bring a nicely different energy and style to the group.

The other addition I’d suggest for “Avengers 2” is Giant-Man – that’s right, not Ant-Man – Giant-Man. Why Giant-Man? Because, if a genius like Edgar Wright is doing his own “Ant-Man” movie, the LAST thing I want is a bunch of references to “Avengers 2” crammed into his script. Let Edgar have “Ant-Man” – “Avengers 2” doesn’t need him. Plus, if you already have The Wasp shrinking down in “Avengers 2,” do you really want to have ANOTHER shrinking superhero in the same movie? Go the other direction, revel in the contrast, and have the Wasp balanced out by a guy growing 50-feet tall to defend Manhattan. Visually, it would be much, much cooler and is one of the few FX concepts that would possibly compete with the Hulk’s final rampage against the alien invaders in the first movie. Ideally, Giant-Man would be Hank Pym – one of the original Avengers who served on the team as both Ant-Man AND Giant-Man (and like 10 other identities). BUT, if Edgar Wright already has plans for Hank Pym in his movie, we don’t need him. The Giant-Man character itself is enough of a tribute to Pym being a founding Avenger, and we could always pick another iteration of Giant-Man to serve on the team – for example, Bill Foster, who was the second Giant-Man in the comics (and who also went under the name Goliath). And the added bonus there is that Bill Foster is African-American, so, again, you get to pay tribute to the two founding Avengers who didn’t make the cut for the first movie AND you get the chance to bring some much needed diversity to the mostly-white-dudes superhero club.

#### **4. Keep the Villain Personal and Resist the Urge to Go Cosmic**



Ultron

*Photo credit: Marvel*

Loki made for such a fantastic villain in “The Avengers” because, while, yes, he was trying to take over the world, he also waged a very personal kind of warfare on every member of the team. Of course, there were his sibling struggles with Thor, but he also attacked all of the other Avengers on a very intimate level – he tried to make Banner Hulk-out, he took over Hawkeye’s mind, he played head-games with Black Widow, he used Iron Man’s Stark Tower to start his invasion, and so on. Loki wasn’t a nameless, faceless bad guy. He wanted to both rule the world and strip down the Avengers to their soft, chewy centers. THAT is what made him such a great “capital-v” Villain.

And the success of Loki is one of the main reasons why I’m SO hesitant about “Avengers 2” embracing Thanos as its Big Bad. For those unfamiliar – and SPOILERS, BTW – at the end of “Avengers”, we found out that Thanos, a death-obsessed alien conqueror, was pulling Loki’s strings and, after Loki’s defeat, Thanos was looking forward to bringing death and destruction to the Avengers and the whole human race. It was a great comic-nerd wet-dream reveal, but I’m not sure if Thanos is an ideal bad guy for the sequel. I mean, what’s going to be his motivation? “I LIKE DEATH”? That just seems like it’ll be boring and obvious. Plus I also don’t want “Avengers 2” to just be about ANOTHER invading alien force coming from the sky. A Thanos invasion just seems like it’d be poorly motivated and overly familiar.

So, what’s my suggestion for an alternative? Keep Thanos as the mystery bad guy behind the scenes, pulling strings and helping evil along its course, BUT have ANOTHER main bad guy on the ground interacting with the Avengers. Who should be that bad guy? ULTRON. For those of you who don’t know, Ultron, an early Avengers villain, is a rogue sentient robot, an evil artificial intelligence, originally CREATED by Avenger Hank Pym, who wants to exterminate all human life on Earth. First of all, Ultron is a nice, scary bad guy who would have a very different methodology than Loki’s invading army. Instead of aliens from the sky bent on conquest, Ultron would have an evil robot lord commanding Earth’s technology and his robot legions to exterminate all life on Earth. Plus you can EASILY tie Ultron’s creation into the core team of the Avengers – maybe he was a creation of SHIELD or a creation of Tony Stark working with Janet Van Dyne, Hank Pym, or Bill Foster – so there will be PERSONAL stakes when the Avengers have to rise up to slap Ultron down. (Right there, you have your story-driven reason to introduce Van Dyne and Pym as “new” Avengers.)

And Ultron’s mission – kill all humans – fits in PERFECTLY with Thanos’ death-obsessed mission, so you could even have Thanos have a hand in inspiring Ultron’s urge to exterminate. Because what could be more demoralizing to The Avengers than watching Ultron, a being THEY helped create, cause so much destruction? That might be enough to tear the team apart... which is EXACTLY the kind of drama that a good sequel needs. (I know certain fans have been clamoring for Agent Coulson to be reborn as the robot Avenger known as The Vision, but what if that artificial version of Coulson got corrupted and turned into Ultron? How amazing would it be to bring Clark Gregg back and have him rip out the hearts of the team while he cuts a bloody swath across the world? It’d be SPECTACULAR.)

I know, after that last scene in “Avengers”, some fanboys might be sad to not see Thanos slugging it out in a cosmic battle royale with the core team, but I just think that the story needs more than an outer-space despot looking to kill. Loki had wonderfully real, relatable, and emotional reasons for waging his war against the Avengers and, if “Avengers 2” is going to work, the bad guy has to have the same kind of understandable dramatic drive for picking a fight with the world’s mightiest heroes. And, at the moment, I can’t think of a bad guy who could do more damage to the team – both physically and emotionally – than Ultron.

## 5. Pay Joss Whedon a Whole Lot of Money to Write and Direct It





The Avengers

Photo credit: Disney/Marvel

Wait, did I already mention this one? I did? Well, it deserves to be said twice. Even if Marvel and Disney can’t get Whedon back in the director’s chair, they AT LEAST need to have him write it and serve as an executive creative consultant. His crystal-clear vision of what made each character so unique and entertaining turned a movie that could’ve been the spandex-version of “League of Extraordinary Gentlemen” into one of the most crowd-pleasing films in recent memory. Unless Marvel can create a passable life-model-decoy of Joss Whedon – Get the imagineers working on it now, Disney! – they need to acknowledge how much Joss brought to the table and not go ahead with a sequel without Whedon, in some capacity, coming along for the ride.

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