

Directed by Zack Snyder
Screenplay by David Hayter and Alex Tse
Based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore (writer) and Dave Gibbons (illustrator)
Produced by Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin Deborah Snyder
Original Music by Tyler Bates
Cinematography by Larry Fong
Film Editing by William Hoy

Malin Åkerman...Laurie Jupiter / Silk Spectre II
Billy Crudup...Dr. Manhattan / Jon Osterman
Matthew Goode...Adrian Veidt / Ozymandias
Jackie Earle Haley...Rorschach
Jeffrey Dean Morgan...Edward Blake / Comedian
Patrick Wilson...Dan Dreiberg / Nite Owl
Carla Gugino...Sally Jupiter / Silk Spectre
Matt Frewer...Moloch
Stephen McHattie...Hollis Mason
Laura Mennell...Janey Slater
Rob LaBelle...Wally Weaver
Gary Houston...John McLaughlin
James M. Connor...Pat Buchanan
Mary Ann Burger...Eleanor Clift

Zack Snyder (March 1, 1966, Green Bay, Wisconsin) has 8 directing credits: 2013 *Man of Steel* (completed), 2011 *Sucker Punch*, 2010 *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole*, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2006 *300*, 2004 *Dawn of the Dead*, 2000 *Morrissey: ¡Oye Esteban!* (video) and 1990 *Playground* (video documentary short).

David Hayter (February 6, 1969, Santa Monica, California) has 8 film writing credits: 2013 *Wolves* (post-production), 2010 *Chasm* (short), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2003 *X2* (screenplay / story), 2002 *The Scorpion King*, 2002 "Lost in Oz", and 2000 *X-Men*.

Dave Gibbons (April 14, 1949, England) has 7 screen writing credits: 2011 *Green Lantern: Emerald Knights* (video), 2009 *Under the Hood* (video) (graphic novel), 2009 "Watchmen",



2009 *Watchmen* (graphic novel illustrator), 2008 "Batman: Black and White", 2004 "Justice League", and 1994 *Beneath a Steel Sky* (Video Game) (comic).

Alan Moore (November 18, 1953, Northampton, England) has 10 film writing credits: 2012 *Jimmy's End* (short), 2012 *Act of Faith* (short), 2009 *Under the Hood* (video) (graphic novel), 2009 *Tales of the Black Freighter* (video short) (graphic novel "Watchmen"), 2009 *Watchmen: The End Is Nigh* (Video Game) (graphic novel), 2008-2009 "Watchmen" (12 episodes), 2009 *Watchmen* (graphic novel), 2004 "Justice League", 2003 *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (comic books), and 2001 *From Hell* (graphic novel).

Tyler Bates has 69 composer credits, some of which are 2013 *Not Safe for Work* (filming), 2013 *7500* (completed), 2013 *God of War: Ascension* (Video Game), 2007-2013 "Californication" (62 episodes), 2013 *Movie 43* (segment "Beezel"), 2011 *Killer Joe*, 2011 *Conan the Barbarian*, 2010-2011 "Sym-Bionic Titan" (18 episodes), 2011 *Sucker Punch*, 2010 *Super*, 2009

The Haunted World of El Superbeasto, 2009 *Halloween II*, 2009 *Tales of the Black Freighter* (video short), 2009 *Watchmen: The End Is Nigh* (Video Game), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 2008 *Day of the Dead*, 2007 *Halloween*, 2006 *300*, 2006 *See No Evil*, 2004 “The Dead Will Tell”, 2004 *Dawn of the Dead*, 2002 *Lone Star State of Mind*, 2001 *Night at the Golden Eagle*, 2001 *Kingdom Come*, 1999 *Born Bad*, 1999 *Thicker Than Water*, 1998 *Suicide, the Comedy*, 1995 *Not Like Us*, 1995 *Criminal Hearts*, 1994 *Tammy and the T-Rex*, and 1993 *Blue Flame*.

Larry Fong has 16 cinematographer credits: 2013 *Now You See Me* (post-production), 2011 *Super 8*, 2011 *Sucker Punch*, 2010 “Cutthroat”, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2009 “Cop House”, 2009 “Anatomy of Hope”, 2006 *300*, 2006 “Secrets of a Small Town”, 2004-2005 “Lost” (8 episodes), 2005 “The Catch”, 2004 *Cape of Good Hope*, 2000 *Hero* (short), 1997 “Sleepwalkers”, 1997 *Cost of Living*, and 1992 “Red Shoe Diaries.”

William Hoy (1955, USA) has 27 editing credits, some of which are 2012 *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, 2011 *Sucker Punch*, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2007 *Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer*, 2006 *300*, 2005 *Fantastic Four*, 2004 *I, Robot*, 2002 *We Were Soldiers*, 1998 *The Man in the Iron Mask*, 1998 *The Repair Shop*, 1995 *Outbreak*, 1993 *Sliver*, 1992 *Patriot Games*, 1991 *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, 1990 *Dances with Wolves*, 1989 “Star Trek: The Next Generation”, and 1987 *No Way Out*.

Malin Åkerman...Laurie Jupiter / Silk Spectre II (b. Malin Maria Åkerman, May 12, 1978, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden) has 47 acting credits, some of which are 2013 *CBGB* (post-production), 2013 *The Numbers Station*, 2013 *Cottage Country*, 2013 “Robot Chicken”, 2013 “Newsreaders”, 2010-2012 “Childrens Hospital” (28 episodes), 2012 *Rock of Ages*, 2012 “Burning Love”, 2012 *The Giant Mechanical Man*, 2012 *Wanderlust*, 2010 *The Bang Bang Club*, 2010 *The Romantics*, 2009 *Couples Retreat*, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *27 Dresses*, 2007 *The Heartbreak Kid*, 2006 “Entourage”, 2005 “The Comeback” (13 episodes), 2004 *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle*, 2002 *The Circle*, 2001 “Twice in a Lifetime”, 2001 “Shotgun Love Dolls”, and 2000 *The Skulls*.

Billy Crudup...Dr. Manhattan / Jon Osterman (b. William Gaither Crudup, July 8, 1968, Manhasset, New York) has 31 acting credits, some of which are 2013 *Glass Chin* (post-

production), 2013 *Blood Ties* (completed), 2012 *The Longest Week*, 2011 “Too Big to Fail”, 2010 *Eat Pray Love*, 2009 *Public Enemies*, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2007 *Dedication*, 2006 *Mission: Impossible III*, 2003 *Big Fish*, 2000 *Almost Famous*, 2000 *Waking the Dead*, 1998 *Without Limits*, 1997 *Grind*, 1996 *Everyone Says I Love You*, and 1996 *Sleepers*.

Matthew Goode...Adrian Veidt / Ozymandias (April 3, 1978, Exeter, Devon, England) has 23 acting credits, some of which are 2013 *Belle* (post-production), 2013 “Dancing on the Edge”, 2013 *Stoker*, 2011 *Burning Man*, 2010 *Leap Year*, 2009 *A Single Man*, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *Brideshead Revisited*, 2005 *Imagine Me & You*, 2005 *Match Point*, 2004 *Chasing Liberty*, and 2003 *South from Granada*.



Jackie Earle Haley...Rorschach (July 14, 1961, Northridge, California) has 46 acting credits, some of which are 2014 *RoboCop* (post-production), 2013 *Parkland* (post-production), 2012 *Lincoln*, 2012 *Dark Shadows*, 2010-2011 “Human Target” (25 episodes), 2010 *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, 2010 *Shutter Island*, 2009 *Watchmen: The End Is Nigh* (Video Game), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *Fragments*, 2008 *Semi-Pro*, 2006 *All the King's Men*, 1993 *Maniac Cop 3: Badge of Silence*, 1992 *Nemesis*, 1990 “Gravedale High” (13 episodes), 1986 “Murder, She Wrote”, 1985 *The Zoo Gang*, 1983 *Losin' It*, 1980-1981 “Breaking Away” (7 episodes), 1979 *Breaking Away*, 1978 *The Bad News Bears Go to Japan*, 1977 *The Bad News Bears in Breaking Training*, 1976 *The Bad News Bears*, 1975 “The Waltons”, 1975 *The Day of the Locust*, 1974 “Planet of the Apes”, 1973 “The Partridge Family”, and 1972 “Wait Till Your Father Gets Home” (11 episodes).

Jeffrey Dean Morgan...Edward Blake / Comedian (April 22, 1966, Seattle, Washington) has 50 acting credits, among them 2013 *The Adventures of Beatle* (post-production), 2012-2013 “Magic City” (10 episodes), 2012 *Red Dawn*, 2012/I *The Possession*, 2012 *The Courier*, 2011 *Peace, Love, & Misunderstanding*, 2011 *Texas Killing Fields*, 2011 *The Resident*, 2010/I *The Losers*, 2009 *Taking Woodstock*, 2006-2009 “Grey's Anatomy” (24 episodes), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *Days of Wrath*, 2005-2008 “Supernatural” (13 episodes), 2007 *P.S. I Love You*, 2007 *Live!*, 2005 “Weeds”, 2004 *Dead & Breakfast*, 2003 “CSI: Crime Scene Investigation”, 1995-2002 “JAG”, 2002 “The Practice”, 2001 “ER”, 2000 “Walker, Texas Ranger”, 1999 *Road Kill*, 1996-1997 “The Burning Zone” (11

episodes), 1995 *Dillinger and Capone*, 1995 “Extreme”, and 1991 *Uncaged*.

Patrick Wilson...Dan Dreiberg / Nite Owl (July 3, 1973, Norfolk, Virginia) has 29 acting credits, some of which are 2013 *Insidious: Chapter 2* (post-production), 2013 *Space Station 76* (post-production), 2013 *The Conjuring* (completed), 2013 “Girls”, 2012/*Prometheus*, 2011-2012 “A Gifted Man” (16 episodes), 2011 *The Ledge*, 2010 *Morning Glory*, 2010/*The Switch*, 2010 *The A-Team*, 2009 *Watchmen: The End Is Nigh* (Video Game), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *Passengers*, 2007 *Evening*, 2006 *Running with Scissors*, 2005 *Hard Candy*, 2004 *The Phantom of the Opera*, 2004 *The Alamo*, 2003 “Angels in America”, and 2001 *My Sister's Wedding*.



Carla Gugino...Sally Jupiter / Silk Spectre (August 29, 1971, Sarasota, Florida) has 76 acting credits, some of which are 2014 *Match* (post-production), 2012 “New Girl”, 2012 *Hotel Noir*, 2012 “Political Animals” (6 episodes), 2012 “Justified”, 2011 “Californication” (10 episodes), 2011 *Girl Walks Into a Bar*, 2007-2010 “Entourage” (12 episodes), 2010 *Elektra Luxx*, 2009 *Under the Hood* (video), 2009 *Women in Trouble*, 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 *Righteous Kill*, 2007 *American Gangster*, 2007 *The Lookout*, 2006 *Night at the Museum*, 2005-2006 “Threshold” (13 episodes), 2005 *Sin City*, 2003-2004 “Karen Sisco” (10 episodes), 2003 *The Singing Detective*, 2001 *The One*, 2001 *The Center of the World*, 1999-2000 “Chicago Hope” (23 episodes), 1996-1998 “Spin City” (13 episodes), 1998 *Snake Eyes*, 1997 *Lovelife*, 1996 *Michael*, 1995 *Miami Rhapsody*, 1993 *Red Hot*, 1993 *This Boy's Life*, 1991 “Doogie Howser, M.D.”, 1990 “Ferris Bueller”, 1989-1990 “Falcon Crest” (11 episodes), and 1988 “Who's the Boss?”

Matt Frewer...Moloch (January 4, 1958, Washington, District of Columbia) has 114 acting credits, some of which are 2012 “Falling Skies”, 2006-2012 “Eureka” (18 episodes), 2010 *Frankie & Alice*, 2009 “Alice”, 2009 *Rampage*, 2009 *Under the Hood* (video), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2006-2007 “Intelligence” (24 episodes), 2006 “Eureka: Hide and Seek” (7 episodes), 2004 *Riding the Bullet*, 2004 *Whitecoats*, 2004 *Going the Distance*, 2004 *A Home at the End of the World*, 2004 *Dawn of the Dead*, 2001 “The Sign of Four”, 2000 “The Hound of the Baskervilles”, 1997-1999 “PSI Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal” (49 episodes), 1998-1999 “Hercules” (9 episodes), 1997 “Breast Men”, 1996-1997 “The Incredible Hulk” (10 episodes), 1997 “Tracey Takes On...”, 1996 “Apollo 11”, 1993-1996 “The Pink Panther” (30 episodes), 1996 “The Outer Limits”, 1996 “Iron Man”, 1995-1996 “Dumb and Dumber”

(13 episodes), 1995 “Kissinger and Nixon”, 1994 “In Search of Dr. Seuss”, 1994 “The Stand”, 1993 “Batman”, 1991 “Star Trek: The Next Generation”, 1989-1991 “Doctor Doctor” (40 episodes), 1989 *Far from Home*, 1989 *Honey, I Shrank the Kids*, 1988 “Miami Vice”, 1987-1988 “Max Headroom” (14 episodes), 1987 *Ishtar*, 1987 “The Original Max Talking Headroom Show”, 1986 “The Max Headroom Show”, 1985 *Spies Like Us*, 1985 “Max Headroom”, 1984 *Supergirl*, 1983 *The Meaning of Life*, and 1983 *The Lords of Discipline*.

Stephen McHattie...Hollis Mason (b. Stephen McHattie Smith, February 3, 1947, Antigonish, Nova Scotia) has 171 acting credits, some of which are 2013 “Body Slam” (TV short) (post-production), 2013 *Hellmouth* (post-production), 2013 *Septic Man* (post-production), 2013 *Baby, How'd We Ever Get This Way*

(post-production), 2013 *Exil* (post-production), 2013 *Wolves* (post-production), 2011-2012 “XIII: The Series” (19 episodes), 2012 *Eddie: The Sleepwalking Cannibal*, 2012 *The Tall Man*, 2011 *Immortals*, 2010-2011 “Haven” (8 episodes), 2011 *Irvine Welsh's Ecstasy*, 2011 “Moby Dick”, 2010 “Who Is Clark Rockefeller?”, 2009/*2012*, 2009 *The Timekeeper*, 2009 *Under the Hood* (video), 2009 *Watchmen*, 2008 “The Trojan Horse”, 2007 *Shoot 'Em Up*, 2006 *300*, 2006 *The Covenant*, 2005 *A History of Violence*, 2003 “Star Trek: Enterprise”, 2002 “Mutant X”, 2002 *Secretary*, 1999-2001 “Cold Squad” (33 episode), 2000 “La Femme Nikita”, 1996-1999 “Walker, Texas Ranger”, 1998 “The Magnificent Seven”, 1997 *Pterodactyl Woman from Beverly Hills*, 1996 “The Outer Limits”, 1995 “The X-Files”, 1994 “Highlander”, 1994 *Beverly Hills Cop III*, 1994 “Northern Exposure”, 1993 “Quantum Leap”, 1993 “L.A. Law”, 1992 “Seinfeld”, 1991 “Law & Order”, 1989 *Bloodhounds of Broadway*, 1989 “Miami Vice”, 1988 “Tales from the Darkside”, 1986 *Belizaire the Cajun*, 1985 “The Hitchhiker”, 1981 “Hill Street Blues”, 1980 “Roughnecks”, 1979 “Mary and Joseph: A Story of Faith”, 1979 “Lou Grant”, 1978-1979 “Centennial” (11 episodes), 1978 *Gray Lady Down*, 1975 “Starsky and Hutch”, and 1971 *Von Richthofen and Brown*.

” Roger Ebert: We’re all Puppets, Lauries. I’m Just a Puppet Who Can See the Strings. (Roger Ebert’s Journal, March 4, 2009)

Inside many superhero stories is a Greek tragedy in hiding. There is the godlike hero, and he is flawed. In early days his weaknesses were simplistic, like Superman's vulnerability to Kryptonite. Then Spider-Man was created as an insecure teenager, and comic books began to peer deeper. Now comes the “Watchmen,” with their origins as 1940s goofballs, their development into modern costumed vigilantes, and the laws against them as public nuisances. They are human. Although they have extraordinary

physical powers, they aren't superheroes in the usual sense. Then everything changes for Jon Osterman, remade after a nuclear accident as Dr. Manhattan. He isn't as human as Batman, but that can be excused because he isn't human at all.

He is the most metaphysically intriguing character in modern superhero movies. He not only lives in a quantum universe, but is aware that he does, and reflects about it. He says, "This world's smartest man means no more to me than does its smartest termite." He lives outside time and space. He explains that he doesn't see the past and the future, but he does see his own past and his own future. He can apparently go anywhere in the universe, and take any shape. He can be many places at the same time, his attention fully focused in each of those places. He sees the big picture, and it is so vast that it's hard for him to be concerned about the fate of the earth. I wonder how many audience members will know much about quantum mechanics. Some will interpret it simply in terms of Dr. Manhattan's powers. It's one of those story devices like the warp drive in "Star Trek." Dr. Manhattan, however, views it in a much more complex way, from the inside, and apparently in terms consistent with current science. So let's ask what we understand about quantum mechanics. We'll start with me. I understand nothing.

Oh, I've read a lot about it. Here is what I think I know:

At a basic level, the universe is composed of infinitesimal bits, I think they're called strings, which seem to transcend our ideas about space and time. One of these bits can be in two places at once, or, if two bits are at a distance, can somehow communicate with one another. Now I have just looked it all up in Wikipedia, and find that not only don't I understand quantum mechanics, I don't understand the article either. So never mind. Let's just say my notions are close to the general popular delusions about the subject, and those are what Dr. Manhattan understands.

So, I've just come from seeing "Watchmen" a second time, this time on an IMAX screen, which was an awesome experience. Not having read the graphic novel, I found my first viewing somewhat confusing. There were allusions and connections I suspected I was missing. I had to think back and take inventory of the characters. On the second viewing I was better prepared, and found the movie does make perfect sense on the narrative level. It takes place in 1985 in an alternate timeline, where Richard Nixon is still president, we won in Vietnam, Dr. Manhattan took the photo of Aldrin and Armstrong planting the American flag on the Moon, and so on. When the helicopters made their fateful flight to "March of the Valkyries" in "Apocalypse Now," Dr. Manhattan was there too.

The plot (very) briefly. In 1985, America and the USSR are at the brink of nuclear war. Perhaps the Watchmen could save the planet. But someone seems to be trying to kill them, retired though they may be. This danger inspires them to reunite for the first time in years. On the second viewing, I realized something I

missed the first time through: The Watchmen assassination plot makes no sense, because the only Watchman who could possibly save the planet is Dr. Manhattan, and his disinterest is cosmic. There is only one of the other Watchmen who might possibly persuade him.

The second time through I found myself really listening to what Manhattan says, and it is actually thought-provoking. I didn't care as deeply about the characters on the human level as I did with those in "The Dark Knight," but I cared surprisingly about the technically inhuman Manhattan. He doesn't lack emotion as the alien did in the recent remake of "The Day the Earth Stood Still." He has simply moved far, far beyond its reach. From where he stands, he might as well be regarding a termite. Why does he even bother to make love with Laurie Jupiter? Not for his own pleasure, I'm convinced. And not to father a Little Manhattan,

either, because as I understand his body he would ejaculate only energy. Could be fun for Laurie, but no precautions needed, except not to be grounded at the time....

At the end of "The Day the Earth Stood Still," the alien decides not to destroy life on earth because he is convinced that humans do love one another. Nothing that sentimental motivates Manhattan. Listen carefully to what he says. He tells Laurie she exists because, "your mother loves a man she has every

reason to hate, and of that union, of the thousand million children competing for fertilization, it was you, only you, that emerged. To distill so specific a form from that chaos of improbability, like turning air to gold!" He is intellectually amazed by her uniqueness, and by the workings of genetics. Her father and mother, were the last two people you expect, and from their unlikely coupling Laurie, specifically Laurie and no one else, was created. Manhattan is not saying he may save the planet because Laurie is so wonderful. He is saying he may save the planet because of the sheer wonder of the workings of DNA....

The next detail is not important to the plot of "Watchmen," but I found it fascinating: Manhattan thinks he might leave this planet altogether, travel to a distant galaxy, and there, he suggests, might try his hand at creating some life himself. He would then, would he not, be the Intelligent Designer of life in that place?

Left unanswered is the question of how life was created here on this planet, and indeed the question of whether Manhattan as he now exists constitutes life. Always remaining is the much larger question, Why is there something instead of nothing? These are questions Manhattan might fruitfully meditate upon, although if you exist on a quantum level, as he himself observes, life and non-life are all the same thing, just nanoscale bits of not much more than nothing, all busily humming about for reasons we cannot comprehend. As he puts it, "A live body and a dead body contain the same number of particles. Structurally, there's no



discernible difference. Life and death are unquantifiable abstracts. Why should I be concerned?"

Whoa. I have come all this way, and forgotten all the things I meant to say about "Watchmen," its visual strategy, its acting, and so on. I know from many reports that the film is unusually faithful to the graphic novel written by Alan Moore and drawn by Dave Gibbons, importing some dialogue and frames literally. Faithfulness in adaptation is not necessarily a virtue; this is a movie and not a marriage. But I think it has use here, because it helps to evoke the film noir vision which so many comic-based movies inhabit. Looking at page grabs from the book, I can see Gibbons' drawing style is often essentially storyboarding.

The acting? Very effective. Yes, these characters are preposterous, beginning with their need to wear costumes and continuing with their willingness to retire them. But within the terms of the story and the screenplay by David Hayter and Alex Tse, the performances create a certain poignancy. These are not superheroes with human flaws. They are flawed humans all the time--some of them possibly mad (Rorschach is "crazier than a snake's armpit," a cop says.)

You can see Matthew Goode, as Ozymandias, using an interesting tactic: He adopts a manner that leads us to think one thing about him at the first, and another thing later. Jackie Earle Haley, as Rorschach, the raspy narrator, is tortured both in and out of his mask. Patrick Wilson (Nite Owl) needs his costume to even really even possess a personality. And so on, including Malin Akerman as Laurie, whose affection for Manhattan seems oddly plausible under the circumstances.

Zack Snyder's "300" (2006) showed a similar mastery of CGI imagery as "Watchmen" does. Most of both films is not really there. But "300" struck me as fevered overkill, literally; there wasn't a character I cared about. It involved, I wrote, "one-dimensional caricatures who talk like professional wrestlers plugging their next feud." In "Watchmen," maybe it's the material, maybe it's a growing discernment on Snyder's part, but there's substance here....



Watchmen (graphic novel) (Wikipedia)

Watchmen is a graphic novel by writer Alan Moore, artist Dave Gibbons, and colorist John Higgins. It was serialized as a limited series by DC Comics in 1986 and 1987, and collected in 1987. Watchmen originated from a story proposal Moore

submitted to DC featuring superhero characters that the company had acquired from Charlton Comics. As Moore's proposed story would have left many of the characters unusable for future stories, managing editor Dick Giordano convinced the writer to create original characters instead.

Moore used the story as a means to reflect contemporary anxieties and to critique the superhero concept. *Watchmen* depicts an alternate history where superheroes emerged in the 1940s and 1960s, helping the United States to win the Vietnam War. The country is edging towards a nuclear war with the Soviet Union, freelance costumed vigilantes have been outlawed and most former superheroes are in retirement or working for the government. The story focuses on the personal development and struggles of the protagonists as an investigation into the murder of a government sponsored superhero pulls them out of retirement, and eventually leads them to confront a plot that would stave off nuclear war by killing millions of people.

Creatively, the focus of *Watchmen* is on its structure. Gibbons used a nine-panel grid layout throughout the series and added recurring symbols such as a blood-stained smiley face. All but the last issue feature supplemental fictional documents that add to the series' backstory, and the narrative is intertwined with that of another story, a fictional pirate comic titled *Tales of the Black Freighter*, which one of the characters reads. Structured as a nonlinear narrative, the story skips through space, time and plot.

A commercial success, *Watchmen* has received critical acclaim both in the comics and mainstream press, and is often hailed by critics and reviewers as comics' greatest series and graphic novel. After a number of attempts to adapt the series into a feature film, director Zack Snyder's *Watchmen* was released in 2009. A video game series, *Watchmen: The End is Nigh*, was released in the same year to coincide with the film's release. In 2012, DC Comics began publishing *Before Watchmen*, a comic book series acting as a prequel to the original *Watchmen* series, without Moore and Gibbons' involvement....

A critical and commercial success, *Watchmen* is highly regarded in the comics industry and is frequently considered by several critics and reviewers as comics' greatest series and graphic novel. In time, the series has also become one of the best-selling graphic novels ever published. *Watchmen* was the only graphic novel to appear on *Time's* 2005 "All-Time 100 Greatest Novels" list, where *Time* critic Lev Grossman described the story as "a heart-pounding, heartbreaking read and a watershed in the evolution of a young medium." It later appeared on *Time's* 2009 "Top 10 Graphic Novels" list, where Grossman further praised *Watchmen*, proclaiming "It's way beyond cliché at this point to call *Watchmen* the greatest superhero comic ever written-slash-drawn. But it's true." In 2008, *Entertainment Weekly* placed *Watchmen* at number 13 on its list of the best 50 novels printed in the last 25 years, describing it as "The greatest superhero story ever told and proof that comics are capable of smart, emotionally resonant narratives worthy of the label 'literature'." *The Comics Journal*, however, ranked *Watchmen* at number 91 on its list of the Top 100 English-language comics of the 20th century.

In *Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History*, Robert Harvey wrote that with *Watchmen*, Moore and Gibbons "had demonstrated as never before the capacity of the [comic book] medium to tell a sophisticated story that could be engineered only

in comics". In his review of the *Absolute Edition* of the collection, Dave Izkoff of *The New York Times* wrote that the dark legacy of *Watchmen*, "one that Moore almost certainly never intended, whose DNA is encoded in the increasingly black inks and bleak storylines that have become the essential elements of the contemporary superhero comic book," is "a domain he has largely ceded to writers and artists who share his fascination with brutality but not his interest in its consequences, his eagerness to tear down old boundaries but not his drive to find new ones." In 2009, Lydia Millet of *The Wall Street Journal* contested that *Watchmen* was worthy of such acclaim, and wrote that while the series' "vividly drawn panels, moody colors and lush imagery make its popularity well-deserved, if disproportionate", that "it's simply bizarre to assert that, as an illustrated literary narrative, it rivals in artistic merit, say, masterpieces like Chris Ware's '*Acme Novelty Library*' or almost any part of the witty and brilliant work of Edward Gorey".



Patrick Kevin Day: Zack Snyder on 'Watchmen' legacy as 'the anti- "Avengers" movie' (LA Times, Nov. 12, 2012)

Director Zack Snyder's "Watchmen" was released in theaters in 2009, but the film has been in a near constant state of revision since then. First there was the director's cut released on DVD, then there was "Tales of the Black Freighter," a separate adaptation of the comic-within-a-comic in the original "Watchmen" book. Then there was an "Ultimate Cut," with the "Black Freighter" segments re-edited into the film, giving it a three-and-a-half hour running time.

Now, there's a new edition of the film, billed as the most complete "Watchmen" yet released, which combines the full "Ultimate Cut" of the film with Alan Moore's original graphic novel. The set hits stores Tuesday.

Snyder, deep in post-production on "Man of Steel," took time out to talk about the film's continuing appeal to viewers and how it means even more today than when it was released.

PKD: There's another version of "Watchmen" coming out on Blu-ray. This seemingly never-ending interest in the film must be gratifying as a director.

ZS: It's weird because I was talking with some colleagues and we were talking about "Watchmen" and saying that in a weird way,

"Watchmen" becomes more and more relevant as more and more superhero movies come out. After "Avengers" really would have been the perfect time to release "Watchmen" because it's the anti-"Avengers" movie. With "Avengers" being this phenomenon worldwide, it's interesting what Alan Moore did with that graphic novel and what we tried to do with the movie. Alan Moore not only is a genius in the book he created, but also his knowledge of comic books and mythology of comic books and what the superheroes were in response to and what they represent is really beautiful and insightful. We try to get that across in the movie. When "Avengers" or whatever other movies get made, it confirms to me the mythological deconstruction that Alan was able to achieve in the book and we tried to achieve in the movie. It's even more fun to watch the movie now, I think, as the general audience has become more and more familiar with these icons and this mythology. The deconstruction of that mythology is inevitable, but it really hasn't been done. I think it's interesting that we have this genre that is so rich, but except for "Watchmen" and "Kick-Ass," which I would call more of a comedy superhero movie, I don't know that they try to dig into the why of it that we do.

PKD: That deconstruction of the genre means that "Watchmen" probably shouldn't be the first comic non-comic book fans read.

ZS: In a weird way, it should be the last comic book people read. But the reason people say that is because of the things it deals with. These characters, Doctor Manhattan responding to the threat of cold war and nuclear weapons. These heroes ambiguously crossing lines between good and evil. How do you justify the actions these guys take? All that stuff. In that context, I think a non comic book fan is able to go, "Wow, that's not just put on the stand and it kicks ass." It becomes an intellectual exercise as well. It's funny, when Chris Nolan came to me and said "Do you want to do Superman?" I was like "No!" That's a difficult one. But I felt like I knew the rules. I understand the rules of Superman — not necessarily better than anyone else — but better than a normal filmmaker would. After doing "Watchmen" and digging that deep into the why of superheroes, when Superman is presented to you, I felt like I was in a unique position to say "I get this guy. I know what this is."

PKD: Was it a greater challenge to adapt the specific story of "Watchmen" or create a new story within the rules of Superman?

ZS: There's different challenges, and I guess they're equal. "Watchmen" is just so rich. The challenge with "Watchmen" is making sure that the ideas that were in the book got into the movie. That was my biggest stretch. I wanted people to watch the movie and get it. It's one of those things where over time, it has happened more. People always come up to me now and say, "'Watchmen' is the best superhero movie ever made. I'm always say "That's super cool. That's nice of you to say." But it happens now, more and more and more than it did when it first came out. I think the studio thought it was a superhero movie. They thought it was this franchise-able superhero movie that was going to be sequel-able, like "Iron Man" or something. And I'm like, guys, this is something entirely different. I can't even begin to describe how wrong that is. It's a hard-R, deconstruction of the superhero genre, and that's the fun of it. The fun is not, "Wow, we're bad-ass.

We're these superheroes and we're going to go kick the aliens' ass or whatever enemy presents itself." That's not the fun of the movie. The fun of the movie is that these superheroes rape each other and they have super-destructive relationships and they don't know how to cope with society or themselves. They have a lot of issues. That's the fun: to see superheroes in that context. I think that was the thing the studio was like, "Wow." When a general audience goes to the movie, like when my parents go to the movie, thinking, "Oh, my son made a cool superhero movie." And they were like, "What is this?" There's that part of it. I think we've set up this concept of what a superhero movie is and in a weird way, that mythology has been respected by filmmakers across the board. Then for a movie like "Watchmen" to come along. It's period. The way it's sewn into history. The way it uses the collective psychology of world politics to shape the superheroes. That stuff is like, "Whoa." Some people feel there's no need for that. That becomes a little exhausting for some people, but for me that's the best part of it.

PKD: Do you continue to get feedback on a film after it leaves theaters?

ZS: For me it's slightly different because I'm plugged into fan culture in a weird way. So it does resonate a little bit deeper for me. I get another kick at the can. Like "Sucker Punch," which wasn't critically acclaimed in any way, but when I'm at Comic-Con I can take a renewed pride in the movie by the cultural expression that the movie has. I'm like, wow, it didn't fall on deaf ears entirely. I think with

"Watchmen," this is a movie that had marginal box office success. I wouldn't say it was horrible, but it wasn't a runaway hit. But on the other hand we've had more DVD versions of this movie than any other movie I've ever made. I've done more interviews about this movie. I've done more panels and discussions. You can say what you want about how the movie is perceived by popular culture, but it definitely has a place in comic book history and comic book movie history because it has a way of dealing with a thing that the studios mine as pure gold. You gotta know what you're mining, it's not that easy. You don't get to just stick your shovel in the mountain and come out with a pot of gold. There's got to be a why to it.

PKD: Are you fine with modest box office if it means the movie has a life later?

ZS: 100%. I couldn't be prouder of the movie. It's exactly as I intended it. I don't get it anymore, but I think people have seen the reality. I used to get "Oh you changed the book. It's not 100% pure 'Watchmen.'" And I'd say, "Are you kidding me? Are you crazy?"

"300" allowed me to make this movie exactly how I wanted it. I had a stranglehold on the studio that allowed me to make a super-personal love letter to that graphic novel. It's funny that Alan Moore has said he's against "Watchmen" the movie. But it's the strictest rendering of his work, by far, in movie form. It's probably better in a weird way, that there was the controversy and the struggle to get it made. I wouldn't change it at all. It is pokey. It's a pokey movie in the sense that it never let anyone in. Unless you're letting the story wash over you. I go to it because I enjoy the superhero genre, but you also get confronted by some harsh realities. I'm incredibly proud of it and I wouldn't change it at all.

PKD: Have you read the prequel comics? "Before Watchmen"?

ZS: I have been checking that out a little bit. Not as much as you'd imagine. I've got them in my office. But I haven't had time to crack 'em. I've flipped through them and they look pretty cool to be honest.



PKD: So you're not someone who believes that "Watchmen" should stand on its own with no sequels or prequels?

ZS: I took that graphic novel and made it into a movie, so I can't really say, "Hey, no other adaptations!" That's not really cool. And by the way, I don't think it does anything to the graphic novel. It doesn't hurt it. I feel like the legacy of the graphic novel is OK. If I made a three-

hour ad for the graphic novel, then I succeeded.

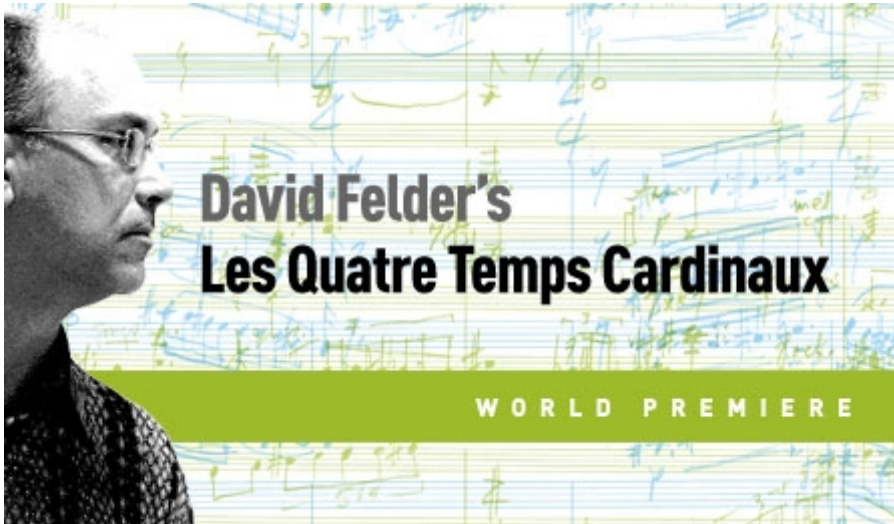
PKD: How do you see "Man of Steel" fitting into this mythology now that you've made "Watchmen"?

ZS: It's a more serious version of Superman. It's not like a heart attack. We took the mythology seriously. We take him as a character seriously. I believe the movie would appeal to anyone. I think that you're going to see a Superman you've never seen before. We approached it as though no other films had been made. He's the king-daddy. Honestly that's why I wanted to do it. I'm interested in Superman because he's the father of all superheroes. He's this amazing ambassador for all superheroes. What was it about him that cracked the code that made pop culture embrace this other mythology? What we've made as a film not only examines that but is also an amazing adventure story. It's been an honor to work on. As a comic book fan, Superman is like the Rosetta Stone of all superheroes. I wanted to be sure the movie treated it respectfully.

April 16, 2013 (XXVI:13)
Zack Snyder, WATCHMEN (2009, 162 min.)

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WORLD PREMIERE PRESENTED BY THE UB OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE ROBERT AND CAROL MORRIS CENTER FOR 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

Tuesday, April 23, 2013 | 7 p.m.

LIPPES CONCERT HALL, SLEE HALL, NORTH CAMPUS

The premiere is the focal point of a two-day program that marks the start of a new university tradition called the Signature Series, which President Satish K. Tripathi has introduced to celebrate UB's legacy of innovation and distinction in arts and letters.

An internationally acclaimed composer of contemporary music, David Felder has long been recognized as a leader in his generation of American composers. His works are known for their highly energetic profile, lyrical qualities and for his use of technological extension and elaboration of musical materials. Felder is SUNY Distinguished Professor and Birge-Cary Chair in Composition at UB.

LES QUATRE TEMPS CARDINAUX

"Les Quatre Temps Cardinaux" is a complex song cycle for two solo voices, a 35-piece orchestra and twelve channels of electronics. Commissioned in 2011 for the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, "Les Quatre" is dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky. The work was composed from fall 2011 through spring 2013, and was written for Ensemble Signal, The Boston Modern Orchestra Project and the Slee Sinfonietta, and for singers Laura Aikin and Ethan Herschenfeld. Additional support was provided by the Robert and Carol Morris Center for 21st Century Music at UB, the Cameron Baird Foundation, the Birge-Cary Chair at UB, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

For further information about the performance and related events go to <http://www.buffalo.edu/president/sig-series/felder.html>

