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Meet the gay superhero here to save the world

Vincent J. Roth tells us why now was the right time to unleash the sequel to Surge of Power



Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel. Image courtesy of Justin Cook PR.

18 December 2017 | Gareth Johnson | [f Recommend 1](#) | [t Tweet](#) | [G+](#)

Releasing in early January 2018, Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel sees filmmaker Vincent J. Roth returning to the cape-clad title role of Surge, the gay superhero.

Roth is joined by a cast that includes Nichelle Nichols, Robert Picardo, Bruce Vilanch, Shannon Farnon, Eric Roberts, Linda Blair, Gil Gerard and Lou Ferrigno.

Ahead of the film's release we spoke with Vincent J. Roth for a behind-the-scenes look at Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel.

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Surge of Power was released in 2004, why was now the right time to revisit the world of Big City for the sequel?

The first film started screening in film festivals and comic conventions in 2004 but wasn't released until 2006. Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel started screening in 2016, which is the 10 year anniversary of the release of the first movie.

Although we had some 'life distractions' that caused several long delays, we knew that the 10-year mark was coming up. We wanted to get the sequel out as a way of celebrating, and we celebrated big with over 50 stars in the sequel.

What was the production process like to bring the sequel to life?

We had some starts and stops, but we developed a sort of plug-and-play paradigm, shooting the scenes we could when we could with the money we had. This allowed us to make progress in chunks. It was definitely an unorthodox approach to production, but it worked, and for the better.

The spaces in-between shootings allowed us more time to think about and plan for the scenes not yet done. It allowed us to improve the story and think up new celebrities for the roles not yet shot.

At first, we were just going to do a 'chapter 1' sort of approach, with a script for a 30-minute story. As the plug-and-play methodology unfolded, we kept adding to the script, adding scenes, expanding on character development, and ended up with a 90-minute movie.

So, aside from the initial script, writing was never really done until we shot the last scene. It took us about four years to make the sequel.

What was the casting process like?

Casting in our plug-and-play approach was done in phases. We focused on the actors we needed for the scenes we were working on, and then when those were done, we'd move on to the next phase.

You've got numerous cameos, how did they come about?

We had 20 stars in the first movie, with Nichelle Nichols, Lou Ferrigno, and Noel Neill being our three featured celebrities. This was done in the flavour of the old Batman TV show, with miscellaneous celebrities popping up here and there.

As we were making the sequel, people would, of course ask us, 'Who's in it?' So, we knew we needed to have celebrities in it, but this time we made it more deliberate, and the celebrities play dramatic roles integrally stitched into the fabric of the world of Big City.

We also knew we had to do it bigger and better than the first movie. While I wasn't initially aiming for 50 stars, as the momentum grew, we figured, let's just pull out all the stops. The fact that we had one movie with 20 stars already under our belt helped us recruit for the sequel.

This time around I used talent agents to help me recruit celebrities. Plus the movie developed its own momentum. When we got Nichelle Nichols – Uhura from Star Trek – to return and reprise her role as Omen, it allowed us to get other Star Trek actors to come on board. When we got Noel Neill – the original Lois Lane from Adventures of Superman – to return, it allowed us to get her buddy, Jack Larson, the original Jimmy Olson, to join us. Similarly, Lou Ferrigno's presence allowed us to recruit his colleagues from The



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Incredible Hulk TV movies who played Thor and Daredevil. Along that same trend, when Rebecca Staab joined us – the first live-action portrayal of Invisible Woman – she introduced us to her colleagues from the original Fantastic Four movie, and we ended up getting all the hero actors plus the actor who played Doctor Doom.

Why was it important to you to create a gay superhero?

It's important for representation. I was taught very early about the importance of being out. When straight people know and get familiar with gay people, fear and prejudice dissipate. Being out is an important part of desensitising society. I wanted that to be my contribution to the comic and sci-fi genre, to put an openly gay superhero on the big screen.

I found it disconcerting that we experienced homophobia in a number of dimensions as we produced the sequel. It reinforced to me why we needed to get our gay superhero out there again – to help a society where so much bigotry still festers, that needs more tolerance, acceptance and understanding.

I chose comedy as the vehicle for conveying the stories because humour diffuses people's discomfort with gays. As we've seen with the success of shows like Will and Grace, mainstream audiences seem to enjoy the levity gay characters can bring to entertainment. Comedy is definitely working.

The villain is also gay, did you think about writing the villain as straight or was it important that both protagonists were gay?

At first, I didn't think it was critical for the Metal Master character to be gay. I didn't want Surge to be the token gay character in the first movie, but I also didn't want the movie to be populated with gay characters. It turned out to be a good decision because with the evolution of superhero movies, audiences really take interest in the villains. Why is the villain evil? What made him or her turn bad? So, the fact that Metal Master was already established as gay in the first movie allowed us to really explore his background in the sequel.

Fans and commentators on the first movie wanted to know more about Metal Master and why he was bad. So, the sequel introduces us to Hector's homophobic parents, played by Linda Blair and Gil Gerard, and audiences learn quickly that Hector turned evil because of his parents' lack of acceptance. This rejection fuels his personal story. Amid the comedy and zany antics, that family struggle becomes the emotional underpinning of the movie.

How would you describe the style of film that you've created with Surge?

Humour is working and mainstream audiences are enjoying it. The style is very light-hearted. There is campy fun. We also have characters dealing with real issues. We touch on the perils of homophobia and how that can damage families. We poke a lot of fun at ourselves, and at the superhero genre, like we did in the first movie. We also pay a lot of tribute and homage to the genre. There are tons of geek moments and references throughout the movie. So the movie expresses that we're having fun, celebrating the genre, and giving a message of acceptance.

What's the response to the film been like so far?

I've been at every screening so far, and I can tell that we're getting the message across. Viewers are laughing and cheering in expected places. Audience members are enjoying all the sci-fi references and geek moments, and they're picking up on the message.

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The movie has won four awards at film festivals – Best Comedy, Best Villain, Best Special Effects, and Most Inspirational Lead Character. I'm delighted with these awards. I think they're perfect.

No

VOTE

What do you hope that people feel when watching *Revenge of the Sequel*?

I hope people feel good. I hope they feel uplifted from having some hearty laugh-out-loud moments. I hope they get a kick out of all the stars and geek moments. I hope they're motivated by the message of acceptance.

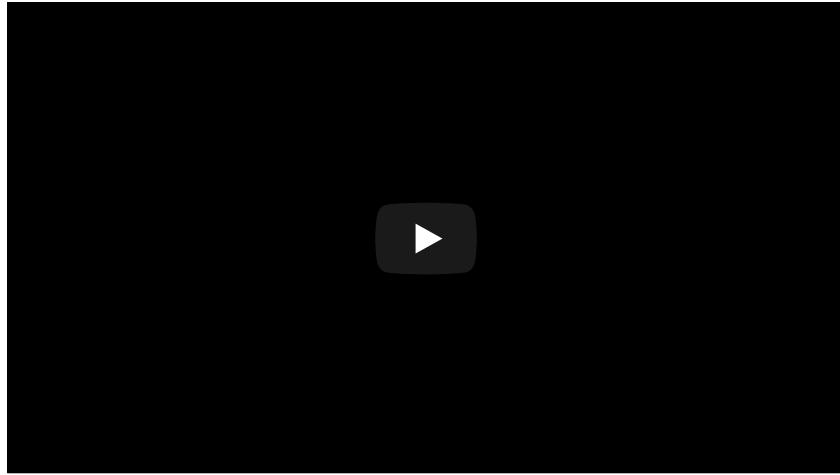
What next for Vince Roth?

Our third project, *Surge of Power: Big City Chronicles*, is already under way. It's a variety show of short episodes on the web. Our first season will end with a Christmas Special, our 17th episode on Christmas weekend. I already have a dozen episodes done and ready for season two that will launch in January along with the release of the sequel.

Some *Big City Chronicles* episodes are of Surge interviewing celebrities who have played superheroes or prominent sci-fi characters. Some episodes are behind-the-scenes looks. Some are mini adventures of Surge.

We've also already shot scenes with Nichelle Nichols for the third movie, *Surge of Power: Call of the Champions*.

Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel will be released on 5 January 2018.



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