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Elizabeth Olsen Interview: Wanda's MCU Journey, Making WandaVision, And Multiverse Of Madness



By [Chris Hewitt](#) | Posted On 13 05 2022

For eight years now, [Elizabeth Olsen](#) has been playing Wanda Maximoff in the [Marvel Cinematic Universe](#) – from morally-murky villain, to complex hero, to grieving widow, and back again. Now she returns in [Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness](#) as the Scarlet Witch, a being of immense power caught up in a reality-bending adventure with [Benedict](#)

Olsen stopped by the *Empire Podcast* to talk her role in [Sam Raimi's](#) sequel – but, given the super-secretive nature of the [MCU](#) and fear of spoilers, the conversation turned into an expansive look at Olsen's journey through the Marvel saga so far, from her very first cameo in the post-credits sequence of [Captain America: The Winter Soldier](#) to the emotional rollercoaster of [WandaVision](#). Listen to the [full interview on the Empire Podcast here](#), and read an edited transcript below.

EMPIRE: Here we are, eight, nine years after you first signed on to that little cameo at the end of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, still playing Wanda in all her complexity. The way she's developed must be a surprise to you still.

Elizabeth Olsen: Such a surprise. I mean, I also didn't sign a big contract with Marvel, so I continue to be surprised every time they use me. I wasn't a title character, so you don't do that same contract of multiple movies. You only do a little bit at a time. I actually wasn't put in that situation, so it's even more surprising when Kevin asked me to do *WandaVision*. It was so terrifying because I got very comfortable taking up my little space, my little lane, in these ensemble films. The pressure of leading one only hit me when we were doing press for it, not when we were making it. It definitely feels different than how I started out.

Sam Jackson signed on for nine movies, Ruffalo signed on for nine movies... It wasn't anything like that?

No, nothing like that.

Have you been doing the last couple for free?

Yeah, exactly. "Oh, we don't need a contract! I'm just happy to be here."

"I trust you guys!" It's a buy-one-get-one-free situation. But that means you have the power to say no. Was Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of

Yes. But they didn't know what *Doctor Strange* would be. They knew what *WandaVision* would be. We had the six months break when we were filming *WandaVision*, because of the pandemic, and it was a couple of weeks before I went back to finishing *WandaVision* that I was verbally explained the *Doctor Strange* plot. So, I was like, 'Oh, wow! I would have loved this information before we did *WandaVision*.' [laughs] But that is the thing, when people think that our lips are sealed with not wanting to expose the future – we don't *know* the future. There's truly nothing I could share, because I find out two weeks or a month before I shoot the thing.



Wow. It's changed a lot since its original inception with Scott Derrickson a few years ago. Is it substantially different from what you were pitched at that time?

No. I never knew the earlier iterations of this story. Even people would talk to me on set, explaining, 'Oh, well, you know how it was before...' I didn't know anything until it's more or less this story. I still don't really know what it was before. They've tried to explain it to me, and it goes way over my head. [laughs]

must be a really interesting, unique opportunity to put a different spin on characters.

Well, you're getting into territory that starts to scare me because you're actually talking about the film. So I will just kind of pivot and say, I think it's really exciting that the multiverse exists. Because how often are we in this space of, "I wonder, what would have been, had I made a different decision, or a different choice?" And so I do think there is this endless opportunity that Marvel has created by opening up the multiverse. That's very fun to me as an actor as well.

Beautifully done. Well, let's talk about something we can talk about, which is your past as Wanda and what it's like for you being the constant throughout all these different iterations – throughout *Age Of Ultron*, and the movies you made with the Russo Brothers, and then Jac Schaeffer and Matt Shakman on *WandaVision*, and now with Sam Raimi. The constant is you. How involved have you been over the years in shaping Wanda and where she goes?

[I was] involved in the sense where they would ask me, 'Do you have any ideas about where you'd want to go next?' That is how I was involved in the earlier films. I didn't really have too many things I was pitching. I was just very happy to be there, and to always have something to play. I never felt like I didn't have an arc to play. So I was just grateful that I was one of the characters who got that, or who did something that affected the film – which, you know, that doesn't have to be the case all the time, and it was for me.

With *WandaVision*, it was definitely Jac wanting to work with me – she wanted to pick my brain, but the truth is, she already knew everything. She already understood everything that was played. Paul and I would create these little moments in between the films where we had assumed

don't know how she intuited it. She put it in *WandaVision*, all these little moments that that we stitched together. And then also, she invented some really big things that shifted, like the Darkhold and this idea that Wanda is actually a mythic person with a destiny that was set out for her. That's a whole new journey now that we get to have with the character, and I was so grateful that she could also interpret all this from the past, and then present an amazing opportunity forward.



***WandaVision* was a chance for you to stretch in multiple ways – shooting in front of a live studio audience, that very sitcomy vibe. But at the same time it's this really, really deep and complex exploration of mental health, and grief, and loss. The last conversation that Wanda has with Vision is absolutely heartbreaking. Playing that stuff must be really fun for you.**

It was a playground, it really was, that show. My whole body woke up to have to play all the different tones and styles and genres – mostly sitcom, but the different versions of the sitcoms through the years. And then to also have something grounded. I mean, it truly was a gift of a job. And we also had so much fun making it. There's this theory that the hard ones are

shocking response for us all. I really feel like it revitalised something in my own opportunities outside of Marvel. So there are many levels of me having a lot of gratitude for that show, and for being a part of this MCU.

That shot where we first see you in *Winter Soldier*, where you're playing with the box – how much did you have a handle on who Wanda was for that? Because that was presumably just one day.

I mean, it's seriously Joss's creation. She really was from his mind. He had the idea of how she physically moved that was interpreted through a choreographer. He created something that was unique to the MCU at that time. He didn't want to create the version of the comics – he wanted to create something that was adjacent, and somehow since then we've gotten closer to the comics. So it's been this amazing journey. And since he gave it to me with *Ultron*, I just took it with me for the ride, I feel. I do feel very protective over Wanda. It's also kind of amazing that she's not a character that we've seen in any other live-action of these superheroes. So it feels very personal.



It's wild, isn't it? Just that one day on set, doing those those hand gestures and that locks you into decisions you make seven, eight years down the line.

I mean, yean, it locked us into *wandavision* just in that one moment where she sees the light. That was connected directly to that cameo. So it was amazing to bring that back as well.

Listen to the [full Elizabeth Olsen interview on the Empire Podcast](#) – new episodes of which are released weekly on Fridays. *Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness* is out now in cinemas.

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