



“Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” arrives to the big screen after delays

BY IAN SANDWELL AND GABRIELLA GEISINGER

“Black Panther 2” will be arriving in cinemas later this year, and we have now seen a few rounds of footage, enough to tease out some details about the eagerly-awaited sequel.

The emotional first trailer was debuted at Comic-Con on July 23 during Marvel’s epic presentation and confirmed that T’Challa’s death would be a part of the storyline, following the tragic death of Chadwick Boseman in August 2020.

Since then we’ve had another trailer, which means more to examine for clues as to what the sequel will be about, and just who will be stepping into the titular superhero

role. This is what we know so far about the upcoming “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.”

RELEASE DATE

After the delay in October 2021, “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” will now be out in cinemas on

November 11, 2022. That’s a move of four months from July 2022, and the sequel takes the original place of “The Marvels,” which has now moved back to July 2023.

While nothing is set in stone, we hope this will be the last shift for the movie.



Filming started in June 2021, but as mentioned above, there was a hiatus between November 2021 to January 2022. However, production restarted in January 2022 and filming wrapped in March 2022, so hopefully, it can hit that November release date.

< The Dora Milaje return in the upcoming sequel.

RETURNING CAST MEMBERS



THE CAST

It's been confirmed that the sequel will honour the legacy of Chadwick Boseman and won't recast the role of T'Challa. Thankfully as well, there are no plans to use a 'digital double' in the sequel.

"There's only one Chadwick and he's not with us," said Marvel Studios' EVP Victoria Alonso. "Our king, unfortunately, has died in real life, not just in fiction, and we are taking a little time to see how we return to history and what we do to honour this chapter of what has happened to us that was so unexpected, so painful, so terrible, really."

Kevin Feige added: "Wakanda is a place to further explore with characters and different subcultures. This was always and initially the primary focus of the next story. We're not going to have a CG Chadwick and we're not recasting T'Challa."

Letitia Wright, Lupita Nyong'o, Winston Duke, Danai Gurira, Angela Bassett and Danny Sapani (pictured from top to bottom) are all reprising their roles in the sequel as Shuri, Nakia, M'Baku, Okoye, Ramonda and M'Kathu, respectively.

Duke is reportedly set to be given an "expanded role" in the sequel, but the reports have yet to be confirmed by Marvel, while "Narcos: Mexico" star Tenoch

Huerta Mejía is playing the antagonist Namor, confirmed to be a mutant in the film.

Martin Freeman will return as CIA agent Everett Ross. One character who we can officially confirm won't be returning is Daniel Kaluuya's W'Kabi.

The actor, who played Border Chief tribe W'Kabi in the first film, revealed that he didn't film any footage for the sequel as he was committed to the film "Nope," which reunites him with "Get Out" director Jordan Peele, and shooting for both overlapped.

New to the cast are "I May Destroy You" star Michaela Coel and UFC champion Kamaru Usman, though their roles have yet to be confirmed. Dominique Thorne ("If Beale Street Could Talk") will make her MCU debut as Riri Williams, aka Ironheart.

Another Marvel actor who was spotted on set was Falcon and the "Winter Soldier"'s Anthony Mackie – however, he has confirmed that he is not in the film but merely visiting the set. This could, of course, be an elaborate ruse à la the reunion of the Spider-Men. Only time will tell.

Behind the scenes, Ryan Coogler is returning to write and direct "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," and he's bringing back the original creative cast.

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THE PLOT

Now that we know for sure that the role of T'Challa will not be recast, the focus of the sequel will have had to change, and all we officially know is that it will continue to explore the world of Wakanda and beyond.

Along with the first trailer, we got our first official plot synopsis. "Queen Ramonda, Shuri, M'Baku, Okoye and the Dora Milaje fight to protect their nation from intervening world powers in the wake of King T'Challa's death," it reads.

"As the Wakandans strive to embrace their next chapter, the heroes must band together with the help of War Dog Nakia and Everett Ross and forge a new path for the kingdom of Wakanda."

It had previously been confirmed that "Wakanda Forever" would feature the aquatic villain Namor, thanks to early plot details from Production Weekly. "Both Wakanda and Atlantis are hidden civilisations with advanced technology and increased militaristic abilities that decided to separate themselves from the rest of the world for their own safety, and in a way, out of fear," the details read.

"Wakanda feared that their technology would be abused. Atlantis feared that surface dwellers would come and desecrate the mythical city just as they did so many years ago. And yet their fears escalate even further when these two once-hidden nations clash with each other."

Kevin Feige had hinted that he wanted to explore more of Wakandan history in the sequel, so we could expect to see some historical flashbacks to explore how



"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" is expected to give more detail about the history of the Wakandan civilization.

Wakanda became the place we saw in the first movie.

As for the question on everyone's minds — who will be stepping into the Black Panther armour — only time will tell. Everyone's guess seems to be that Shuri is the most likely candidate to take over the mantle.

However, the newest trailer did give us our first full look at the new Black Panther. Towards the latter part of

the trailer, the new iteration of Black Panther makes their debut, falling from the ceiling in a spectacular stunt. Still, there has yet to be any official word on who is in the suit.

This is likely not to be revealed until the movie comes out, and hopefully won't be spoiled.

"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" is set for release on November 11. Black Panther is available to watch on Disney+.



'We are here now': Mejía honors Latino culture in 'Black Panther' sequel

By Brian Truitt

It's not long until Tenoch Huerta Mejía makes his Marvel movie debut in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," and he's navigating a perfect storm of nerves and excitement.

"I feel like I'm on the beach (and it's warm and beautiful, but the tsunami's coming," the Mexican actor says, smiling over a Zoom chat.

As the antagonistic Namor, leader of the underwater kingdom Talokan, Mejía, 41, brings a new wave of problems for the Wakandan warriors of director Ryan Coogler's "Black Panther" sequel. The Oscar-nominated 2018 hit celebrated Black people and African traditions, and the fresh faces of "Forever" could do the same for the Latino community with a fictional global superpower inspired by Mayan and Mesoamerican culture.

At the end of the original "Panther," King T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman) revealed to the world that Wakanda, considered by many a developing nation, was the most technologically advanced country on the planet. But in the sequel, T'Challa's sister Shuri (Letitia Wright), Dora Milaje leader Okoye (Danai Gurira) and others are mourning the loss of their king when Namor decides to invade Wakanda, as the Black Panther is no longer there to protect them.

"Wakanda has the privilege in some ways of opening themselves up to the surface world in the present day because they've amassed so much power over time," says producer Nate Moore. "Namor's people don't feel like they have that same privilege. They've had to flee before and they know what conquest can

look like and how damaging that can be."

While the comic-book Namor rules over Atlantis, "Wakanda Forever" filmmakers designed a kingdom anchored in Mayan mythology, just as Wakanda pulled from disparate African cultures.

"Namor is a relatively conceited character and believes he knows better than everyone," Moore says. Mejía primarily sees someone whose "main goal is to keep his people safe and hide from the exterior world."

The actors were impressed by the level of detail in the Talokan wardrobe, art pieces and symbols, including the "amazing" masks that signaled at their importance in Mexican culture. Mayan consultants were hired for the production, one of whom was an on-set linguist: Talokan characters communicate with each other in the Yucatec Mayan dialect. "I thought coming in, I'm fluent in Spanish; Mayan is not going to be that difficult. Wrong!" Alex Livinalli, who plays one of Namor's advisors, Attuma, says.

Mejía felt pride and happiness seeing himself in full Namor mode in the mirror for the first time. "It was like, 'Oh my god, this is serious. This is good. This is beautiful.' And at the same time, those Speedos were so tiny," he says with a laugh. "It's a balance, man."

He's received messages from fans about how important the Latin representation is onscreen in "Wakanda Forever." "We are here now, and we are not going anywhere," Mejía says.

Livinalli also takes that to heart: "My mom brought me here for a better life. This could show other kids, 'Hey, you know what? My mom brought me here. Perhaps I can do it, too.'"

IN THE COMICS

By Brian Truitt

Namor the Sub-Mariner, as he's been known in the comic books since 1939, is one of Marvel's oldest superheroes, predating Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and even Captain America. Just as on the page, "Namor is a relatively conceited character and believes he knows better



than everyone," Moore says. He's also a mutant who can fly, thanks to the wings on his ankles. He's older than the rest of the Talokan people, and sports pointy ears, but without the same blue tint to his skin. Those differences set Namor apart from his peers in a way that's "a bit emotionally isolating," Moore adds. "There's a tragedy to that character and a wisdom that comes with loss, and that is where he connects with Shuri in the film."

Left: Tenoch Huerta Mejía pictured as Namor, leader of the underwater Talokan kingdom.