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The Marvel Cinematic Universe Expands Ambitiously Through “Eternals”

George Burquest, Staff Reporter

The 26th Marvel Movie, “Eternals” introduced Marvel Cinematic Universe fans to the shared world’s newest team of superheroes.” Released Nov. 5, Marvel’s “Eternals” was directed by Academy Award winner Chloé Zhao, and is currently only available in theaters.

It boasts an expansive cast starring Gemma Chan, Richard Madden, Kumail Nanjiani, Lia McHugh, Brian Tyree Henry, Lauren Ridloff, Barry Keoghan, Don Lee, Kit Harrington, Salma Hayek and Angelina Jolie.

With many characters to corral, it is no wonder that the movie seems more like a ‘getting the band back together again’ story, as compared to typical Marvel breakneck action. As a result, the film has a more character-driven story that some Marvel fans might be surprised by.

The story follows an immortal alien race, the Eternals, who emerge from hiding after thousands of years to protect Earth from their ancient counterparts, the Deviants.

Marvel movies have developed a tendency to tie in their other story lines through small Easter eggs and subtle references in each film. Taking place five years after the events of “Avengers End Game,” however, “Eternals” demonstrates a notable lack of those hints as Zhao and her colleagues attempted to make “Eternals” into an ecosystem of its own.

Seattle University second-year student, Erin Tarasow, describes herself as a big Marvel fan. She argued that “Eternals” felt forced into the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

“The Avengers story died out, and now it seems like they are trying to replace it with this Eternal group. But you can’t just replace the Avengers,” Tarasow said. “It was a lot packed into one movie.”

With a runtime just under three hours, the film is now the second-longest movie within the MCU, which is no surprise given what it attempts to accomplish.



Kennedi Finnes

The “Avengers” movies brought together several stories, such as “Iron Man,” “Captain America” and more, all serving as foundational backstories for the heroes and heroines. In the case of the “Eternals,” the heroes’ stories are all brand new and monolithic; they are being introduced all at the same time with little backstory.

Similar feelings were shared by fellow Marvel fan first-year Computer Science major Cassidy Denault.

“It’s hard—there were a lot of new characters and you didn’t get to know all of them, but I think the movie did as good of a job as it could. It was very ambitious of them,” Denault said.

Ambitious is right. With ten Eternals, all brandishing never-before-seen powers named in relation to myths and legends, this diverse set of heroes faces enemies on the grand scale anyone would expect from a Marvel film.

Shifting away from the traditional white male archetype of a superhero, “Eternals” follows the trend of recent Marvel movies “Black Widow” and “Shang Chi,” which respectively feature a female hero as well as a Chinese-American actor in the titular roles in their heroic stories.

“Eternals” not only challenges superhero conventions of race, gender and sexuality, but the film also introduces the first deaf superhero into the MCU.

First-year Economics major Alyna Roshan was a big fan of these changes.

“The diversity of the new characters made it super interesting,” Roshan said.

These newly introduced characters are the backbone and lifeblood of the future of the MCU now that the Avengers are in the past. Now that an older cast of actors has left Marvel following the conclusion of its “Avengers” arc, Disney has an incentive to create more diverse stories.

Tarasow will be interested to see how the “Eternals” story unfolds in the future.

“I would want to see the second one, but it’s not like I’m theorizing what it’s going to be about. It’s more the case that I go to see every Marvel movie, so of course when this one comes out, I will be seeing it as well,” Tarasow said.

The cultish nature of the Marvel fandom holds true for Denault and Roshan as well. Each said that they would be willing to see the next movies to see how the MCU will continue these stories.

Long-time fans as well as those interested in joining the heroes of the MCU are both offered something in “Eternals.” The movie is a welcome change of pace to the traditional superhero formula and leaves plenty of room for future success.