[Marvel](https://www.cnet.com/marvel/) is certainly getting value for its money from Oscar Isaac. New superhero show Moon Knight mixes Marvel's trademark cocktail of action and humor with spooky horror and intriguing Egyptian mythology, and Isaac embodies that mix of styles by playing multiple roles as a normal guy who discovers he's secretly a superhero -- whether he wants to be or not.

Also starring Ethan Hawke and May Calamawy, Moon Knight streams on [Disney Plus](https://www.cnet.com/news/disney-plus-movies-release-dates-hulu-bundle-and-everything-else-to-know/) March 30. Speaking about the show to journalists at an online press conference Monday, Isaac described how he drew inspiration for his character's non-superhero personality from British comedy icons Peter Sellers (star of Dr. Strangelove, Casino Royale, Being There and the Pink Panther films) and Karl Pilkington. Yes, really.

Isaac plays Steven Grant, a meek museum employee who discovers that sometimes he can be a whole other person. By night, he turns into a badass international mercenary -- and if that wasn't enough, this split personality appears to take orders from an ancient Egyptian god of the moon.

Isaac describes the show as "a real opportunity to do something completely different, particularly in the MCU, to use Egyptian iconography and the superhero genre language to really focus on this internal struggle."

Part of the appeal of the role for the [Star Wars](https://www.cnet.com/tags/star-wars/) and [Dune](https://www.cnet.com/culture/entertainment/dune-2021-movie-review-stunningly-cinematic-and-wonderfully-weird-sci-fi-epic-dvd-blu-ray/) star was to put a slightly different spin on Marvel's trademark quippy humor from wiseacres like Tony Stark and Peter Parker. "There was a chance to do a different type of comedy," said Isaac of his bumbling character, "with somebody that doesn't know they're being funny."

The show is set in London, and when Isaac asked why, he was apparently told Marvel had too many characters living in New York. Isaac wanted to follow that thought even though it meant departing from the comics: "What if we make him English?" Isaac suggested. "What if Peter Sellers was approached with a Marvel project?"

To perfect a timid British accent, the actor began with UK comedy shows like [Stath Lets Flats](https://www.metacritic.com/tv/stath-lets-flats) and [The Office](https://www.metacritic.com/tv/the-office-uk), as well as comedian [Russell Kane](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russell_Kane) and curmudgeon [Karl Pilkington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Pilkington) (sidekick to Ricky Gervais in various TV and podcast projects). He also listened to the accents of the Jewish community of North London.

The hapless English-accented Steven provides the humor, but the action kicks off when tough guy Marc Spector takes over the character's body. The brooding Spector is more what you'd expect from a violent superhero. In fact, Isaac said he "leaned into the stereotype of the tortured, dark vigilante guy ... [except] with this little Englishman living inside."

The two aspects of this oddball hero interact with each other on screen in various ways, which means Isaac plays two very different characters who talk to each other in mirrors and other reflections. To act out those split personality scenes, Isaac needed a stand-in: so they hired his brother, journalist [Mike Hernandez](https://www.miaminewtimes.com/arts/before-star-wars-the-force-awakens-actor-oscar-isaac-was-just-a-miami-kid-8107945). "I didn't anticipate how technically demanding that was going to be," Isaac remembers, "having to show up and decide which character I was going to play first and and then try to block that out, give my brother notes, do the scene and then switch characters."

Because each scene was so meticulously choreographed, Isaac missed one of the most fun things about acting: sparking off the other performer to create unexpected moments. Still, at least his brother did the accents too.

Isaac's English accent provides the series with lots of comic highlights, but the show's Egyptian mythology and heritage gives it a weightier foundation. Director and executive producer [Mohamed Diab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamed_Diab) made the powerful films Cairo 678 and Eshtebak (Clash) in in his home country of Egypt, and even though Moon Knight is a fantasy adventure he sees it as an intimate story.

"And the other aspect that really attracted me was the Egyptian part of it, the Egyptology," Diab said in the press conference. "As an Egyptian, we always see us depicted, or the Middle East depicted, in a way that is called Orientalism, when you see us as exotic and dehumanized. Just showing us as normal human beings and seeing even Egypt as Egypt [was appealing], because 90% of the time, Egypt [in movies] is not Egypt. Imagine Paris and you see Big Ben in the background. ... It's funny, but it hurts."