

Content Writing and Criticism Samples, James D. Ward

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Direct content marketing, 861 words: Spotlight on Poppo COLOUR, *Desert Boots*

Article link: <https://www.desertboots.com/blog/2018/05/spotlight-on-poppo-colour/>



For the past few years, DesertBoots.com has been proud to carry [POPPS](#), which has become our flagship brand. POPPS boots are fun, stylish, and come in a range of colours and materials to match your individual style. They're perfect for both smart and casual looks, and their stripped-back aesthetic complements jeans and cords alike. The simple stitch detail allows the feet to flex more naturally when walking, as well as being stylish. Plus, POPPS boots are unlined, which provides maximum breathability making them perfect for hotter days and warmer months.

The POPPS ranges

We launched POPPS with the [ORIGINAL](#) range back in May '16. This initial collection came in the classic colourways [Black](#), [Dark Brown](#), [Navy](#), [Taupe](#), [Black Leather](#) and [Tan Leather](#).

These traditional unisex desert boots form the cornerstone of the POPPS brand. The soft suede and supple leather uppers have been rigorously tested and carefully crafted to be practical, fashionable and comfy all year round.

We have since added the [Chocolate Brown](#), [Ash Grey](#) and [Stone Beige](#) colourways, perfectly complementing the timeless style of the POPPS ORIGINAL range.



There's nothing like a stylish pair of POPPS ORIGINAL Taupe



Our cute range of POPPE PASTELS

Next, in May '17, we launched the POPPE [PASTEL](#) range. Exclusively available in women's sizing, these attractive [Cashmere Blue](#), [Dusty Pink](#) and [Grey](#) suede desert boots are a great addition to funky, casual outfits, and offer a great alternative to canvas shoes and trainers.

Now, POPPE [COLOUR](#) has arrived. This vibrant new range expands the definition of desert boots. We are proud to offer a brand new selection of bold colourways, infinitely opening up your outfit possibilities. The POPPE ethos of fun and quirky year-round style is perfectly represented by these new boots.

Since the COLOUR range is of the same high quality as every POPPE boot, the only question is: which colour do you pick?

Chilli Red

If you're after an eye-catching burst of colour try [Chilli Red](#). These statement boots pair well with a black-and-white outfit, and will give your sharp suit or polka dot dress a dash of spice.

If you want to be a little bolder, remember that blue contrasts well with red. So match your Chilli Red POPPE with a pair of navy blue jeans and a white t-shirt for a great summer look. But don't be afraid to experiment! That's what POPPE is all about.



Choose Chilli Red for a vibrant POPPE of colour



Try a pair of Forest Green to complete your look

Forest Green

Perhaps you're drawn to [Forest Green](#), and why wouldn't you be? If the neutral colours in your outfit aren't doing enough work, then these boots will give it a distinctive edge.

If you want to add a bit more colour to your outfit, experiment with some magenta accessories to find the right match for your new POPPE.

Mustard Yellow

[Mustard Yellow](#) is a bright, summery choice for your feet. This colour is here to stay this season, in both the fashion world and the homeware world, so get your hands on it quick. There's no mistaking the appeal of a splash of yellow against a dark outfit, and it also goes great against whites and beiges for that Mediterranean feel.

If you want to match your new boots with a complementary colour, look out for purple shirts and blouses on your next shopping trip. Alternatively, go all in on the yellow! Bring the sunshine to the city streets of rainy England!



Share Mustard Yellow with a friend



Ocean Blue might be the pair for you

Ocean Blue

Who can resist a pair of [Ocean Blue](#) suede boots? Get your Elvis on and pair them with your favourite dark blue jeans or shorts for a classic desert boots look. These Ocean Blue POPPS offer a more muted alternative to the Chilli Red or Mustard Yellow styles. They are perfect for you if you want to add colour to your outfit in a more subtle manner.

If you're feeling a bit bolder, though, take our advice from Chilli Red and flip it on its head. Wear some red accessories or a top with red highlights to make the blue boots really pop. Or, if you're feeling especially brave, a block red t-shirt or dress will turn heads – in a good way.

Rose Pink

[Rose Pink](#) is a fantastic option from the POPPS COLOUR range. Like the rest of the boots in the range, Rose Pink works well with both neutral and monochrome outfits.

However, pink matches really well with a variety of different looks. Match it with other shades of pink from your wardrobe for a fantastic outfit, or wear it with a loud print dress. You only live once, why not be a little extravagant?

Making POPPS

Finally, we recently visited our POPPS factory in Spain, and brought a camera along. Check out the video below to see exactly how we make our stunning desert boots, and feel free to share it with your friends.

[YouTube embed]



Rose Pink by any other name would be just as sweet

Which POPPS COLOUR is perfect for you? Let us know in the comments, and make sure you're following our [POPPS \(Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | Snapchat\)](#) and [Desert Boots \(Facebook | Twitter | Instagram\)](#) social media accounts for more great looks.

Indirect content marketing, 1669 words: The Shuperb Guide to the Royal Wedding, *Shuperb*

Article link: <https://www.shuperb.co.uk/blog/the-shuperb-guide-to-the-royal-wedding/>



Here at Shuperb, we're all excited for the next Royal Wedding on Saturday (but a bit miffed we didn't get a day off for it). We've picked our outfits, organised the street party, and come up with our best excuses as to why the happy couple left us off the guestlist. But why all the fuss? While we wait for the appointed day, here is the Shuperb guide to the Royal Wedding.

Why is it a big deal?

Royal weddings are hardly a new phenomenon. Throughout the centuries there have been royal weddings large and small (and in the case of Henry VIII, frequent), and without them, we wouldn't have royal families at all. A commoner's wedding is fun enough – you get to wear a nice hat, sip champagne, and gossip about so-and-so the second cousin. With a royal wedding you get all of the above, but on a grander scale, filled with ancient ritual and heraldry and golden everything. Plus, you can do it all from your home – no sorting out hotels in the Cotswolds or talking to Great Uncle Harry, just lunchtime Bellinis and heckling the BBC coverage.

So we've agreed that royal weddings are a fun time. However, as we are down to just thirty sovereign monarchs in the world (including the Pope) the opportunities for royal weddings have dwindled somewhat. It's no wonder then that the British royal family remains so popular. The wedding of Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge drew a million people onto the streets of London in celebration and was broadcast in over 180 countries. Plus, nobody does pomp and circumstance like the British. So, if you're after a public union with all the trimmings, the British royal family is your safest bet.



Henry VIII loved a wedding

Who, when and where?



A depiction of the royal wedding at Legoland Windsor

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are set to marry at 12pm BST on Saturday 19 May, 2018 at St George's Chapel, Windsor. Afterwards, there will be a carriage procession through Windsor and two receptions: one hosted by the Queen for all attendees, and another later for family and close friends.

The best man will be Prince William, who chose Prince Harry as best man for his wedding. Meghan has not selected a maid of honour, and all the bridesmaids and page boys will be children. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, will perform the marriage ceremony, and he has been listening to "Blinded By Your Grace" by Stormzy to help settle his nerves ahead of the day. He baptised and confirmed Meghan into the Church of England on 6 March ahead of the wedding.

Who's been invited?

600 guests have been invited to the ceremony, with a further 200 invited to the reception. All of the obvious members of the royal family will be there, like the Queen, and some members of Diana's family will be too. Since it's a private wedding, rather than a state occasion like William and Kate's, no political leaders need to or are expected to have been invited. Harry's party train will be there, those friends he's been pictured partying with worldwide, and likely some comrades from his military service too. The Spice Girls are also reportedly invited, so David Beckham is likely to turn up as well. Aside from the celebrities, the Royals have also invited 1200 members of the public, many chosen in recognition of their charity work, to watch the couple's arrival and departure from the grounds of Windsor Castle.



A picture of St. George's Chapel



The Queen, who will be attending, and her corgis and dorgis, which will not

As for Meghan, it's a bit less clear. Her mother Doria Ragland will join her in the car to Windsor Castle, and her father Thomas Markle Sr. was due to walk her down the aisle, but it has since become uncertain whether he will even attend the wedding. Her estranged half-brother and half-sister definitely won't be there, as both have been outspoken in the media about their differences with Meghan. Meghan is also friends with Serena Williams, but there's no word on whether she will attend, let alone her old castmates from *Suits*.

Sadly, there will be no corgis in attendance. Willow, the Queen's last remaining corgi, died in mid-April. She was the fourteenth generation descended from Susan, the corgi presented to Princess Elizabeth on her 18th birthday in 1994. The Queen still has two dogs, Vulcan and Candy (both the result of Princess Margaret's dachshund mating with one of the corgis) but they should consider themselves lucky if they even get to attend the reception.

Traditions

As you might expect, there is a vast tapestry of rituals and traditions associated with the royal wedding. However, the young princes have some form in breaking with tradition. We've already mentioned a few as we've been going along, but here are a few things you can expect to see – and a few you won't.

Tradition – Prior to 1840, royal brides tended to go for blue or black wedding dresses. This changed with the wedding of Queen Victoria, who began the modern tradition of brides wearing white. She chose white so that the crowds could see her more clearly.

Today – It's widely expected that Meghan will turn up in white, but we don't even know who's designing the dress, so there still could be an upset.

Tradition – Royal weddings usually take place on a weekday, fuelling the hopes of an extra bank holiday from Britons nationwide.



Detail from The Marriage of Queen Victoria, 10 February 1840 by Sir George Hayter



Prince William won't be attending the FA Cup final this year

Today – Sadly, Harry and Meghan are getting married on a Saturday, which means no day off. William has to miss the football too – Saturday's also the FA Cup Final, which William usually attends in his capacity the President of the FA – since he can't be in two places at once.

Tradition – There is some contention as to whether, as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, the Queen should attend the wedding of Meghan Markle, a divorcée. As precedent, the Queen didn't attend the civil ceremony of Charles and Camilla, but she did attend the subsequent Service of Prayer and Dedication.

Today – The Queen is a confirmed guest at the wedding, and she's even hosting a reception. Clearly, divorce is no longer as much of a problem in the royal family.

What to wear if you're invited

The royal invitation specifies "uniform, morning suit or lounge suit" for men, and a "day dress with hat" for women. What does this mean in layman's terms?

For men the uniform is self-explanatory – for those serving in the Armed Forces, dress uniform may be their preferred option. If Harry is not in uniform, however, you do run a risk of outshining the groom.

Many will go for a morning suit, which is comprised of a black or grey morning coat (single-breasted jacket with tails) with matching trousers, a waistcoat (sometimes of a contrasting or flamboyant colour), and a shirt.

This is paired with a tie – some may choose to wear their public-school tie. This ensemble can be accessorised with a pocket square, a boutonnière, or a top hat.



Prince William and Prince Harry in morning dress

Finally, you have the choice of a lounge suit, which is essentially a business suit with the flexibility to be less sober in colour or style.



Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, Prince George and Princess Charlotte at Pippa Middleton's wedding

Women are expected to go for a knee-length dress, with sleeves or a wide strap, or a skirt worn with a jacket. Accessorise this with daytime jewellery such as pearls, and a pair of tights. A fancy hat is an essential touch – take inspiration from those worn at the Royal Ascot.

As for shoes, polished black Oxfords with a toecap but no brogueing are the only choice for men. Don't go for patent leather either, as that's more appropriate for evening dress. You can find a selection of appropriate shoes [here at Shuperb](#).

Women should wear high heels (but not extreme ones) or wedges if it's going to be soft underfoot. Obviously, these will need to be carefully selected, but we have a great selection of [heels](#), wedge [shoes](#) and [sandals](#) to choose from, so have a browse.

Party togs for the rest of us

If your invitation has been lost in the post, never fear, you can join in the fun at a street party, pub, or even hold a gathering at your own house. While you can certainly choose to dress as if you were really attending, that may turn heads for the wrong reasons. Instead, take the opportunity to dress up a bit smart, but within the realms of common sense, and liberated from the formality of a dress code.

Men, take inspiration from the morning suit, but don't be bound to actually acquiring tails. Instead, wear a waistcoat, white shirt and tie with a pair of chinos or smart jeans to look smart, but not like you're trying too hard. From here, you have a wide range of shoe options, depending on what works with your combo. The more casual will go for some [canvas shoes](#), to undercut the formality. Many, however, will choose a nice pair of [Chelsea boots](#), [brogues](#), or maybe a brand of quirkier formal shoes like [Gucinari](#) or [Mister Carlo](#).



A slightly less dressy look for your royal wedding party

Women should probably skip the hat, but otherwise should embrace the opportunity to choose a dress, skirt, or a suit that's a little more daring (or perhaps just more comfortable) than strictly formal wedding attire. If you do go for some higher heels, though, we recommend sticking a fold-up pair of [Butterfly Twists](#) in your handbag just in case you need to do some dancing.

What are your royal wedding plans? Drop us a comment below, or find us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Film review blog, 531 words: *Little Women*, jamesdavidward.com

Article link: <https://jamesdavidward.com/2020/01/15/little-women-2019-dir-greta-gerwig/>

Little Women is only a brilliant film if you want to cry all the way through it. It's a very undignified experience. (I've been reading bits of the script, put online to help with Oscars nominations, and I've been tearing up reading that. Complete and utter shambles.) Awards are nonsense, but it deserves all the awards.

There's an exchange towards the end of the film concerning whether people are interested in stories about ordinary lives. Jo March, the author of the story we have been watching for the past two hours, frets that no one will be interested their "little li[ves]". (Novels were post-modern well before modernism was invented, which must be awkward for a certain breed of academic.) Jo believes her story "doesn't have any real importance". Her sister, Amy, responds that writing makes things more important, that "maybe we don't see those things as important because people don't write about them". There's little more important than showing life as it is lived.

There's so much to love about this film. Timothée Chalamet's entrance, the carriage screeching to a halt and Florence Pugh leaping out, destined to be the new "Colin Firth coming out of a lake in a drippy shirt". Meryl Streep's Aunt March, beyond giving a shit. (The film could only have been improved by giving Streep a song.) The chaos of the March household treating a sprained ankle, the film's eye matching Laurie's as he looks on in fond amusement. Laura Dern and Saoirse Ronan sat against a bed, talking about anger. Saoirse Ronan throughout. Laura Dern throughout. Jo's coats and waistcoats. Emma Watson getting good material for once. The different voices Florence Pugh uses for the different ages of her character. The beautifully structured script. The fantastic use of parallel shots. Everything Greta Gerwig did to earn the Oscar she deserves to win that she wasn't even nominated for (awards are nonsense).

Mostly what I love is that it wasn't some worthy costume drama. You get so many at this time of the year. They're all some trudge about Great Men, doing some groundbreaking work or such nonsense, the film prostrating itself in front of the awards nonsense screaming pick me, pick me, while carefully avoiding any difficult questions. You shouldn't praise with negativity about something else, but I'm glad it's not that.

I'm glad *Little Women* is *this* film. Lively, intelligent, funny, Romantic with a capital ahh, playfully assembled, deftly played. Watching this film is the full moviegoing experience, save maybe jump scares, it doesn't have any of those. Best of all, the film is a lived experience. Watching the Marches put on a play, and these actors doing the gig of a lifetime, made me miss those times I got to be creative in a group. Watching Jo blanket her floor with pages reminded me of assembling my master's dissertation, and Frederick's pointed critique was every writing seminar I went to. And of course, watching a family at Christmas can't help but be emotional. We're only two weeks into the year, and if I see any films even nearly this good in the other fifty, it's going to be another fantastic year for cinema.

Theatre criticism, 590 words: *An Ape's Progress*, *The Manchester Review*

Article link: <http://www.themanchesterreview.co.uk/?p=5123>

Dave McKean, introduced tonight as “the man who wears many hats”, is a constant collaborator, working with everyone from Grant Morrison to Heston Blumenthal, and is best known for his longstanding partnership with Neil Gaiman. He has produced accomplished pieces across a number of art forms, from his graphic novels, to his painting, to his films such as *MirrorMask* and *Luna*, and his involvement in a project usually signals that it's worth paying attention to. Perhaps, then, the excellence of this latest collaborative venture shouldn't come as much of a surprise.

An Ape's Progress is a musical narrative commissioned by both the Manchester Jazz and Literature festivals. The work was instigated by a sequence of poems by Matthew Sweeney that reimagines Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* with a retired Chinese circus monkey as its protagonist. These were passed to McKean, who produced a mesmerising film filled with his distinctive artwork and cinematography, and also song lyrics and musical ideas. These were in turn passed to Iain Bellamy, who developed and orchestrated an arresting score, and all these elements were performed alongside each other by the collaborators and the Pepper Street Orchestra.

The spoken word/sung element of the show curates a history of the great figures, and architecture of Manchester. As the monkey makes its way around the city, he converses with a man who claims to be John Dee, pines for the love of Emeline Pankhurst despite his inability to visit her in 1903, and views a Lowry, which instigates a monologue from the painter. This excellent narrative device allows the work to probe the character and the ethics of the city with wit and a light touch. A particularly dry sequence has the monkey describe his inability to buy any present suitable for his love from the shops of the city, which concludes with him noting that “the fault is [his] own” that he is unable to engage with the commercialism of modern society.

The film was notably precise, cut sympathetically to the tempo of the score. Each of the eight sections of the piece were introduced by a beautiful illustration and a title card, and the moving images that followed were varied and interesting. The shopping sequence described above was accompanied by a kaleidoscopic pattern comprised of present day footage, with multiples of the monkey wandering through, red as if being seen through a heat detector. There was a mix of archive footage, computer graphics, and even footage of McKean as Dee, collaged in McKean's signature style.

The score was an exemplary demonstration of how to create an expansive score, which moves effortlessly between moods and genres, out of a small ensemble. It helps greatly, of course, that every member of this ensemble is world class. Bellamy is an emotive saxophone soloist and an engaged conductor. Emilia Mårtensson sings with delicacy and clarity, and carries the show effortlessly. Kit Downes' piano provides the texture of the score, and he plays with a lightness that supports rather than overwhelms the ensemble. Stian Carstensen is a breathtaking accordionist and accomplished whistler. Matthew Sharp plays cello with ease and grace, but particularly shines as the introducer of the performance, and with his astonishing singing voice. McKean, too, sings with resonance, and blends some synthesised touches into the score throughout.

However, the star of the show was perched on a stool at the front of the stage – the monkey itself. This performance was a highlight of the festival, and I dearly hope it receives some version of recorded preservation in the near future.

Film festival coverage, 675 words (extract): DocFilm Festival, *The Grade*

Article link (1750 words, offline): <http://the-grade.com/doc-film-fest-2013-review>

The fourth DocFilm festival has a strong community focus. Festival founder John Coster's focus is on getting films seen, as shown by his offer at every screening of free admission to the rest of the festival, and local film-making, as shown on the first day by **Not Lost The Plot – The Story of the Queens Road Allotments** (2013, dir. Bill Newsinger). The lightly humorous short follows small stories of local people, and the drama of gardening. It dips into local politics when it discusses the preservation of the space against housing development, the only section where the film shows any bite. Otherwise, it is a wistful, whimsical, competently shot short.

Little is memorable, though, save the gravity with which the subject of allotment water shortage is given, and the filming of a slug genocide. While the montages of gardening and nature shots are nice, the frequency with which the film relies on them belies the lack of real material. Production values are generally decent, save the use of some cheap-looking captions. Despite the characterless voiceover and one participant's attempt at presenting to camera, it's a decent 25 minutes, and certainly inspires a good poke around the top of Queens Road.

The full film is available, along with further information and a supporting booklet, at <http://queensroadallotments.wordpress.com/projects/not-lost-the-plot-lottery-funded/>.

The festival shifted from the local to the international with the UK premiere of **Unfortunate Brothers: Korea's Reunification Dilemma** (2013, dir. Dodge Billingsley), which was accompanied by a q&a session with Billingsley and his co-writer and editor, Scott Thornton. The 46 minute film explores the vast cultural and political differences which have developed since the sixty years since separation, and the difficulty faced in enacting the older generation's dream of making the two countries as one again.

Its main figure is Mr. Lee, a North Korean escapee living in South Korea, but it summarises the entirety of the Korean situation as it currently stands. The most interesting section follows Mr. Lee's attempts at providing aid to the North Korean people. Every so often, Mr. Lee attaches a package full of supportive messages and socks to a balloon, and floats it over the demilitarized zone. He says, that since good quality socks are so scarce in North Korea, new spares are often traded away, so "socks are the same as money falling from the sky."

However, the film struggles to maintain this level of insight. Partly, this is because of the difficulty of getting fresh, accurate information out of North Korea and China, not to mention getting cameras in. This means the film has to resort to informed speculation from experts about their government's motives, and the testimony of ex-pats concerning life in North Korea, leading to a preponderance of talking heads. This issue is glossed over in the documentary, where it might have proved a demonstration of the difficulty of making any fair and accurate film about these countries while they are uncommunicative.

As such, the film is unremarkable in an artistic sense, and while details are communicated clearly and concisely, and the topic is interesting, the documentary is far from compelling. It does, however, serve as a good facilitator for further discussion, as the q&a portion was at least as interesting the main body of the film, with both Billingsley and Thornton showing a passion and extensive knowledge surrounding the subject. They communicated with a casual intelligence, rather than the formal and staid nature of their film, and as such their presence provided something the film was lacking.

...The concept of the DocFilm festival is strong, and the promotion and exhibition of local film-making is a laudable cause, essential to the development of Leicester culture. However, far too many of the films were too short to contain much insight, and were artistically uninteresting, therefore hampering the effective communication of ideas. As DocFilm moves into its fifth year, one would hope that the festival expands and improves on its offerings this year, and finds films that really show the best of what documentary can offer, rather than the merely competent.

Graphic novel review, 209 words; Snotgirl, Vol. 1, *Goodreads*

I always like O'Malley's work, and Hung's artwork is fantastic. The characters are believably beautiful fashionistas, while maintaining a strong sense of cartooning and comedy. Quinn's colours are also worth mentioning, with plenty of bold choices that come off really well. The writing, however, is an interesting one to unpick.

O'Malley usually works in longer installments, in either one-off graphic novels or the manga-length volumes of *Scott Pilgrim*. This is his first attempt at the traditional US short form/serialisation structure. The single issues are packed with dialogue and character, but the ongoing plot is very lightly laid on. It tonally shifts between two aesthetics. Primarily, it's a "tears of a clown" character drama of a fashion blogger's perfect online life vs her messy offline life (written in the familiar O'Malley patter). The ongoing plot, however, seems to be a tense, surreal murder mystery, with resonances of, say, *Mulholland Drive*.

On this first volume, it's impossible to say whether this is successful - certainly, you lose something here as a collected edition, since the serialisation becomes a bit lumpier than intended - but I'm certainly intrigued enough by the broadening of O'Malley's artistic interests (and trust him enough from his previous work) to follow this book down its rabbit hole.

List article, 320 word extract: 15 Things You Didn't Know About Iron Man's Suit, *Screenrant*

Full article: <http://screenrant.com/iron-man-suit-armor-facts-trivia-secret-history/>

Iron Man has worn a number of suits over the years, from the clunky silver contraption introduced in *Tales of Suspense* #39, to the sleek, modern Adi Granov design from the 2008 movie *Iron Man*. Broadly speaking, they all have the same functionality. Jets in the boots allow flight, and the repulsors in the gloves along with the unibeam in the chest are used to attack Tony Stark's enemies. As such, you'd be forgiven for thinking there's not much to else to the suits.

However, not every suit has the same functionality, and some of the enhancements installed over the years are surprising. From catheters to finger lasers, armor-making bacteria to unconvincing camouflage technology, there have been a variety of approaches to the Iron Man armor. Here, then, are 15 Things You Didn't Know About Iron Man's Suit.

15. LIKE ANY ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE, IT'S CHARGED BY A MAINS POWER

The Iron Man suit is an advanced piece of equipment, capable of flight, strength enhancement, and carrying a large array of different weapons. However, the silver suit from Iron Man's first appearance in March 1963 ran on fairly conventional DC motors. As such, Tony Stark had to plug it in for charging between missions. The gold armor, introduced in his second appearance, added the capability to be recharged by solar power, and the original red and gold Model 2 from December 1963 was more power-efficient, but ultimately, its power supply technology was not too dissimilar to any household appliance.

Later armors had more demanding power needs. The Model 4 armor in April 1976 was fully solar, and could convert excess temperature into power. The Model 5 Space Armor from January 1981 was the first to use nuclear power, and the Model 9 from June 1988 was the first to run on a betavoltaic battery. Currently, the suit is charged by Stark's chest-mounted arc reactor, as established in the 2008 movie *Iron Man*.