

It's "Endgame": Commentary

Why new Marvel movies are disappointing the general audiences and critics alike

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Warning: spoilers ahead for some of the more recent Marvel releases.

I've loved superheroes since I can remember. I read the comics, I went to movie theaters dressed up as the characters, and I fervidly discussed the artful depth of these action movies with any of my friends who would listen. Sadly, Marvel's newer movies have really disappointed me—and I'm not the only one.

A superhero comic-turned-movie franchise, Marvel releases movies in phases over time. Phase Four movies released between 2021-2022 have made far less money than their predecessors. According to The Wall Street Journal, the six films Marvel's produced since 2021 have made roughly half as much as the previous six movies. Money isn't the only indicator of these box office flops, though. A poll by Forbes found both general audiences and self-identified Marvel fans enjoyed superhero movies less than last November. The film review website Rotten Tomatoes reports that recent Marvel movie approval ratings are worse than average by 13.5 percent.

After decades of fantastic movies, why is Marvel going downhill? A lot of people

have a lot of different complaints. Some call "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" a stale and forgettable story dressed up with bad CGI (Computer-generated Graphics), but bad CGI has never seriously hindered Marvel movies before; "Avengers: Infinity War" had its fair share of awkward visuals. My real disappointment regarding this movie is the content, not the set dressing.

"Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" lacks a clear message. The main character doesn't have a clear motivation, and the leading metaphor about balance is confusing at best. Not only that, but the movie has a foundation in racist source material, that redresses racist tropes rather than combating them. Take, for example, the cute animal sidekick to the main cast, a mythical creature appropriated into a tour guide.

This isn't the only new Marvel movie that's lost the plot. "Black Widow" sidelined what was originally a poignant message about the atrocity of disregarding human autonomy. Instead, audiences received another boring spy movie, albeit with more women characters. "Thor: Love and Thunder" completely missed the mark on what was meant to be an emotional narrative about love and death. It



Art by Zoe Kelton

was hard to be immersed in the real tragedy each character faced—Jane Foster's cancer diagnosis, the antagonist's loss of his daughter—when every other line was an overused quip.

Audiences are used to complex and challenging ideas in superpowered packages. It's hard to find a more interesting exploration

of the humanity within these superpowered people than in their early movies. But, in attempting to be watchable to every audience imaginable, Marvel has alienated many of their original viewers. What used to be purposeful metaphors has been replaced by computer-animated explosions. That may be entertainment, but I wouldn't call it art.

BeReal: More like BeFake

The controversy around the new social media app

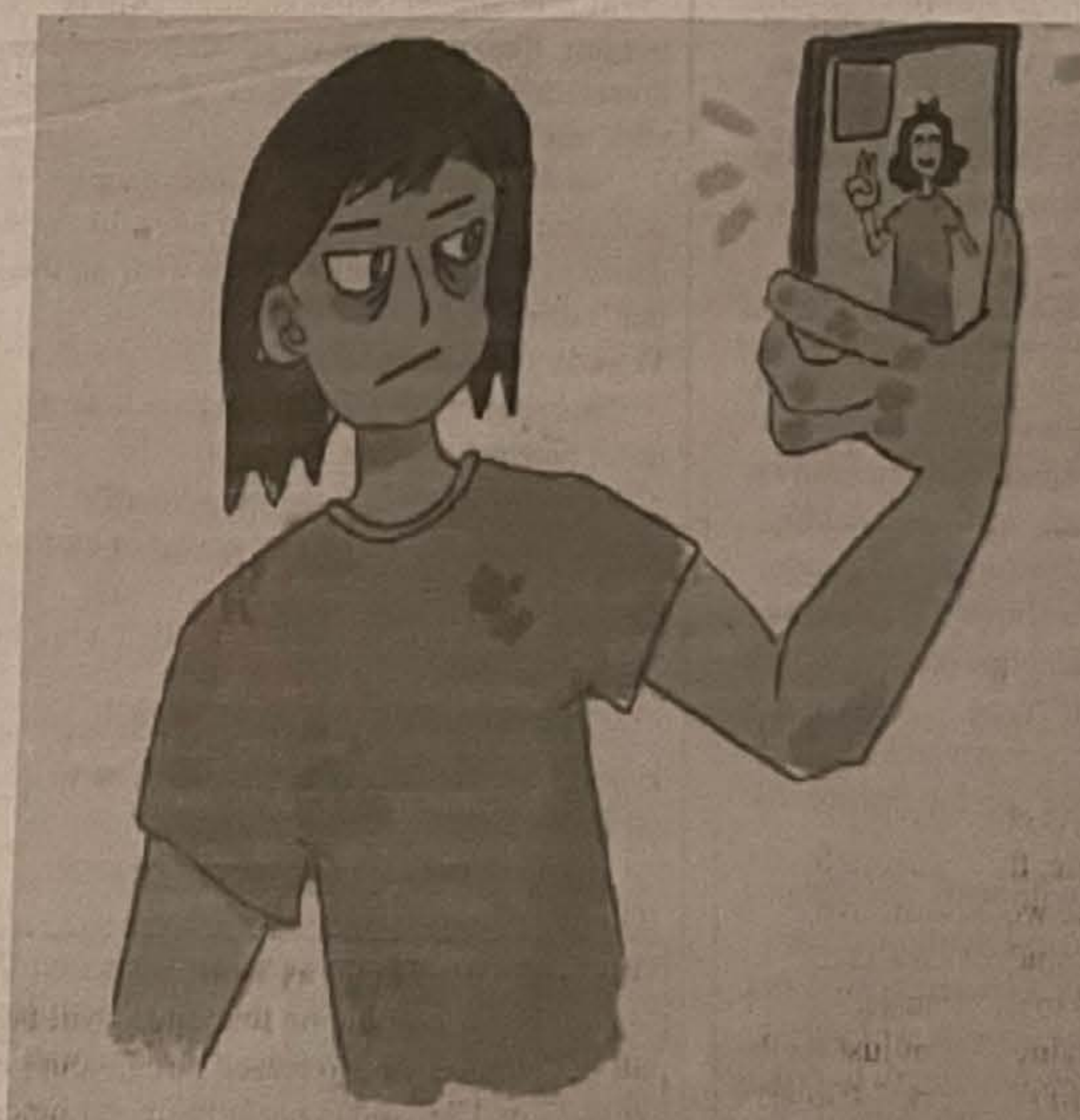
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DING! Across the crowd at the football game, the student section pulls out their phones. Is it an amber alert? An air quality warning? No, it's a BeReal notification: Gen Z's newest social media fixation.

So, how exactly does the app work? It's simple. Once a day, BeReal sends a notification to post a photo, giving you two minutes to do so. Both the front and back camera snap a shot at the same time, showing where you are and what you're doing at the given moment. Only your friends (those you add) can see your post, encouraging you to put forth the truest version of yourself within the given time frame. Here's the catch: In order to see what your friends post, you must post, thus motivating you to, as the name says, "Be Real."

But many have accused BeReal of Being-Fake. For one, the app permits you to post a late BeReal (after the notification period ended), still allowing you to see what your friends posted on-time. Furthermore, you can retake your BeReal, allowing you to re-pose for the photo. You can even post and then delete a BeReal—you'd still get to see what others posted, but they wouldn't see yours after you've deleted it. These are just a few



reasons students are calling BeReal out for its inauthenticity.

Sophomore Evelyn Grennan, who has never downloaded the app, believes BeReal was originally a "cute idea" that was taken

too far. "Whenever it would go off, if people were at their house or something, they just wouldn't take it," Grennan said. "When my friends were all like 'wanna get in my BeReal' before taking it, it's not actually real... it's posing."

Many agree with Grennan. Several students who initially downloaded the app are deleting it or opting out of taking their BeReals. One such student is senior Alberto Solano. "I first downloaded it in the summer and used it every day. Now, I rarely post," Solano said, scrolling through his "memories" (the log of BeReals) to reveal several blank days. Part of this decline can be attributed to a return to

school, Solano believes. With more opportunities for in-person social interaction, people no longer feel a need to post about their daily lives.

Despite the backlash BeReal is facing, some still use it frequently. Cally Webb, a freshman who's had the app since it first came out, believes BeReal is a good way to socialize with others. "I think BeReal is good because there's no filters. I mean sure, you pose for the picture, but that's the only fake thing about it, it's just a picture with your friends mostly," Webb said. In this sense, BeReal differentiates itself from Instagram or Snapchat, where the content one consumes could be fake or edited.

Regardless of the controversy, many refuse to delete the app because they say they'd miss it. "I enjoy scrolling through and commenting on other people's. It's fun seeing what people are doing," said Webb, adding that "Realmojis" (emojis made with one's own facial expression) are a unique way to interact with others online. For now, it's impossible to tell whether BeReal will continue to remain popular, or if it's simply another phase that will die off by the year's end.