**DEADPOOL – Who is Deadpool?**

**By Joe Utichi – www.joeutichi.com**

There are superheroes, and then there’s Deadpool. The latest super-powered star from 20th Century Fox’s stable of Marvel adaptations is like nothing that has come before; you’ll want to be prepared. Ryan Reynolds plays the eponymous mercenary in DEADPOOL, from director Tim Miller, but who is the man himself? Brush up on the backstory and history of the funny, acerbic “Merc with a Mouth” ahead of the film’s release.

**He is super-powered…**

Deadpool started life as Wade Wilson, an elite Special Forces operative turned mercenary. An expert marksman, swordsman and martial artist, and proficient in several languages, Wilson was diagnosed with terminal cancer, threatening to cut his days of being a hired gun short. Approached by a secret experimental program, Wilson was presented with a choice: take part in their twisted experiments for a chance to cure his cancer, or bear the pain of imminent death. But the shadowy facility didn’t exactly cure Wade’s cancer... What they did was activate dormant mutant genes that imbued Wade with with regenerative healing powers. In fact, the procedure advanced Wade’s cancer, leaving him permanently disfigured but incapable of death, the perfect cocktail for an unhealthy mind.

**…but he’s a different kind of superhero.**

Ryan Reynolds is quick to insist that there’s very little heroism in Deadpool’s actions, even though he does like to take down bad guys and has a particular soft spot for kids. After escaping the secret facility’s clutches, with his psyche in tatters, Deadpool resolved to take his revenge. He’s foul-mouthed and refuses to play by the rules, making him a pariah to any superhero with a conscience. In fact, his big mouth has been shown to drive his enemies crazy on its own, leading to the “Merc with a Mouth” moniker.

**He’s self-aware.**

That is to say, he knows he’s a comic-book character. His similarity to DC Comics’ Deathstroke was reflected in the name of his alter ego, Wade Wilson; Deathstroke’s name is Slade Wilson. The character’s creators embellished from there, allowing him to break the fourth wall and talk to the reader. At times, he refers to comic book he’s in, to the confusion of whoever he’s speaking to, and he’s been shown to read his own comic. He’s also in love with popular culture, frequently referencing films, music and other comic books, and carrying his heavyweight arsenal of weaponry in a Hello Kitty bag. From the perspective of those around him, this just confirms his crazy.

**You’ve seen him before, but not like this.**

Ryan Reynolds made his first appearance as Deadpool in X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE in 2009. In that film, he had his mouth sewn shut, and engaged in a silent, but deadly battle with Logan towards the film’s end. But you can’t silence the Merc with a Mouth. With the stitches out, and the character’s real nature allowed to run free, expect something a little truer to the comic roots this time around. You know that guy you see at a party who won’t shut up and doesn’t know how to take a hint? Give him elite combat skills, a duffle bag of weapons and a pair of razor sharp katana blades – that’s the true Deadpool.

**Ryan Reynolds is perfect casting.**

Though certainly much better at a party. Deadpool is Canadian, like Reynolds. They share the same age, height, weight, hair and eye colour. Long before his involvement in a movie adaptation of the character, the comic book made reference to the fact that Reynolds would be the perfect actor to bring him to life. Deadpool has even compared himself to a cross between Reynolds and a Shar Pei dog. And they’ve both got alliterative names: Wade Winston Wilson and Ryan Rodney Reynolds.

**They even share a sense of humour.**

Tim Miller’s DEADPOOL movie features endless references to Reynolds’ own dalliances with the superhero universe, and most especially his lead role in GREEN LANTERN. Suffice to say, Wade Wilson isn’t a fan. “Please don’t make the super-suit green,” he tells the facility scientists. “Or animated.” When Fox showed off a teaser for the film at Comic-Con, the studio poked fun at their own first go at the character. “From the studio that inexplicably sewed his mouth shut the first time, comes five-time Academy Award viewer Ryan Reynolds…”

**He’s a superhero fan.**

Wade Wilson’s childhood hero was Captain America, and he’s had an on-again, off-again bromance with Spider-Man in the pages of the comic book. He’s also appeared alongside almost every other member of the Marvel universe, a rare honour.

**Plus, he’s killed them all.**

The four-part series DEADPOOL KILLS THE MARVEL UNIVERSE might be the most aptly-named comic book series ever. After another experiment goes awry, Deadpool becomes completely unhinged and starts going postal on everyone from the Avengers through the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, Spider-Man, Punisher and the Hulk. Charmer.

**In fact, he’s killed everyone.**

Another series, DEADPOOL KILLUSTRATED, featured graphic, gory eviscerations of fictional characters such as the Three Musketeers, Don Quixote and the Little Mermaid. The series culminated in a battle with Frankenstein’s Monster, Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, Beowulf, Natty Bumppo and Mulan. Another series saw him do battle with the zombified reanimations of every dead president, from Abraham Lincoln to Lyndon Johnson.

**He and Ajax don’t get along.**

The Big Bad in DEADPOOL is Ajax, played by Ed Skrein, who’s an enforcer for the experimental program, similarly imbued with enhanced strength and a high tolerance for pain, as well as superhuman speed and agility. In the comics, Ajax sought permission to kill Deadpool after being endlessly taunted by him. He removed Deadpool’s heart, but his regenerative healing factor caused it to grow back, further costing him his sanity. Deadpool thought he’d killed Ajax when he escaped the facility, but he resurfaced years later and set out to kill the surviving members of the program in order to exact his revenge.

**He’s not above killing for love (of STAR WARS).**

In one of the comic books, one character makes the mistake of stating a preference for the STAR WARS prequels. That’s Deadpool Code for asking to have your head blown off. He really, really doesn’t like Jar Jar Binks.

**But he was once in *actual* love.**

Vanessa Carlysle, played by Morena Baccarin in DEADPOOL, fell into a life of prostitution before she met and married Wade Wilson. In the comics, distraught with his cancer diagnosis, and wanting to protect Vanessa from a lifetime of nursing him, Wade shunned her, leaving her heartbroken. But Vanessa is no damsel in distress. She’s a shape-shifting mutant in the comics, and eventually goes by the alias Copycat. Morena Baccarin says she hopes to explore this side of the character in any potential DEADPOOL sequels.

**He also dated Death.**

You know, the skeleton with the scythe. How’s that for crazy? In fact, Deadpool has been described as “omnisexual”. “Deadpool is whatever sexuality inclination his brain tells him he is in THAT moment,” notes Fabian Nicieza. “And then that moment passes.”

**He does have friends. Sort of.**

In DEADPOOL, Colossus and Negasonic Teenage Warhead are sent from the X-Men to keep Wade in check, and they offer to bring him under Charles Xavier’s supervision. He mostly declines. He also has a love-hate relationship with his blind landlady, Blind Al. But one friend, Weasel (played by TJ Miller), sticks by Wade’s side throughout the movie, even though he does suggest that his disfigurement makes him look like “an avocado had sex with an older avocado”.

**And he LOVES chimichangas.**

Let’s face it, the only thing better than a burrito is a deep-fried burrito. Maybe he’s a stand-up guy, after all.

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