

Ask A Genius 3 – Superheroes: Our Last Hurrah

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There have been a lot of superhero movies as of late. What does this reflect in the larger culture? Does this somehow tie to the future?

One thing to have in good superhero movies is good special effects. It wasn't possible to have great science fiction movies until *Star Wars* came out. It was able to deliver convincing and impressive science fiction special effects.

With CG and by spending \$200,000,000, and having crews of 2,000 people produce a movie, it has become possible to make a convincing and entertaining movie of superheroes. There's another thing that comes along with that.

You needed entertainment consumers that have seen enough action that they can actually follow the action in a superhero movie. If you took a viewer from the 70s, he would be completely baffled by the action in the current action movies because it's so fast, so complicated, and a lot of these movies have 4-on-4 action.

You've got individuals in spaceships fighting individuals not in spaceships. There's a lot of stuff going on. But beyond technical ability, and the educated and interested public, superhero movies represent some kind of ultimate end of what humans imagine for themselves.

The superness of super heroes is still highly human. They have all of these abilities. Yet, they are still completely concerned with human stuff like relationships. You can't have Peter Parker without his angsty relationships with his Aunt May and he's feeling bad about getting his uncle killed.

His relationships with Mary Jane Parker and Stacy, and whoever else he's always got a thing going with - a girl. He's got work problems. Superman spends most of the day as a human and with a bunch of hassles because he feels the need to be a part of human society.

Fantastic Four and X-Men, most of the time they are dealing with human issues such as relationships and trying to get power rather than fighting bad guys or trying to save the world. Superheroes, it's similar to Greek and Roman gods. They have ultimate power.

All of the power was expressed in human contexts - having sex, feuding, having offspring, and what's going to happen in the non-superhero world in the next 20-200, or 500, years is that we're going to re-engineer ourselves.

We will add to our abilities to think, to our lifespans, and our ability to process information and network with each other. We'll be able to change what our basic drives are when that suits us.

The most ridiculous human drive in terms of messing up and making us do ridiculous things is the sex drive.

Where, what evolution wants for us is to reproduce, find the healthiest partners, partners that are best able to help make offspring and help offspring survive. Often, the drives to reproduce have helped make offspring. They make us go against what we want for ourselves as individuals.

We will have power over ourselves as individuals and over our drives. Huge numbers or percentages of the population will decide to not reproduce because if you can live indefinitely then you want to save resources for yourself. So, the entire human enterprise up until now in history.

You're able to take the most twisted human in history and hypothesize motivations for that humans actions no matter how weird or horrible based on basic human drives - being resentful that you don't fit in, wanting power, wanting sex, but the human enterprise is about to become all smeared in terms of drives and actions as we acquire the ability to mess with those drives.

Superhero movies represent our last hurrah for unadulterated basic human drives taken to their imaginary limits.