

# The actual first black superhero movie is available on YouTube, and it is insane

 [avclub.com/algo.html](http://avclub.com/algo.html)

This week, *Black Panther* became only the fifth movie ever to have an over \$200 million opening weekend, disproving once and for all the old Hollywood belief that films centered around “nonwhite” protagonists—particularly in the superhero genre—won’t perform well. Hopefully, the film’s undeniable success will inspire audiences to rediscover the often forgotten black superheroes of cinema who paved the way, like *Blade*, *Spawn*, *Meteor Man*, and *Blankman*. But, as *Slate* reports, if we’re going to be celebrating those heroes of the vanguard who broke down barriers for future generations, we need look no further than the real first black superhero movie: *Abar*, *The First Black Superman*.

*Abar*, which was recently unearthed for the Brooklyn Academy Of Music’s film series on black superheroes, is a low-budget blaxploitation film from 1977 that follows the adventures of the titular Abar, a black revolutionary turned indestructible vigilante. (It can be viewed in its entirety on YouTube, where it is conveniently broken up into seven 15-minute chunks.) Like other films of the genre, it deals with issues of race relations, empowerment of the black community, and the nefarious machinations of “The Man,” all underscored by a near-constant funky guitar riff.

“The cast of amateurs seems to be competing for whoever can give the stiffest, most incoherent line reading of the fantastically terrible script,” writes *Slate*’s Aisha Harris, who goes on to describe the film’s sprawling, bizarre plot, complete with an Old West cowboy dream sequence. While *Abar* undoubtedly looks, sounds, and is generally terrible, it could never be called uninteresting.

Those expecting a 1970s version of the action-packed MCU might be disappointed, especially considering *Abar* doesn’t get his super powers until the final twenty minutes of the movie. The majority of the plot deals with the trials and tribulations of an upper-middle class black family who recently moved from the ghetto to the all-white suburbs. But, in the climactic shootout scene at the Watts Towers, *Abar* realizes he’s not only bulletproof—like some sort of West Coast Luke Cage—but that he can control people with his mind. An extended “cleaning up the hood” montage ensues and, frankly, it rules.

But the true “what the fuck is even happening” moment of the film comes in its final scene, when it is revealed that the racist suburban white neighbor was (spoiler alert!) secretly black the whole time. How she was able to pull off this elaborate ruse is explained away by her suffering from sickle cell anemia. No. We’re not kidding.

Check out *Slate*’s full analysis of this cultural artifact [here](#).

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