[intro music]

Cinema has a unique power in that it calls to our imagination to create entire universes. At the same time, it can speak to our own world and be highly influential as a cultural agent. We can see these two possibilities in the films from the Marvel Comic Universe, particularly the recent film Black panther..

[Samples of various MCU movies]

Even if you’ve never read a comic chances are you’ve seen a movie from Marvel Cinematic Unvierse or MCU. The MCU is an American media series featuring a vast shared universe full of superheroes, villians, and a ton of action. It is produced by Marvel Studios and is roughly based around the storylines and characters present in the comics.

[Comic sound effects]

At this point the MCU lineup includes 20 plus movies and 11 tv shows, there is no question as to how much of a powerhouse the MCU has become in this era of cinema. And with this powerful presence comes the ability to act as a cultural agent.

[Black Panther sound bite]

By far the most culturally significant MCU movie was Black Panther [Wakanda forever]. According to [Typing sounds] twitter, it was the most tweeted about film in 2017 despite not releasing until 2018. One of the reasons for the buzz was the predominately black cast and purposeful “blackness” of the themes. It was relatively rare for a movie of this magnitude to be this rooted in black american and black African cultures..

[Data searching sounds]

What was so special about black panther was its duality and how it portrayed what it was like to be black in America as well as Africa. It created a model for representation that huge blockbuster movies can follow.

And it had an influence on culture. Searches for Africa spiked to their highest in years two days after Black Panther was released. Social media was quickly filled with the catchprase “Wakanda forever,” and a huge number of memes was spawned around the actors' signature arms crossed at the chest salute at many public events.

[Black panther movie sounds]

Black panther showed that non-majority white cast movies can make money, be successful, but most importantly, they are needed and wanted.