

# Chadwick Boseman: Why 'Black Panther' needed African accent

'Black Panther' star Chadwick Boseman revealed Tuesday doubters had tried to convince him not to give the superhero an African accent—and how proud he was to prove them wrong. The 41-year-old American stars in the titular role in the 18th movie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe—the first black superhero to get his own standalone movie. "There was a time period where people would ask me questions about whether or not an audience could sit through a movie with a lead character that spoke with that accent," Boseman said of the east African inflection he gives the superhero—alias King T'Challa.

"I became adamant about the fact that it's not true," he added, stressing that none of the naysayers had come from Marvel itself. "The intonations and melodies inside an African accent are just as classical as a British one or a European one." Boseman was speaking at a Beverly Hills news conference along with director Ryan Coogler, co-stars Michael B Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira and the rest of the cast the morning after Monday's glittering Hollywood premiere.



Actor Chadwick Boseman attends the world premiere of Marvel Studios' 'Black Panther.'

The actor got his break after a decade as an obscure television and indie film actor when Marvel came calling in 2014 with a lucrative five-picture deal to play Black Panther. His appearance in "Captain America: Civil War" (2016) brought Boseman his first taste of real fame and his celebrity looks set to skyrocket when "Black Panther" opens on February 16, followed in May by "Avengers: Infinity War."

## King of Wakanda

T'Challa, king and protector of the technologically advanced fictional African nation of Wakanda, has been characterized as the first black superhero, which is partly true. Around 30 black characters have donned the lycra for the big screen since the early 1990s, including Marvel's Falcon (Anthony Mackie since 2014), Wesley Snipes's titular vampire hunter in "Blade" (1998) and Halle Berry's Kenyan princess Storm in four "X-men" movies. The Wakandan royal can claim to be the first black superhero to land a standalone movie in the MCU and the first in mainstream American comics, having been featured in "The Fantastic Four" in 1966.



Comic book writer Stan Lee (left) and actor Chadwick Boseman attend the world premiere of Marvel Studios' 'Black Panther,' in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos

Critical and celebrity reactions to "Black Panther" after Monday's premiere were about as good as could be expected, with reviewers hailing the movie as "iconic" and "astounding." Donald Glover, who is due to star as Lando

Calrissian in the upcoming "Solo: A Star Wars Story," called it "beautiful" while "Ant-Man" director Peyton Reed said it was "soulful, thoughtful and of the moment." Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige, who produces every

MCU movie, agreed that the messages of the movie—which posits Wakanda taking in refugees and extending its culture and technology to poorer nations—were particularly topical, but added that most of the script was written 18 months ago.

## 'Badass Women of Wakanda'

Coogler and the producers came in for particular praise at the news conference for their decision to feature a clique of powerful female characters dubbed "the badass women of Wakanda" front and center. "I was so pleased that this story... that it supported that. In African culture, they feel as if there is no king without a queen and this story, it highlights the queen, the warrior, the general, the young sister," said Angela Bassett, who plays T'Challa's mother Ramonda. "I was so proud to have my daughter and my son there last night, because in their faces, in their spirit, they were feeling themselves. They stood taller after last night."

Gurira ("The Walking Dead") spoke of her trepidation over having her head shaved to play Okoye, the head of Wakanda's Dora Milaje special forces, but how she saw it as "subversive in the right way." "In theory, it sounded amazing, and then the day came... it happened. Then you walk into the restroom to wash your hands, look up like, 'What the?'" "It took a few days... Then the pride started to grow, there's pride around it, and the embracing of this symbol of power and these women." — AP

## Hundreds of thousands mark Hindu festival in Malaysia



Hundreds of thousands of Hindus across Malaysia celebrated the annual Thaipusam festival yesterday, with many piercing their skin with hooks and skewers to show devotion to the deity Murugan. Thaipusam marks the day when the goddess Parvathi gave her son Lord Murugan a powerful lance to fight demons. It is observed mainly in countries with a significant ethnic Tamil population, including Malaysia and neighboring Singapore. Most of Malaysia's roughly 31 million people are Muslim but it also has ethnic Chinese and around two million ethnic Indians, mostly descendants of laborers brought from India by former colonial ruler Britain.

Thousands of devotees thronged the Batu Caves on the outskirts of the capital Kuala Lumpur in the early hours yesterday, walking



barefoot up the 272 steps towards the site's limestone hilltop shrine.

Many carried prayer offerings known as "kavadi" and balanced milk pots on their heads with their hands as they ascended. Some carried large platforms attached to a harness and decorated with images and idols of Hindu deities. Others pierced their faces with tridents and rods or hung multiple hooks and chains

from their skin in an act of penance. The steps also take devotees past a statue of Lord Murugan standing 42.7 meters (141 feet) high—the tallest figure of the deity in the world. "I just recently got married so I just went up to say thanks to him (Lord Murugan)," Vijayaletchumy Vimalan, a Thaipusam participant for 25 years, told AFP. — AFP



Ethnic-Malaysian Hindu devotees dance in a state of trance as they walk towards the Batu caves temple during the Thaipusam festival celebrations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP photos



## Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils 'Heart to Heart' jewelry collection to celebrate the season of love



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the BIG 5 jewelry retailers globally launched a special collection of diamond and 18K gold jewelry named 'Heart to Heart' to celebrate the season of love. 'Heart to Heart' jewelry collection showcases the exclusive heart shaped jewelry which symbolizes the best way to express your love.

As the demand for heart shaped jewelry increases during this season of love, the jewelry retailer launched the exclusive collection to cater to the customer demand. This unique jewelry collection is a perfect gift to express true emotions to your loved ones. With prices starting from KWD 55 to KWD 275, there is something to fit everyone's budget.

Apart from the diamond pendants customers can also choose the heart shaped beautifully crafted diamond bangles and rings to gift your loved ones. The company

has also launched a special 3 in 1 diamond ring which can be worn in 3 different ways. To add more delight to this occasion, the customers can also avail a branded Daniel Hechter watch absolutely free with this limited edition jewelry. These promotional sets will be available at their outlets in Kuwait until 17th February 2018.

Apart from these, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also showcase an incredible collection of unique designs in gold and diamond jewelry from Italy, Singapore, Turkey, Bahrain, India, etc to suit the tastes and budget of its different customers. Customers can also choose gifts to their loved ones from their branded jewelry segment that includes Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Precia- Gem Jewelry and Divine - Indian Heritage Jewelry.

## New wave of Iranian globetrotters hits the road

A travel frenzy is gripping young Iranians, who are inspiring each other through social media to overcome traditional constraints and expand their horizons. The exploits of young Iranian travellers, hitchhiking and backpacking their way around the globe, have become immensely popular on Instagram and Telegram, the most widely used apps in Iran, with some gathering more than 200,000 followers. Iran has long had a globetrotting elite thanks to the large diaspora that fled to the United States and Europe after the 1979 revolution, but now it is the turn of the emerging middle class to stretch their wings, overcoming cultural barriers and parental worries in the process. Sara Louee, 31, grew up thinking that holidays were a family trip to the northern coasts of Iran.

But two years ago, she met a group of foreigners through the website couchsurfing.com and joined them as they hitchhiked to the ancient city of Yazd. She was unprepared: "I had absolutely no equipment. I was wearing flimsy girly shoes and had borrowed a backpack from a friend," she told AFP. But her mind was opened to a world of possibility and she was soon saving for a 40-day trip around Europe, even if it meant battling with her conservative-minded parents. "My family didn't accept it easily or overnight. I went through a lot of pain. But I gradually proved I could do it with shorter trips and gained their trust," said Louee, who now blogs regularly about her travels. "These days, if I stay home at the weekend, my dad comes over and asks if something is wrong," she added, laughing.

### 'Strangers in your room?'

Other young Iranians, particularly women, say they had been taught that travelling alone was dangerous. "When I told people I stayed in a hostel in Europe, Iranians would be shocked and say 'You mean there were strangers in your room?! Didn't they do anything to you?'" said Mahzad Elyassi, another travel blogger. She only heard about hitchhiking for the first time in 2015 but has since travelled to all 32 of Iran's provinces and 20 countries. "We've proven that Iran is really safe for such trips. It's become a trend. 'One woman said she used my Instagram page to convince her husband, saying: 'If she can do it alone, so can we.'" Last year, Iran recorded 9.2 million departures, a 38.5-percent increase on the previous year and almost double the numbers a decade ago. The trend has been helped by President Hassan Rouhani, who came to power in 2013 promising to improve Iran's relations with



Young Iranians are inspiring each other through social media to overcome traditional constraints and go travelling. — AFP

the world. Iranians are not welcome everywhere: the United States this year banned them from entry unless they have close family, and European countries have strict and laborious procedures for tourists designed to weed out poor people. But much of the rest of the world is welcoming Iran's tourist boom, with 38 countries now waiving visas for Iranians. They include Georgia, Russia, Turkey and Malaysia, and talks are reportedly under way with India.

### Tech support

That has helped encourage travel among those outside of the rich elite by putting the focus on cheaper countries. "Maybe Iranians don't have enough dollars or euros to travel to Europe but they can explore places like southeast Asia," said Elyassi. Technology has also been crucial. "When I started, Google Maps didn't exist. People couldn't just easily travel and share their experiences," said Reza Pakravan, 43, one of Iran's best-known travellers after he broke the world record for crossing the Sahara on a bike. Alireza Zafari, 38, has spent two years on the "Herculean task" of documenting the whole of Iran for travellers, a project he expects will take another eight years to complete. — AFP