

Control and conscience divides heroes in 'Civil War'

LOS ANGELES, April 26, (RTRS): Marvel's band of Avengers are usually a heroic bunch, but when faced with the destruction of their heroic efforts to save the world, the superheroes are split between maintaining control of their powers or going under government contract, leading to an explosive battle.

"Captain America: Civil War," out in international theaters this week and in US theaters on May 6, holds the heroes accountable for the mass destruction caused by their efforts to save the planet. Last year's "Avengers: Age of Ultron" ended with an entire town being lifted into the air.

In "Civil War," Chris Evans' Captain America fights for superheroes to govern themselves and goes head to head with his former

ally, Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man, who wants the heroes to be governed by the United Nations.

"We like to liken it to a fight at a wedding," said Joe Russo, who co-directed the film with his brother Anthony Russo.

Fall-out

"It's something that's been brewing in a family for some time and something happens that instigates a fall-out amongst all of the characters so relevancy and topicality are really important to us because it makes the audience feel like it's part of their world."

"Civil War" sees Captain America's best friend the Winter Soldier (Sebastian Stan) seemingly cause massive acts of destruction.

A divided superhero camp mirrors the complexities of the current

US political stage, Evans said. "Even in American politics, no one is right or wrong. There's no evil here, we're not fighting Nazis or aliens. This is just a matter of whether we're fighting for our head or our heart," he said.

Moments of levity come courtesy of new additions to the superhero ensemble, namely Paul Rudd's smart-talking Ant-Man and the first appearance of British newcomer Tom Holland's Spider-Man, the latest iteration of the web-slinging hero.

Spider-Man is joining Disney's Marvel cinematic universe as part of a collaborative deal between Walt Disney Co and Sony Pictures, which owns the rights to Spider-Man. Holland will be swinging his way into 2017's standalone film "Spider-Man:

Homecoming."

"I like the fact that they're skewing Spider-Man young because that's how he is in the comic books. He's a young kid, and Tom Holland has this really great innocence and naivete but sense of subtle maturity," Evans said.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Christopher Gorham will make his feature directorial debut on the independent comedy "We Love You, Sally Carmichael!," Variety has learned.

Gorham, best known for portraying a blind CIA officer on USA Network's "Covert Affairs," will also star in "Sally Carmichael." He will direct from a script by Daryn Tufts.

Adam Abel is producing

through his production company Go Films. Executive producers are Tufts and David Nibley of Flinch Films.

"Sally Carmichael" will shoot in Utah this summer. Gorham will portray an author who is ashamed to have secretly written an incredibly popular series of young adult romance novels that chronicle the epic love story between a human girl and a merman -- all under the pen name, Sally Carmichael. When he is forced to meet a top box office star about the movie adaptation of a Sally Carmichael book, the author's carefully built life of anonymity starts crumbling down around him.

Gorham will soon appear alongside Douggray Scott, Harold Perrineau and Kim Raver in Audience Network's limited series

"Full Circle."

Gorham noted that his first professional acting job was in Danny Boyle's "A Life Less Ordinary," which was shot in Utah in 1996. Several years later, Gorham landed his first starring role in a feature on Disney's "The Other Side of Heaven" alongside Anne Hathaway.

"I started my feature acting career in Utah, and I'm thrilled to begin my feature directing career here as Salt Lake City has a distinct beauty that this story fits perfectly," Gorham said. "So we didn't want to just shoot here. We wanted this movie to take place here."

Go Films has produced the "Saints and Soldiers" movies, "Outlaw Trail" and "Forever Strong."

Film

Variety



Chris Evans poses for photographers at the photo-call of the film 'Captain America: Civil War' in London, on April 25. 'Captain America: Civil War' is opening in US on May 6. (AP)

Film

'Bigger Splash' a different beast

Fiennes dives deeper into dark comedy

LOS ANGELES, April 26, (RTRS): Ralph Fiennes exploded onto the movie scene with an Oscar-nominated performance in Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List" 23 years ago. Becoming a prestige mainstay in dramas like "Quiz Show," "The English Patient," "The End of the Affair" and "The Constant Gardener," he established a bit of a brand for himself before his work as the villainous Voldemort in the "Harry Potter" series introduced him to a whole new genre and audience.

But with three recent films — Wes Anderson's "Grand Budapest Hotel," Joel and Ethan Coen's "Hail, Caesar!" and Luca Guadagnino's "A Bigger Splash," which opens May 4 — Fiennes may have found a new calling in comedy.

In "Grand Budapest" and "Hail, Caesar!," it was the opportunity to play the straight man amid humorous circumstances that shined a light on the actor's untapped wit. Martin McDonagh's 2008 dark comedy "In Bruges" hinted at the quality, but curiously, it's one that few other filmmakers have clued onto.

"I would love to have done a comedy, but I haven't really gone through a process," Fiennes says. "I've always felt that if it's a character that I can get my head around and if the writing is witty and has humor in it, then I feel I can have a go. I've just been lucky that I understood these three parts myself. I had a way into the characters."

Fiennes' hotel concierge M. Gustave was so delightfully of a piece with Anderson's general brand of dry comedy

that there were calls throughout 2014 for supporting (or even lead) Oscar recognition. He did receive a BAFTA nomination, however.

Exchange

As for the Coens' February release, plenty of tickets may well have been sold on a hilariously arid exchange in the trailer between Fiennes' movie director Laurence Laurentz and young actor Hobie Doyle (Alden Ehrenreich) over a line reading. The directors allowed the back-and-forth to play out so long that the crew was in stitches and poor Ehrenreich could hardly keep a straight face as he was left wondering when they would finally yell "cut."

But Fiennes demurs in particular when it comes to praising his comedic chops in these two films.

"If there's any way that I can land anything comedic with any degree of success, it's if the writing is comedically great," he says with a laugh. "You can have an awareness of timing and stuff, but a lot of the times you play it straight and it will be funny. If it's as well-written as I believe it is then the comedy will be better served in that way."

But "A Bigger Splash," which co-stars Tilda Swinton, is a different beast altogether. It's Fiennes on fire, totally possessed as record producer Harry Hawkes (a character he attempted to infuse with a bit of his brother, Magnus, also a record producer). It's a much darker shade, however, as Harry is haunted by love lost and, for all the amenities of his lush life, a deep unhappiness.

"Harry is a larger-than-life character," Fiennes says. "He has an in-your-face sense of humor, but I felt it was a dark piece. I think Luca treads a very interesting line with the darkly comic. There's an atmosphere in the film that has a slight sense of unease or threat or uncertainty. The performances I like, there's often a sort of weirdly dark comedic element, even for things that are not intended to be."

Again Fiennes points to the script, in which he found Harry to be "very vivid on the page." That and the prospect of doing something fresh was what sold him on the project — not to mention a cushy retreat to the Italian isle of Pantelleria for production.

"It was contemporary and it was a character I don't feel I had ever been asked to play, that sort of live-wire personality that he is," he says.

Voice

Going forward, Fiennes says he'd like to direct more. He also name-checks back-to-back Oscar winner Alejandro G. Iñárritu as a filmmaker he'd particularly like to work with. ("I think he's fantastic.") But he has more comedy on the way in the form of voice work in Warner Animation Group's upcoming "The Lego Batman Movie." He plays the Caped Crusader's trusty butler Alfred in the film, and giggles when thinking about the script and his lines in particular.

"I'm trying not to go back and retreat similar roles, I suppose," Fiennes says. "I'm just waiting for parts to be offered that have something different about

them."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Blake Jenner, Margaret Qualley and Tim Blake Nelson have joined the cast of "Sidney Hall" starring Logan Lerman and Elle Fanning.

Kyle Chandler, Nathan Lane and Michelle Monaghan also star with Shawn Christensen directing. Christensen co-wrote the script with Jason Dolan.

Jonathan Schwartz is on board to produce through his Super Crispy Entertainment banner with Christensen and Lerman exec producing.

The story follows three stages in the life of the title character, who writes the book of his generation before disappearing without a trace. The film is currently in production in New York.

Jenner can currently be seen in Richard Linklater's "Everybody Wants Some!!" and also has "Billy Boy" bowing this year. He is repped by CAA and Atlas Artists.

Along with starring in the final season of "The Leftovers," bowing this year, Qualley has "The Nice Guys" bowing next month and starts filming the Netflix pic "Death Note" this summer. She is repped by UTA, Management 360 and Harris Hartman.

Nelson was most recently seen in "The Confirmation" and has Ang Lee's "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk" bowing this fall. He is repped by UTA, Gateway Management Company and Bloom Hergott.

LOS ANGELES: "Detective Conan: The Darkest Nightmare," the 20th feature episode in the animated series about a teenage genius detective trapped in a boy's body, won its second straight weekend at the Japanese box office during the peak Golden Week holiday period. The film earned \$6.1 million on 522,023 admissions to run its cumulative total to \$22.5 million, with Toho distributing.

Debuting in a second place on 471 was Disney's "Zootopia." The animation took \$4 million on 329,513 admissions. This was nearly 10% better than the opening frame for the Pixar animation "Inside Out," which finished its run in Japan with \$36 million.

Highest ranking among new local films was Toho's "I Am A Hero," a disaster thriller based on a best-selling novel about a zombie-like holocaust, with Yo Oizumi starring as a struggling manga artist turned killer of the undead. Bowing on 284 screens, the film recorded \$2 million on 159,964 admissions. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Paramount Pictures has acquired an untitled original pitch by Marlon Smith and Daniel Fajemisin-Duncan with Matt Reeves attached to produce.

Reeves and Adam Kassan will produce through their production banner 6th & Idaho, with an eye for Reeves to direct. Rafi Crohn will oversee for the company.

Plot details are being kept under wraps.

Smith and Fajemisin-Duncan, who have been friends since childhood growing up in South London, are best known for the British limited series "Run," which scored them a BAFTA nomination for writing. The duo are currently developing a handful of projects, including a TV series based on Gareth Edwards' debut feature, "Monsters" for Channel Four.

Reeves most recently directed "Dawn of the Planet of the Apes," which went on to gross more than \$702 million worldwide including \$209 million domestically. He is

currently filming the next Apes installment, "War for the Planet of the Apes," which is set to bow on July 14, 2017.

Smith and Fajemisin-Duncan are represented by CAA, Grandview, and in the UK by Sayle Screen. Reeves is repped by CAA, 3 Arts and attorney Karl Austen. (RTRS)



Stone



Jolie

LOS ANGELES: Disney confirmed Monday it is planning sequels for box office smashes "The Jungle Book" and "Maleficent" and announced nine new live-action movies mostly inspired by its animated back catalogue.

The studio also confirmed widespread rumors of a "Mary Poppins" sequel starring Emily

Blunt, and "Cruella," a spin-off of "101 Dalmatians" with Emma Stone.

Angelina Jolie will reprise her role as Maleficent with Linda Woolverton once again taking on script duties while director Jon Favreau revisits the story of man-cub Mowgli for "Jungle Book 2," the studio said in a statement.

Reese Witherspoon will take a leading role in "Tinker Bell," a remake of "Peter Pan," Disney said, while Tim Burton will take the helm for "Dumbo," a modern retelling of the 1941 Disney classic.

While speculation about all the films has been rife — some of which Disney has previously confirmed — Monday's state-

ment represents the studio's first official announcement accompanied by a roll-out schedule.

The studio plans to release live-action fairy tales in December 2017, April 2018 and December 2019, it said, without revealing which movies had been allocated to each slot. (AFP)