A short rant about the decline of the MCU

This is a rant. A short diatribe that's part humorous, part vitriolic and part funny. And it's about why I feel like the Marvel Cinematic Universe is currently on its last legs and why it will never fully recover to its former prime, at least not without the whole project having a company-wide hard reset. Let's start our ride, shall we?

First, let me get this straight. The MCU took its biggest advantages and smashed them to pieces. It's the last flight of a decapitated pigeon propped by the last spasms of its muscles and the momentum of a butcher who threw him away. I am exaggerating a fair bit, but at the current point it's safe to say that the MCU can continue to expand as it does only because it's owned by Disney and has the backing of the most infamous media empire alongside all the cash that it implies.

Let's break it down, bit by bit. The four biggest advantages of MCU were: already popular characters, literal decades of stories to pull from, proper visual spectacle and finally the most overlooked part, the ability to have a fresh start and plan out a long term story. It's actually pretty simple. They took known or at least somewhat known comic book characters, gave them to the authors allowed to write somewhat more grounded, gritty stories with them and then gave them the budget needed to actually bring this vision to life. Gone were the days of C list actors in green body paint and campy reimaginings of superhero spandex, now was the age of the lifelike special effects and action blockbuster spectacle. So, where did it go wrong?

Let's start with the first point, the massive store of already popular or semi popular characters Now, after the Infinity Stones Saga has ended, the most popular Marvel Comics characters are either dead, in a legal limbo or too disconnected from the main setting to debut now. And I'm specifically referring to the fact that at the current point they can't really bring in the X-Men or Fantastic Four without feeling like they are just tacking them on. To be fair, Fantastic Four at least has the benefit of being able to just get plopped into any point of the timeline without causing a continuity issue. Still, the Infinity War, Endgame and the first round of movies after them have thinned the herd of the popular characters to a point of the collapse of the ecosystem. And the newcomers? Well, let's say it that way, to have a popular newcomer, you need an actually good movie for them to make a debut in, which is something Marvel is currently really struggling with.

Now, the question of what happened to their store of the ready made plotlines. Short answer? Their most stories were either already used, wasted or have become almost impossible to set up in the current state of the cinematic universe. This is mostly me being incredibly salty by how they have wasted both the Mandarin and the Planet Hulk plotlines and how the current setup is so far away from the status quo of the marvel comics to actually set up the comic book classics without retcons or reliance on the multiverse.

The third issue is actually pretty tricky, since it could theoretically be solved overnight. It's also difficult to fix because it would require a complete overhaul of the whole company to solve. You

see, the special effects growing worse lately is an effect of constant push on management to cut costs, have better than ever before quartal financial results, and the horrible state of the special effects industry born from them. It's all about cutting corners and the two corners the management seems almost maniacally obsessed with cutting are the labour costs and actually properly planning out the product development. This is why practical special effects are a dying art - workers are unionised citizens of the developed countries and you cannot make drastic last minute changes. With CGI you can on the other hand hire some internet connected sweatshop who will give you last minute revision to any scene with greenskin on it. Sure, it will look cheap and rubbery, but who cares! The report from accounting shows that the costs of making the movie have gone down by thirty percent! Well, the audience is starting to care since the supposed blockbusters are actually going backwards with special effects quality. The floaty heads in halo of digital blur are today's equivalent to the old school green body paint and plastic mallets.

Last but not least, we have an issue about the MCU people aren't talking about too much, because it comes from the loss of an advantage few people could actually describe; the thematic cohesion. The Marvel Cinematic Universe was not only build on taking the beloved or at least presentable comic book characters and putting their adventures on a big screen without the usual excess camp, it was also build on giving these characters the fresh start, free from the confines of the decades of changes, retcons, and plot holes. It removed the ever growing, cancerous continuity snarl of the Marvel Comics and made the stories more thematically focused. It was a bit more grounded and a much more coherent version of a superheroic world. But now? The MCU is throwing in everything and a kitchen sink and watching what will work out. Asgardians? Gone from advanced aliens to actual gods in massive multiplayer pantheon mess up. Magic? Gone from non-existent to a do everything gamebreaker. And the list goes on and on.

In conclusion, do I believe that the MCU is falling? Yes, of course. It's slowly falling apart like a body eaten away by radiation poisoning. Do I think that it can go back from the brink? Not really, the flaws that are eating it away are either too entrenched to be removed without resetting the whole cinematic universe or too intrinsic to the state of modern showbusiness to fix. Do I regret that Marvel's greatest marvel will likely end with a pathetic whimper after a decade or so of a slow fall from grace? Of course I am, I don't like watching a part of my childhood get turned into a corporate IP zombie. Do I feel like MCU needs saving? No, not really. All things come to an end and I wish Disney would finally let it rest in peace.