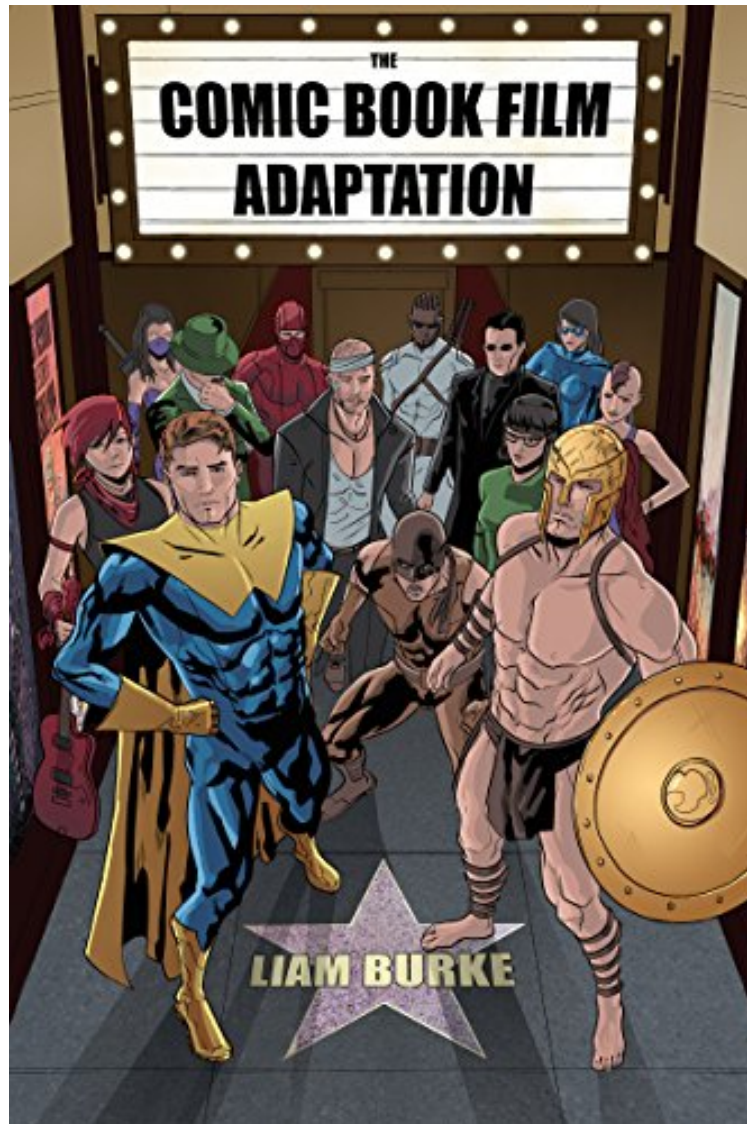


The Comic Book Film Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood's Leading Genre

Liam Burke

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Liam Burke : The Comic Book Film Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood's Leading Genre before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Comic Book Film Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood's Leading Genre:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brief Reflections (Read the reviews below as well!) By Chris Lopez Chronologically speaking, it might be too soon to say whether or not The Comic Book Film Adaptation

constitutes a seminal work in film (and comics) studies. However, since the book's release, a decent number of books, offering holistic attention to the phenomenon of comic book adaptations, have come out. And in all of their introductions they note the ground breaking work Burke has done through this book and what he has paved the way for. So I'd say this book is en route to becoming a must read in any academic or creative conversation regarding the adaptation of comic book stories. Honestly, the two reviews below set up a good spectrum of how you might feel about this book. Burke's analyses are very comprehensive and each chapter is so self-contained you could read this book out of order and reach the same conclusions as someone who read it front to back. If there's anything that establishes continuity within the book it's the simple question of, "how did a once disparaged form of cinema become Hollywood's most successful genre?" However, Burke doesn't presume to provide THE answer to that question, the "silver bullet" as he calls it; instead he aims to demonstrate how the answer to such a question is profoundly multifaceted. So if you're coming to this book for answers, prepared to just have more questions when you finish -- usually the sign of a good book. Essentially each chapter unpacks a particular methodology one can approach the comic book film adaptation genre with: Ch1 (Cultural, technological, commercial/economic, and generational approaches) ch2 (Genre Studies) Ch3 (Fidelity to source material and Fandom) ch4 (Translating comic aesthetics into cinematic aesthetics) and Ch5 (identifying the conventional forms of achieving said translations). Through this book, Burke points to the ways future interpreters of the genre can go to make sense of its nature and success. The introduction is more than enough to acquaint you with the contents of this book, if you're looking for a more detailed overview of it. Not a book one can skim through (especially if you're into cinema and media studies) but definitely a must read if you want to speak into the conversation revolving around the comic book adaptations.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Nothing like the comics
By David Siegel I bought this book because of the three original "Spider-Man" movies released from 2002 to 2007 and the two "Amazing Spider-Man" movies released from 2012 to 2014 and I love it.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. clear, insightful, authoritative, timely, well documented and sourced, and highly readable
By B. Capossere The Comic Book Film Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood's Leading Genre, by Liam Burke, is a scholarly look at the comic book movie genre, examining why these movies became so popular since the turn of the new century as well as the various elements that can be said to constitute the genre. Burke also discusses the question of fidelity to the original source material and how that fidelity has lately been affected by the rise of mass fan culture. It's a learned, well-documented, highly informative exploration and highly recommended for anyone interested in comics books, either their film or print versions.

After a brief introduction, the book moves through five relatively lengthy sections, each focused on a different area. I'll address each chapter separately.

One: Burke opens his examination with the simple question of what is it that led to first the rise of comic book movies and then their utter dominance at the box office in what is called The Golden Age of Comic Book Film Making. Generally speaking, he breaks the reasons down into three categories of culture, technology, and business economics. More precisely: the impact of 9/11 on the US population, creating a need/desire for heroes in the face of national trauma; the technological progress, especially in CGI, which allowed filmmakers to present on screen comic book action that previously would have been either impossible or terrible looking; and finally, the fact that comic books brought to their producers a built-in audience, a multitude of stories allowing for serial or franchise films, and a built-in iconography for ease of merchandising. Each of these areas is further subdivided and examined in thoughtful detail, as for instance when the cultural aspect is sub-divided into nostalgia, wish fulfillment, escapism, and ideology.

Two: Here, Burke explores the elements of the comic book genre, placing comic book heroes in a larger context alongside Western heroes and 1970s/1980s action heroes. He makes clear early on as well that a comic book movie does not need to actually be based on a comic book to be included in this genre; it simply needs to adopt elements synonymous with the comic book movie (he places *The Matrix*, for example, in this genre despite it having no comic source). Amongst the elements examined are protagonists, and a heightened reality, and a comic aesthetic. In this chapter he does an in-depth comparison of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and *Watchmen* films, which he places on the opposite ends of the Fidelity spectrum in terms of how faithful they were to the source material.

Three: The discussion at the end of chapter two leads into a much more extensive look at the idea of fidelity, in particular the connection between fans and fidelity. Burke charts this connection from the early days of the Marvel Bullpen where Stan Lee would respond to fans letters in the comic books to the current rise in fandom on the net and the web's ability to create a ripple effect, whereby fan reaction emanates outward through the general population, thus magnifying its impact. As an example, he points to how dismissive the creators of the original *Batman* were of fan reaction to the film, saying This is too big a budget movie to worry about what a fan of a comic would say: or referring to fans as a small cult. He contrasts that to the current relationship between fans and comic book movie creators, with those creators now engaging in back and forths on the web, attending conferences, offering pre-screenings to fans, etc.

Four: In this section Burke takes a much more detailed look at the comic aesthetic, diving into the ways in which comic books have informed the look of films and vice versa. He begins by looking at what would be the base comparison points: a comic book's panel versus a film's shot. The chapter then looks in detail at various elements both film and comic books employ and how they are similar or different. Included are aspects such as transitions, angles, conveyance of motion, framing, passage of time, economy of detail, color, and the like. One specific comparison is for

instance how the notorious bullet time slo-mo in *The Matrix* can approximate the time a film viewer has to look at an individual panel. Five: In the final chapter (excepting the general conclusion), Burke looks at how the Marvel Way has been adapted from comic books to film, a stylistic flourish and exaggeration that once might have been dismissed as comic-booky, but are today among Hollywood's most relied-on convention. He leans heavily on the guidebook *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* by Stan Lee and John Buscema, moving back and forth from their advice (often shown pictorially) on illustrating in the print medium to how that advice has been translated into film. A few categories in this chapter are framing and composition, Performance, and selecting the chosen moment to illustrate (or film). *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* is extremely well sourced throughout, calling upon experts in a host of fields either through quotations/citations or through interviews. As one might (should) expect, Scott McCloud is heavily quoted when Burke examines the elements of the comic book. But he also has interviews with directors and actors, quotes from a host of theorists/critics working in the fields of film theory, literary theory, popular culture, semiotics, and others. And as one would hope, but as I've found is not always the case, the book, which after all is focused on two visual mediums, is liberally dotted with illustrations, photographs, and movie stills. Burke himself is a levelheaded, thoughtful, and clarifying guide throughout, never letting the sometimes-esoteric vocabulary of some theory to overshadow or confuse whatever point he is elucidating. This is a fantastic look at the comic book movie clear, insightful, authoritative, timely, well documented and sourced, and highly readable. And thus highly recommended.

There is no better, smarter examination of the relationship between comics and film. Mark Waid, Eisner Award-winning writer of *Kingdom Come* and *Daredevil*. In the summer of 2000 *X-Men* surpassed all box office expectations and ushered in an era of unprecedented production of comic book film adaptations. This trend, now in its second decade, has blossomed into Hollywood's leading genre. From superheroes to Spartan warriors, *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* offers the first dedicated study to examine how comic books moved from the fringes of popular culture to the center of mainstream film production. Through in-depth analysis, industry interviews, and audience research, this book charts the cause-and-effect of this influential trend. It considers the cultural traumas, business demands, and digital possibilities that Hollywood faced at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The industry managed to meet these challenges by exploiting comics and their existing audiences. However, studios were caught off-guard when these comic book fans, empowered by digital media, began to influence the success of these adaptations. Nonetheless, filmmakers soon developed strategies to take advantage of this intense fanbase, while codifying the trend into a more lucrative genre, the comic book movie, which appealed to an even wider audience. Central to this vibrant trend is a comic aesthetic in which filmmakers utilize digital filmmaking technologies to engage with the language and conventions of comics like never before. *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* explores this unique moment in which cinema is stimulated, challenged, and enriched by the once-dismissed medium of comics.

By far the most insightful look ever at superheroes in film. It's not about what's been translated from comics to the movies; it's about why it has, how it has, and why it works well enough to produce some of the most popular movies in all of cinema history. There is no better, smarter examination of the relationship between comics and film. Mark Waid, Eisner Award-winning writer of *Kingdom Come* and *Daredevil*. Liam Burke takes the reader on a compelling journey through this new Golden Age of adaptation, his argument combining the rigorous, exhaustive research of a committed scholar with the energy and encyclopedic knowledge of a passionate fan. This is a serious book about comic books and their relationship with cinema; it is seriously enjoyable, and also seriously important. Will Brooker, author of *Hunting the Dark Knight* and editor of *Cinema Journal*. What is all too often an overlooked form is finally given the seriousness it deserves in *The Comic Book Film Adaptation*. A most welcome intervention in the field of adaptation studies. Deborah Cartmell, coauthor of *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* and coeditor of the journal *Adaptation*. Burke presents a masterly and engaging argument regarding cultural, technological, and industry transformations, which have facilitated a shift in the comic book form on page and on screen from the margins to the mainstream. This excellent book is sure to become a key text in the burgeoning field of comics studies, while also having a great deal to offer film and media studies. Angela Ndalani, editor of *The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero and Super/Heroes: From Hercules to Superman*. About the Author: Liam Burke, Melbourne, Australia, is a media studies lecturer at Swinburne University of Technology. His publications include the *Pocket Essential Superhero Movies* and the edited collection *Fan Phenomena: Batman*.