

# Licensing Not So Marvel-ous

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As many readers know, I am a pretty big nerd. Therefore, I love comic book super hero movies. This year, Marvel had two movies featuring ensemble casts of heroes. ‘Captain America: Civil War’ chronicled a rift between the Avengers’ Captain America and Iron Man, and remaining members of the team and other super heroes joined the fray. ‘X-Men: Apocalypse’ focused on the team of mutants trying to stop a god-like mutant named Apocalypse (and his minion Psylocke, portrayed by Aaron Rodgers’ girlfriend, Olivia Munn) from taking over the world.

Team-ups of super heroes and crossovers of titles are extremely popular in the comic book world. Several times in the past, the Avengers either teamed up with or squared off against the X-Men in the comics. It would be totally awesome to see that on the big screen, only it’s not likely to ever happen.

In the early 1990s, comic book sales had a huge boom. Like Beanie Babies and baseball cards, many people began collecting comic books as an investment, holding them in the hopes they would appreciate in value. It came as no surprise that the market was flooded with comics and by the end of the decade sales plummeted.

So in the mid-90s, in an effort to raise both money and comic book awareness, Marvel began licensing the rights to put some of its characters in films to movie studios. In other words, Marvel gave studios the rights to make movies about their characters in exchange for payment. They sold the film rights to the character Blade to New Line Cinema, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox got the X-Men and Fantastic Four, and finally, Spider-Man went to Sony.

These movies generated billions of dollars. However, Marvel only got a tiny slice of the pie. So in 2004, Marvel started its own movie production company to make films about their characters. After getting the rights back to the character from New Line Cinema, Marvel produced their first film, ‘Iron Man,’ which generated over \$585 million at the box office.

While Marvel raised enough money to make movies, they didn’t have enough wherewithal to market and distribute them, so they inked a deal with Paramount Studios to distribute their films. Paramount had the distribution rights to the Iron Man, Thor, Captain America and Avengers movies.

In 2009, Disney bought Marvel Studios, meaning they no longer needed outside help to distribute films they produced. In addition, Disney bought Paramount’s production rights to Marvel movies.

Because the rights to these comic book characters are gold mines, the respective studios are fiercely protective of their properties. There are gray areas, however. The siblings Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch are mutants and appears in the X-Men comics. Likewise, Quicksilver shows up in Fox’s X-Men movies. However, the duo also joined the Avengers in the comics, so they both appeared in Marvel’s ‘Avengers: Age of Ultron’ movie.

There is hope for a team-up, however. Thankfully, Marvel and Sony came to terms where Spidey could show up in Marvel’s ‘Captain America: Civil War’ movie. In exchange, an upcoming Sony film about the wall-crawler can take place within Marvel’s “universe.”

Because there should be enough money to be had for everyone, I’m hoping one day the studios can work out an arrangement for us, the nerdy fans, to make a movie with all the super heroes.

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