



ADVANCE

From Marvel Studios comes the highly anticipated “Thor: The Dark World,” continuing the big screen adventures of Thor, the Mighty Avenger, as he battles to save Earth and all the Nine Realms from a shadowy enemy that pre-dates the universe itself. In the aftermath of Marvel’s “Thor” and “Marvel’s The Avengers,” Thor fights to restore order across the cosmos...but an ancient race led by the vengeful Malekith returns to plunge the universe back into darkness. Faced with an enemy that even Odin and Asgard cannot withstand, Thor must embark on his most perilous and personal journey yet, one that will reunite him with Jane Foster and force him to sacrifice everything to save us all.

Based on the ever-popular comic book series, Marvel’s “Thor: The Dark World” stars Chris Hemsworth (“Marvel’s The Avengers”) as Thor with Academy Award® winner Natalie Portman (“Black Swan”) as Jane Foster, Tom Hiddleston (“Marvel’s The Avengers,” “War Horse”) as Loki, award-winning Stellan Skarsgård (“Marvel’s The Avengers,” “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo”) as Selvig, Idris Elba (“Prometheus”) as Heimdall, Christopher Eccleston (“The Others”) as Malekith, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje (“The Thing”) as Algrim, Kat Dennings (“Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist,” “2 Broke Girls”) as Darcy, Ray Stevenson (“The Three Musketeers”) as Volstagg, Zachary Levi (“Tangled,” “Chuck”) as Fandral, Tadanobu Asano (“Battleship”) as Hogun, Jaimie Alexander (“Love and Other Drugs”) as Sif with Rene Russo (“The Thomas Crown Affair”) as Frigga and Academy Award® winner Anthony Hopkins (“Silence of the Lambs”) as Odin.

Marvel’s “Thor: The Dark World” is directed by Alan Taylor from a story by Don Payne and Robert Rodat and a screenplay by Christopher L. Yost and Christopher Markus & Stephen McFeely and is produced by Kevin Feige, p.g.a. The executive producers are Louis D’Esposito, Victoria Alonso, Craig Kyle, Alan Fine, Nigel Gostelow and Stan Lee.

The creative production team includes director of photography Kramer Morgenthau, ASC (“Game of Thrones,” “Life on Mars”), production designer Charles Wood (“Wrath of the Titans,” “The Italian Job”), editor Dan Lebental, A.C.E. (“Iron Man”), editor Wyatt Smith (“Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides”) and costume designer Wendy Partridge (“Silent Hill,” “Hellboy”).

Marvel’s “Thor: The Dark World” releases November 8, 2013, and is distributed by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

THE BEGINNING

In 1962, the now-legendary duo of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby introduced “The Mighty Thor” to readers of Marvel Comics, unleashing a new era of action-adventure with their take on the hammer-wielding Norse god. Despite the Nordic-sounding names, the story

The Nine Realms are taken from Norse mythology and refer to the nine worlds that are supported by Yggdrasil, an immense ash tree, which is central to Norse cosmology. Asgard is depicted at the top and Earth, known as Midgard, is in the middle.

THE NINE REALMS:

ASGARD – Home of the Gods

VANAHEIM – Home of the Vanir, sister race of the Asgardians.

ALFHEIM – Home of the Light Elves

NIDAVELLIR – Home of the Dwarves

MIDGARD – Earth

JOTUNHEIM – Home of the Frost Giants

SVARTALFHEIM – Home of the Dark Elves

NIFLHEIM – Land of the dead

MUSPELHEIM – Home of the Fire Demons and Home of Surtur

was rooted in familiar, universal conflicts that have driven human drama since the beginning of time: a son impatient to prove his worth to his father; a lethally resentful brother; and a woman who helps a man see the world anew.

After the global cinematic success of Marvel’s “Thor,” the filmmakers reached once more into a rich archive of Norse mythology and comic book history for Marvel’s “Thor: The Dark World.” The movie paints an adventure of the most epic and spectacular proportions. Again drawing on universal and familiar themes, the film pits duty and family allegiance against personal aspiration and love. It sees a nation in conflict with an enemy long thought to be dead, but who now threatens the very existence of the universe.

“Thor: The Dark World” producer and Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige notes that writers Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had made an inspired move by looking to Norse mythology when

deciding to create a god as a comic book Super Hero. He recalls, “A lot of people were familiar with the Greek and Roman mythologies, not so much with the Norse. When you read those stories, it’s like the best of the Marvel Comics, because it’s people who are very human, despite their powers—despite their calling down the storm, the thunder and the lightning. They have family issues, in the two brothers fighting, Thor and Loki. It’s a family drama and they’re just as flawed as any of us, or any of the Marvel heroes. That’s what makes the Marvel characters so relatable.”

At the end of “Marvel’s The Avengers,” Thor’s adopted brother Loki is taken back to Asgard by Thor as a prisoner, after trying to take over the world. From this starting point, producer Kevin Feige, executive producer Craig Kyle, the screenwriters and a large team at Marvel sat down to look at where Thor’s story should go next. Screenwriter Christopher L. Yost explains, “We really wanted to look at how you could escalate the story personally for him and push things to the next level in terms of conflict.”

Director Alan Taylor, describing Thor’s journey, says, “In the first film, we saw Thor go from being an impetuous prince to taking his first steps towards maturing and growing up, and in our film that life story continues. He’s moving closer to actually claiming the kind of power that comes with Odin. He’s becoming not just a man, but potentially a king as well. In this story, as Thor matures and deepens, he has to give some things up and suffer.”

To create the conflict, the filmmakers give Thor a worthy adversary—the villainous Malekith. Introduced in June 1984 in issue #344 of Thor, Malekith is leader of the dark elves, who inhabit Svartalfheim, one of the Nine Realms. After waging war with the Nine Realms, and being defeated by Asgard, the dark elves were considered to be extinct. But Malekith put his planet and the surviving dark elves into hibernation for many thousands of years, until a calculated time when he was ready to avenge the universe and turn light once more into darkness. Malekith and the dark elves will prove to be formidable enemies with a violent and personal history with Asgard.

In creating “Thor: The Dark World,” Marvel filmmakers worked diligently to respect the film’s origins and the legions of comic book fans it spawned and worked carefully to endear and excite not only those fans but fans of the Marvel Cinematic Universe as well.

CASTING AND CHARACTERS

Reprising his role as the Mighty Thor, God of Thunder, Chris Hemsworth, the Australian actor with a physique to rival men and gods, was delighted to return. “I love playing the character. The trick is each time to find new ways to make the character have some sort of advance or growth from the last one,” explains Hemsworth. “I think you’ve got to make sure the hero is a big catalyst to the resolution from the beginning, that he’s not just there to step in at the very end and save the day. He has to be proactive throughout. There’s a definite conflict within Thor about where his place was. Was it with Jane on Earth or was it in Asgard, and where does his allegiance lie? Also, he’s beginning to understand the darker sides of what it truly means to be king and the burden of the throne.”

Once more taking on the role of esoteric astrophysicist Jane Foster, Natalie Portman enthuses, “It’s really fun to get to come back and play her again. I think it’s rare to get the opportunity to play these female scientists in this kind of movie, so it’s nice to have a foil for the super hero!”

Joining Jane once more in her scientific explorations of cosmic understanding is the quirky and irreverent intern, and fan-favorite, Darcy Lewis, played by Kat Dennings. “People seem to love Darcy,” notes Dennings. “I love Darcy. And because she’s not in the comic books, she was born out of my imagination. So the fact that people like her is just really flattering.”

Rounding off the scientific trio of mortals is the talented Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgård, who plays Erik Selvig. Like fellow cast members he reprises his role. Within the Marvel Universe we last saw him possessed by Loki in “Marvel’s The Avengers.” This experience has left the scientist traumatized and his former colleagues discover his current location by accident, when he is caught on national TV news, half naked at the ancient sacred site of Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, England. Stellan jokes of his predicament, “It was cold. I’d recommend clothes at Stonehenge. The English climate is not suitable for streaking!”

Revisiting the role of the God Odin, King of Asgard, Anthony Hopkins was happy to join the cast of “Thor: The Dark World.” “I enjoyed the first one with Chris Hemsworth and Tom Hiddleston. I have scenes with Natalie Portman—she’s beautiful and lovely—and Kat Dennings and Chris. They’re terrific people to work with; very easy, gentle and relaxed people.” He admits that he is not well versed in Marvel or Nordic mythology, but explains, “I just play him like a human being, with maybe a little more dimension. I grow a beard, look hopefully impressive and try and keep it as real as possible.”

Jaimie Alexander was thrilled to reprise her role as Sif. “I have to say Sif is one of the favorite characters I’ve played,” says Alexander. “She’s probably closest to my personality out of everything I’ve done. She’s a butt-kicker and I like that!”

Once again playing Volstagg, Ray Stevenson relished the chance to see the character’s background develop further as life as an Asgardian is revealed, before the action intensifies. He comments, “You get a chance to see Volstagg with his family, which was a big surprise. I’ve got these naughty cherubic sort of bouncy kids, which is just a lot of fun.”

Joining the cast to play Fandral is Zachary Levi. Discussing picking up the reins of Fandral, he says, “I like the character of Fandral. He’s different to anything I’ve ever been able to play. He speaks with an English accent, is very blunt and is a total lothario, lady’s man. I love all that; it’s just really fun. He’s very Errol Flynn.”

Christopher Eccleston is new to the cast and takes on the role of arch villain, Malekith. On developing the character of Malekith he says, “I wanted Malekith to have a sense of humor, because I think a sense of humor indicates intelligence and if you’ve got an intelligent villain that means that your heroes have to be really accomplished to beat them.”

Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, who plays the dual roles of dark elf Algrim and Kurse, was delighted to join the cast and take on a complex dual role. “I think every boy and girl

grows up with super heroes, comic books, Marvel in their childhood, so to be part of that history, it's a privilege," states Adewale. Describing his characters, he says, "I suppose Algrim and Kurse would be the quintessential baddies, but in reality they are what I perceive as the scorn and the victims of the story. They are the elves who have basically lost their planet and their race to another race, the Asgardians."

The last piece of the exciting jigsaw was Loki and Tom Hiddleston. Hiddleston was delighted to step into Loki's shoes once more. He says, "I feel like 'Thor: The Dark World' is a chance as an actor to find new depth, new dimension, new iterations of Loki's psychology, of his physicality and his capacity for feeling. On one level he is an off-the-rails psychopathic agent of chaos, but on a human level, his psychology and his emotional landscape is very, very interesting because he's so intelligent and yet so broken. This film is a chance to find where his capacity for heroism and his Machiavellian menace meet."

CREATING THE LOOK

With Malekith, the otherworldly villain in place, filmmakers were keen to give audiences relatable references and worlds. Director Alan Taylor was chief among those wanting to give the film grounding in reality, with a weathered texture and a grittier feel. Says Taylor, "When I came in, I wanted to get more of a sense of the Norse mythology, the Viking quality, the texture, the history and the weight."

As a result, all aspects of Marvel's "Thor: The Dark World," —from the locations, the vast, largely exterior sets, the costumes, hair and make-up, to the armor, weapons, special and visual effects—have been carefully crafted to give a worn, humanizing, historical and grounded quality, with more nods to a Viking era than to science fiction.

Alan Taylor felt it was imperative that Thor's home planet Asgard "feels like it has been there for centuries, that it has its own culture, that it really be a place you could believe in." With these marching orders, production designer Charles Wood was tasked with bringing Asgard to life. "One big challenge was to make the film as fantastical as possible, because that's the nature of this type of film, but also to ground the film and make the environments that we created tangible and realistic."

Wood continues, "In the first film we were generally within the palace, whereas in this film we actually explore the city as well. We wanted to be true to the idea both within the Marvel Universe and within Norse mythology that Asgard was a golden city, but again we wanted to bring a sense of history to this world. We wanted to suggest that Asgard as an environment had been around for many thousands of years."

To create Asgard and further worlds within the Nine Realms with believability, the director and filmmakers felt the best way to help achieve this was to use a combination of real locations and expansive, detailed sets, built largely outside.

Creating Asgard was the biggest challenge of all and also involved the largest number of sets. For their initial inspiration Wood and his team looked to the comic books and at all the material they could find on Thor and the environments that writer Kirby had produced. They then took their research wider, as Wood explains, “We also looked at images on the Internet, whether architectural or whether it was atmospheric, anything we could find that we felt could have related to the film. We studied all sorts of different historical and modern architectural influences, whether it was Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Chinese or Islamic architectural forms. We also studied light and atmosphere. We then went to the studio and met everyone and Alan Taylor and got their take on it and from that point we essentially started conceptualizing.”

The film shot between October and December 2012 at Pinewood Shepperton Film Studios in England, with key locations in London—Greenwich, Wembley, Borough Market and Hayes—and Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England. The film also shot on location in Iceland.