

MARVEL'S

# BIGGEST SMALL HERO



By Andrew Pollard

Long-time comic book aficionados recognise ANT-MAN as a key player in the MARVEL world. A founding member of THE AVENGERS, the size-shifting hero has been right at the very core of some of Marvel's most momentous events since making his debut way back in 1962. After nearly a decade in development, finally this fan favourite hero is making his first steps into the MCU...

MARVEL

# ANT-MAN PREVIEW

## Small Steps to the Big Screen

Whilst July's Ant-Man has been in development for just shy of a decade now, the idea for a film focusing on the hero goes way back to the late 1980s. At that time, the legendary Stan Lee pitched an idea to Marvel Comics' parent company, New World Entertainment, but this idea was shot down when it was revealed that Disney were working on a similar size-shifting project at that particular time. That film, of course, would go on to be *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. All would go quiet on an Ant-Man movie until the turn of the Millennium, with May 2000 seeing Artisan Entertainment announce a deal with Marvel to put together a Hank Pym-focused movie. Again though, all would soon go quiet. Then 2003 saw Edgar Wright and Joe Cornish submit a treatment to Artisan for Ant-Man, which was instead focused on the Scott Lang version of the character. A year or so later, Wright and Cornish got to pitch their idea to Marvel Studios' Kevin Feige, who then officially hired the duo in April 2006. With Wright helming Ant-Man, the plan was for the film to be part of the first batch of Marvel's own movies, which would end up being known as the MCU's 'Phase One'.

Speaking at the 2006 San Diego Comic-Con, Edgar Wright revealed that there

would be certain elements of humour in the movie and that it would now feature both Hank Pym and Scott Lang. As the years went on though, the film was on/off/on/off and naturally missed the boat when it came to Phase One of Marvel's films. It was then suggested by Wright in 2010 that the movie wouldn't actually be set within the constraints of the MCU and may be its own entity entirely, which obviously seemed a little bit of a silly move given what Marvel Studios and Disney had created by that point. When all was said and done, Edgar Wright would finally start serious work on Ant-Man in 2013, with the plan of having the movie be part of the MCU's Phase Three. When it came to casting, Paul Rudd eventually beat out competition from Joseph Gordon-Levitt for the film's lead role of Scott Lang. Michael Douglas was brought in as the original Ant-Man, Hank Pym, who would serve as a mentor of sorts to Rudd's Lang, and additional familiar faces such as Evangeline Lilly and Patrick Wilson were added to the cast. Whilst Wilson would end up having to depart the film due to other commitments, it also came to be that Edgar Wright and Marvel decided to part ways as well. Supposedly, the director's vision started to differentiate from what Marvel and Disney wanted for the film, and the two parties amicably split. With the likes of Adam McKay and Ruben Fleischer in the frame to replace Wright,

it would end up being Yes Man's Peyton Reed who was tasked with the job of finally bringing Ant-Man to the big screen.

## Big Arrival in the MCU

After such a tumultuous process to even get Ant-Man in front of the camera, what can we expect to see when the miniature hero hits the big screen in July? Well, the footage seen so far is certainly extremely positive, managing to have a sense of charm, menace and humour about it. One key element that has surprised many about Ant-Man is the titular hero himself, with Marvel Studios deciding to move forward with Scott Lang as their Ant-Man rather than Hank Pym. In the Marvel comic book realm, Hank Pym is one of the most complex and compelling characters, having founded The Avengers, suffered various breakdowns, created Ultron, famously slapped Janet Van Dyne, and taken on more personalities than Vanessa Feltz has had hot dinners. Pym is a character who could undoubtedly be brought to life spectacularly on the big screen and developed over many, many movies. Instead though, the decision was made to have Hank Pym now merely a mentor-type who is looking to hand the Ant-Man mantle over to a worthy successor. Sensing good in petty thief Scott Lang, Pym sees him as someone



who has the heart and ability to do great things with his Ant-Man technology. Additionally, expect to see some backstory moments of a younger Hank Pym in his early days and creating his iconic suit. As for the Ant-Man technology itself, the main ability is that the suit can shrink in size whilst also increasing strength. Oh, and it also allows communication with ants. Obviously.

While Rudd's Scott Lang will be handed the secrets of the Ant-Man tech and tasked with using his newfound abilities for the greater good, on the other side of the coin is Corey Stoll's Darren Cross. A one-time protégé of Hank Pym's, Cross ends up taking over Pym Technologies and essentially makes a more military-heavy version of the Ant-Man suit. A sleeker upgrade on the standard suit that Scott Lang has, Cross becomes known as Yellowjacket and doesn't have the purest of intentions when it comes to using this newly-acquired tech. Again, comic book fans will be more than familiar with Yellowjacket, with the moniker being just one of the many that Hank Pym has gone by over the years. Interestingly enough, Pym went under the guise of Yellowjacket when he was arguably at his most unstable. As well as Ant-Man and Yellowjacket, Pym has also been known as Giant-Man, Goliath and even took on the moniker of The Wasp at one point. Ah, The Wasp, that's a nice segue to another

character making her MCU debut in Peyton Reed's movie...

Assisting the cinematic Darren Cross in his acquisition of Pym Technologies will be Evangeline Lilly's Hope Van Dyne. The character will be the daughter of Hank Pym and Janet Van Dyne, and will have a mighty strained relationship with her father as indicated in her taking the Van Dyne name. As for Janet herself, she, of course, is the superhero known as The Wasp in comic book lore. Certain stories suggest that the character is dead in the MCU, but we wouldn't rule out an appearance from her during some of Pym's backstory. With a key part of Hope Van Dyne's Ant-Man arc being her struggling with having been brought up by two superheroes, expect her to take on the Wasp moniker herself at some point. Whether that's in this film or further down the line, we'll let you speculate on that.

Elsewhere in Ant-Man, we've got Judy Greer as Lang's estranged ex-wife, Maggie; Abby Ryder Fortson as Lang's daughter, Cassie; the always entertaining Bobby Cannavale as Paxton, a friend of Scott Lang's who ended up marrying Maggie; Michael Peña as Lang's one-time cellmate; and then small, supporting roles for the likes of David Dastmalchian, T.I., Martin Donovan, Gregg Turkington, and Jordi Mollà. Also keep an eye out for Hayley Atwell and John Slattery, who will reprise their roles of Peggy Carter and Howard

Stark for some of the Hank Pym flashback moments, and of course, there's a Stan Lee cameo to look forward to.

Right now, Ant-Man is underway with its final promotional push, with Marvel and Disney treating the public to both microscopic and gigantic billboards across various locales. Whilst we know that Ant-Man will indeed shrink in the film, as evidenced beautifully in the recent trailers, it could very well also be that we get to see the suit increase in size. Maybe. But then again, maybe we're getting way ahead of ourselves. Still, with one eye looking forward, it's already been confirmed that Scott Lang will be a part of Captain America: Civil War's huge ensemble and chances are that the character will also be a key part of the two-part Avengers: Infinity War. Whilst many of us may still feel that utilising a younger Hank Pym in the MCU is a hugely missed opportunity, Paul Rudd is deeply charismatic, with a likeability and humility that lends itself well to the loveable rogue that is Scott Lang. Then when you take into consideration the impressive cast put together for Ant-Man, coupled with the brilliant footage that we've seen to date, all is shaping up for this small hero to make a big splash in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

ANT-MAN is released on July 17th.





## Ant-Man

Like most superheroes, Ant-Man is a moniker which has been taken on by several people over the years, so let us give you the big scoop on these miniature heroes.

**Hank Pym** Henry Pym, a brilliant scientist, was the first ever Ant-Man, making his comic book debut back in 1962. The genius Pym created the famed Ant-Man suit after discovering the uber-powerful Pym Particles. With this new discovery allowing him to alter his size, Pym went about becoming his own superhero. Throwing in an ant-controlling helmet for good measure, Hank Pym became Ant-Man. After letting his then-girlfriend Janet Van Dyne in on things, Pym's other half would take on the mantle of Wasp and the duo would become founding members of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, The Avengers. Unfortunately for Hank Pym, like all good geniuses, he's also just a little unhinged and unstable at times, adding further to the complexity and intrigue that surrounded this fan favourite hero. To match his changing personality, Pym went on to take on various different guises, such as Yellowjacket, Goliath, Giant-Man, and even Wasp. His sanity was also further dented when he created his 'son'; a maniacal, genocidal being known as Ultron.



**Scott Lang** – Scott Lang is an almost Han Solo-esque figure in the Marvel world. He has done some bad things, is not an entirely good person, but he can still be relied on to do the right thing when it matters, and all with a roguish charm. Petty thief Lang first became Ant-Man after stealing Hank Pym's suit in order to save daughter Cassie from a life-threatening heart condition. See what we mean? Bad actions for good causes. Soon reforming his ways and steering clear of the law, Lang would end up taking on the Ant-Man mantle full-time after being given the nod by Pym whilst Hank dabbled with other aliases. Working alongside the Fantastic Four and then becoming a part of The Avengers, Lang certainly made his mark as Ant-Man. Well, until he was killed by Scarlet Witch during the crazy Avengers Disassembled arc. As ever with comic book characters, of course, he'd return from the grave a little while later.



**Eric O'Grady** Not content with having two characters take on the Ant-Man persona, Marvel decided to have S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Eric O'Grady take on the mantle as well. Whereas Scott Lang is comparable to Han Solo, O'Grady is best compared to Lando Calrissian if you scrap the part where Lando redeems himself in the third act of The Empire Strikes Back. O'Grady accidentally happened upon the Ant-Man outfit at S.H.I.E.L.D. HQ and stole the costume for his own means. And those means just happened to be impressing women, stealing valuable items, mocking those below him, and generally being a bit of a bastard. He would have a brief dabble as an Avenger before becoming a part of Marvel's Thunderbolts, a group of reformed villains. Finally making some sort of amends for his previous actions, Eric O'Grady would actually up dying a hero as he sacrificed his life to save a child during Secret Avengers.

