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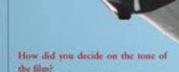
SCARLETT JOHANSSON NATASHA ROMANOFF/ BLACK WIDOW

Scarlett Johansson discusses why Black Widow brings the action – and so much more – to the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

If we had made a Black Widow standaione back then, it would be such a different film to this one. Natasha's sacretice in Avengers: Endgame gave me a totally different perspective on who she is. Before, I don't think I would have been able to show people who Natasha really in, what drives her, and show be remotional core. I don't think we'd be able to cut that deep back then. It would have probably been much more of a straight-up spy thriller that maybe would have been a lot flashier in a different kind of way and just scratch the surface of what we do in this movie.

Why did you decide the time was right to look into the mestery behind Natasha?

There was no reason to do a Black Widow standalone film unless we could dig deep and be brave. For very happy with all the work that we've done on the Marvel Studios films. I felt that Avengers: Endgame was so satisfying I wanted to make sure that Black Widowwoold feel rewarding, not just for the fam, but also for myself, artistically and creatively, after a decade of playing this character. This film gives the opportunity for some sort of healing and understanding as to why Natasha decides to make that ultimate sacrifice in Avengers: Endgame.



There wasn't one specific comic or storyline that we really wanted to adapt. Black Widow as a character has had thousands of different storylines over the years, so, it wasn't obvious what we were going to do. It had to feel like it was the continuation of something that we'd already started, and that we were scratching away at. I was thinking in a very small, specific way, and Kevin Feige thinks in this really huge, unexpected way. The combination of those two approaches is what you get in the Black Widow film. Kevin Feige's genus is that he really always thinks about what fans expect.





06 A detailed look at Taskmaster's hood and mask.

o7/08/09 The mysterious Taskmaster knows Natasha's every move and utilizes photographic reflexes.

10 Showdown! Taskmaster faces Black Widow.

11 Taskmaster makes his Marvel Studios movie debut in Black Widow.













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FLORENCE PUGH

YELENA BELOVA

Florence Pugh talks family and being the no-nonsense assassin that just gets it done.

Ow did you feel about joining the Marvel Cinematic Universe?
With any franchise it's always slightly daunting because of what you're going to bring and what are you going to play. I think for any actor that is automatically going to be a big deal, whether you personally watch them or you don't. Everybody grows up around the Marvel movies or watching them or with some avid fan sibling that loves them.

Was it appealing how much the Marvel Cinematic Universe has been expanding?

Totally. The very fact that they put Cate Shortland in the director's chair, who I never would have thought would be helming one of these films, in front of one of the most precious storylines is amazing. That in itself is branching out. What we've been trying to explain all along is it feels like Cate is just directing another one of her films. It just happens to be with this mega Marvel Cinematic Universe storyline behind it. I never thought of those two crossing over that much. Also, the storyline that we are telling is very horrifying. It's about women that have been, essentially, abused and trained up to be killing machines. As Scarlett said over and over, this is the right time for her to be telling [Black Widow's] story. And we're not shying away from the fact that this story is essentially about women getting their life back. And it's a Marvel Studios film, too. That's pretty rare, and it's very exciting to be a part of that.

Tell us about your character.

I play Yelena, the annoying little sister that says everything that comes to her mind with no consequences. When we meet her she is kind of discovering the world in a new light. She is hurt and complicated and acts out. When she meets Scarlett's character, Natasha, Yelena is kind of rediscovering who she is after being in the Red Room for so long. So together they realize that they're both suffering in very similar ways. There is a lovely and unique friendship between the two of them because they are ultimately long-lost sisters. They repair one another and each other's holes in their lives. At the heart of it is this very brutal journey figuring out who they are, and that's something that I wouldn't think would go together with so many amazing explosions and guns and this and that. There actually is this very sad story at the bottom of it.

"As Scarlett said over and over, this is the right time for telling [Black Widow's] story."

