

## Netflix/Marvel's 'Iron Fist' epic fail, say viewers, critics



This image released by Netflix shows Finn Jones, left, in a scene from the Netflix original series, "Iron Fist." —AP

If your web connection seems sluggish while you're watching "Iron Fist," don't blame your internet provider. The problem is the listless pace of this new Netflix series. But such languor isn't the only failing of this latest offering from the Marvel factory, judging from critical pans and fan unrest since the 13-episode season was unveiled last week.

Any Marvel project (and this is Netflix's fourth, following "Daredevil," "Jessica Jones" and "Luke Cage") is breathlessly awaited by fans. "Iron Fist" was no different. But even before anybody saw it, it was already drawing accusations of "whitewashing." The series centers on Danny Rand, the scion of a corporate titan who returns to New York 15 years after he and his parents died in a plane crash over the Himalayas. Well, actually, Danny didn't die. He was rescued by a mysterious order of monks. And in this intervening period, he trained in martial arts and gained the mystical power of the Iron Fist. Now he returns to New York to reclaim the corporate empire that was hijacked by brother-and-sister baddies (and his childhood friends) Ward and Joy Meachum. He is also, of course, on a quest to "get answers."

### Cultural problems

"Iron Fist" stars Finn Jones, who is best known for playing Loras Tyrell on "Game of Thrones." But casting him as Danny was a missed opportunity, according to disgruntled fans who argue that an Asian-American actor should have been chosen. Maybe, maybe not. But that would seem to be the least of the ills plaguing "Iron Fist." For instance, the Polygon website wielded iron fists of its own in declaring that the series' "problems with delivering exposition, crafting consistent characters, and even basic dialogue writing run right alongside ... problems with its portrayal of Asian cultures and Asian-Americans."

"Not one element of this plodding piece works," railed Variety, adding that the story line "is about as exciting as a slice of Velveeta cheese left out in the sun too long." The New York Times complained about "the dawdling featureless" of the early episodes. And how many viewers could be expected to stick with the series beyond those first installments? Calling it "the first complete misfire of Netflix's Marvel shows," the Uproxx website posed the question: "Why would anyone but the most devout, masochistic Marvel completist want to watch?"

The Twitterverse has been no kinder, with one typical post calling it "a great show if you're looking to sit back, relax and stare at your phone as it plays in the background." Another tweet likened the series' fight scenes to "an awkward junior high school dance." Even a forgiving Marvel neophyte who samples "Iron Fist" is likely to be put off. The conspicuous lack of action and of visual effects, at least in its early episodes, serves as a stark reminder of how lavish production values, unrelenting action and eye-popping visual effects are taken for granted by today's audience and jarring when they're absent.

Granted, the epic failure of "Iron Fist," now installed for eternity on the Netflix site, will register as just a blip on the Netflix/Marvel landscape. And since Netflix never discloses audience figures, no one will ever know how many viewers choose to avoid or abandon the series who might have watched a better "Iron Fist" faithfully. But every potential viewer is advised to note an exchange between two characters in an early episode:

"We need to know more before we can decide how we should proceed."

"So we just wait?"

"Yeah. And watch."

Such patience by "Iron Fist" viewers is doomed to go unrewarded. — AP

Grammy winning DJ-producer Tiesto(R) signs the arm of a fan Willem De Vries, on March 22, 2017 at the opening of Tiesto Miami.



## FOR TIESTO, CONNECTING TO AUDIENCE IS EVERYTHING

From his early raves to massive club shows, Tiesto has spent the past 20 years guiding the ebbs and flows of each audience. He finds the connection so intimate he has a ready comparison. "Basically it's like making love," he said. Ties "Tiesto" Verwest, who is the world's second highest-paid DJ on the list of Forbes magazine, made his name in the trance scene of the 1990s, with his tension-building synthesizer flows and mid-tempo beats working sweaty crowds into literal trances.

Electronic dance music, or EDM, is no longer just for ravers. It is a constant on mainstream radio, with pop stars from Katy Perry to Enrique Iglesias setting their voices to electronic beats. For Tiesto, the dance subculture has evolved rather than ended, with the EDM on the radio remaining distinct from DJ sets at festivals.

"I think a lot of DJs adjust to pop music. The stuff on the radio is still pop music; it's not dance music as we know it at the festivals," he told AFP in Miami. "It's a good balance between DJs making pop music and then in the live sets they have different drops and make it more for the festivals," he said. The Dutch artist was visiting Miami for the Ultra Music Festival, a premier electronic music party that runs from Friday to Sunday. He is taking advantage of his visit to open a pop-up store in Miami Beach.

Tall and youthful for his 48 years, Tiesto spoke at the store that sells knapsacks, caps and T-shirts bearing his signature, as fans pressed their faces against the window to get a look at the world-famous DJ. "Music and fashion and merchandise are more one than ever before," said Tiesto, who has a residency in Las Vegas and became the first DJ to play the Olympics at the 2004 Summer Games in Athens.

### Not too quick or too slow

DJs, according to Tiesto, have a unique relationship with crowds as they mix in front of thousands of people in joyous, fast-changing motion. "I think that the only art in the world that gives you that with the audience is pretty much the DJ. Because there's always the surprise factor," he said. "You never know what you're gonna get from the audience, so that's why I think there is a very special feeling."



Grammy-winning DJ-producer Tiesto speaks to the media, on March 22, 2017, at the opening of Tiesto Miami. — AFP photos

But how can he manage the lows in each performance, bringing audiences down a level so they can take a breather rather than keeping them constantly on overdrive? "You've got to feel it out. That's an experience you learn with DJing over the years," he said. Like sex, "it has to be the perfect timing for everything; you don't want to be too quick or too slow." Tiesto laughed and blushed a little bit. "It's a very magical feeling," he said.

### Changing sound

In the world of EDM connoisseurs, Tiesto has generated controversy with his shift from his trance roots to a more mainstream house sound.

Tiesto was hesitant when asked about his sound but acknowledged his rising success. He said his break started in 2009 with his collaboration-heavy album "Kaleidoscope" and then "Red Lights," his 2013 radio hit with acoustic guitar off his album "A Town Called Paradise."

"I just always follow my gut feeling. I do what I like and I just play what I like," he said, without elaborating on his changing style. As for picking music to sample in his sets, Tiesto said he had diverse tastes from indie rock to R&B to soul, although he admitted he was less interested in hip-hop.

Nonetheless he said he could sample everything from rappers Kanye West and Drake to alternative rockers The Killers or more obscure indie bands. "My tracks always start to build from the underground. And then if they become mainstream that's a bonus, but I'm not focusing on it," he said. — AFP

## Jay Z to make feature on Trayvon Martin

The rap mogul Jay Z is partnering with the Weinstein Company to produce a feature film and documentary series about the killing of Trayvon Martin, the teen whose death in 2012 set off nationwide protests. They will make the film and six-part docu-series after winning a bidding war for the rights to two books about the killing of the unarmed black teenager by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, the trade magazine Variety reported on Thursday.

The case ignited civil unrest across the country and a debate about racial profiling. It also gave birth to the Black Lives Matter movement. Zimmerman, who claimed he shot Martin in self-defense, was acquitted of a charge of

second degree murder in 2013 by a jury in Florida. The film and series projects will be based on the books "Suspicion Nation: The Inside Story of the Trayvon Martin Injustice and Why We Continue to Repeat It" and "Rest in Power: The Enduring Life of Trayvon Martin," Variety said.

"Suspicion Nation" recounts the experience of a reporter who covered the trial for NBC. "Rest in Power" is by Martin's parents. Another docu-series produced by Jay Z and Weinstein Television that touches on race relations—"Time: The Kalief Browder Story"—was aired last month. The six-part series follows the story of a teen arrested in 2010 while walking home for allegedly stealing a backpack. — AFP