

# Throwing our storytelling toys

 By [Charles Siboto](#)

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I went to go see [Captain America: The Winter Soldier](#) some time ago and it was the best movie I've seen so far this year - and that made me think about toys and storytelling. Sitting in that dark cinema, watching a remarkably good comic book movie, I realised that we are living in the best time in terms of seeing things that you could only imagine translated into visual stories.

Growing up reading novels and comic books, many people of my generation are at home living in their heads. All you needed to keep you busy for hours was a Lego set. Older generations can boast that they only needed a stick and a stone and that's fine too. The point is that we were all happy mucking around with sticks or Lego blocks and building these vast landscapes in our minds where robots battled it out with monsters or whatever else. But then we grew up and our toys were discarded and left to gather dust in a garage, but we didn't discard our imaginations.



## The things we loved as children

Our movies, books, video games and even our toys are taken from the things we loved as children. Michael Bay's Transformers movies may not have had good plots, but I absolutely adore them for their visuals. Every single time I see an Autobot or Decepticon transform I smile. Those are the visuals that I had in my head as a child every time I played with a Transformers action figure or watched the cartoon. To this day I can't get over how CGI took images I could only see in my head and plastered them onto screens. There's a little magic about it. It's like pizza, even if it's bad it's still nice to have.



Stories and how we tell them has always been very fascinating to me. Movies are big business and Hollywood has gone back to your childhood to dig up all your old toys and is telling those stories on the big screen - and it works for the most part. Marvel has successfully translated many of its comic franchises into film and it has many plans going forward. Guardians of the Galaxy is its next venture and it sure is being adventurous because the characters aren't well known by general audiences. Marvel is good at taking its quirkier franchises and making good films, though. When Iron Man came out lots of people didn't know who he was.

## Gritty, realistic superhero movies

DC is not having as good a time with its offerings, failing more often than not - but Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy sure did set the benchmark for gritty, realistic superhero movies. Everyone and his dog loves Batman, but even as a kid reading the comics, watching the cartoons and playing with the action figures, you know that the idea of a running around fighting crime dressed as a bat is ridiculous. Batman is probably my favourite comic book character but I'm the first to admit that he is the most ridiculous of the superheroes. You buy into it, though, because it's fun. Then Nolan sells it to you in a straight-up serious setting and it works. If you didn't have a guy dressed as a bat the movies could simply be good action/thriller stories. Marvel did a great job with placing Captain America in a realistic setting in Winter Soldier too. Take away the star-spangled costume and Winter Soldier is just a really good spy flick. It's an interesting dynamic, that, taking stories people think are for children and selling them to adults (and children still) as fun shoot-'em-ups or taking them seriously as stories that could be entirely plausible.



It's a great time to be alive and to see things you loved as a kid being reincarnated in ways that make you love them again or make you want to hire a squad of ninja pirates to assassinate everyone involved in ruining your favourite comic book (guys behind Green Lantern, I'm referring to you). You even get charming things like The Lego Movie! We're throwing all our storytelling toys in the sandpit and having a great time playing with or just peeing on them. Life's good.

## ABOUT CHARLES SIBOTO

Charles Siboto is a delightful, youngish person. He firmly believes that kindness matters and cannot abide people who are asshats.

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