From the web slinging antics of the amazing Spiderman to the brooding, sacrificial tale of the Dark Knight, this summer has been great for comic book fans of all ages. With more superhero flicks in the offing, the question arises – what happens next? By Anjali Alappat
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Comic book heroes taking over the big screen is not a new story. From the first Superman movie in 1978, starring the inimitable Christopher Reeves, to the latest in the Batman franchise, it has been a long and spectacular journey. Not only are the heroes of these films larger than life, with powers that set them apart from the mundane, they are also men and women with remarkable backgrounds. From orphaned children to ex-KGB spies, none of our heroes are paragons of virtue – a fact that serves to make them more human and easier to identify with. Their very obvious flaws are possibly what we love the most.

DISENCHANTED AND REVIVED

Between comic book magnates DC and Marvel, there is a superhero for every kind of fan. The irreverent Green Hornet rubs shoulders with the rugged Wolverine – fans line up to watch their favourite heroes fight the forces of evil. But with the superhero hype peaking, with over five comic book heroes gracing the silver screen in the last five years, and plenty more on the horizon, the question everyone is asking is whether this trend can last. A few years ago, with Sam Raimi’s Spiderman trilogy, fans and critics alike were disenchanted with the trend. Though the films did well at the box office, the diehard fans of the character were disappointed. Superhero movies, it seemed, had reached their expiry date.

Thankfully for the genre, revival and revolution were in sight. With Christopher Nolan’s Batman trilogy came an influx of superheroes whose film debuts had it all – snappy dialogue, flashy costumes, cool gadgets and actual plots. Batman, Iron Man, Captain America, Thor – suddenly the genre was back in action – quite literally.
FULL CIRCLE AND THE FUTURE

This summer’s reboot of the Spiderman story seems to have brought the superhero boom full circle. With the Amazing Spiderman, being released a mere two years after the last time Toby McGuire wore the mask, superhero fans everywhere are wide eyed, apprehensive and asking, “What happens next?” Well, at least peripherally that question can be answered. Iron Man 3 featuring the inimitable Robert Downey, Jr and Gwyneth Paltrow will be in theatres soon, followed by the sequels to Captain America and Thor. Superman will be donning the red cape once again in early 2013, and the sequel to superhero ensemble sensation, The Avengers is also rumoured to be underway. The Dark Knight Rises closes the door on Christian Bale but leaves enough room for Joseph Gordon Levitt to put a foot in if he so desires. The future is teaming with possibilities and audience enthusiasm doesn’t appear to have dimmed. But when will the line be drawn and the audience declare “Enough is enough”? Hard to believe that the day may yet come when the world dismisses its superheroes but as viewers, we have seen the rise and fall of franchises from the best seats in the house. From the eponymous ‘parody’ movies like Not Just Another Teen Movie to Shriek if You Know What I did Last Friday the 13th, the films received a staggering reception initially. Parodying all the teen favourites like Varsity Blues, Scream and Can’t Hardly Wait, what was satirical and just plain funny soon became generic. There is nothing groundbreaking or rebellious if everyone is doing it. So offbeat became mainstream and the parody movie genre lost its shine. Similarly, the ‘ensemble’ romantic comedies have also begun their decline. What began with the heart warming British comedy Love Actually, soon became the vehicle for several less than stellar commercial films like Valentine’s Day, New Year’s Eve and New York, I Love You. Though the flagging genre is trying for a reboot with films like Woody Allen’s To Rome with Love, it is pretty clear that this film format needs a break. Will the interest in caped crusaders and masked marvels peter out? Or has Hollywood hit upon the one genre that will sustain itself through the ages? Only time, the box office and movie magic will tell. So for now, sit back, grab some popcorn and revel in the moment.