It is often said that you can judge a man by the company he keeps. A corollary of that is that you can judge a man by the enemies he has made, which is a type of company that he keeps. Supposing that is true, then we should be able to judge a super-hero by the types of enemies that are gunning for him.

By how does one judge? By what criteria should one rank the bad guys? I thought it would be fun to let the geek culture on the internet do that for me and, in keeping with the spirit of minimal effort, I would amalgamate the various rankings and reach some conclusions.

To this end I’ve compiled lists from the following sources:

1. [IGN’s Top 100 Comic Book Villians](http://www.ign.com/lists/top-100-comic-book-villains)
2. [WhatCulture’s 100 Greatest Comic Book Villains Of All Time](http://whatculture.com/comics/100-greatest-comic-book-villains-of-all-time)
3. [Complex’s The 25 Greatest Comic Book Villains of All Time](http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/09/greatest-comic-book-villains/)
4. [ThoughtCo.’s Top Super Villains of All Time](https://www.thoughtco.com/top-super-villains-of-all-time-804285)
5. [FanSided’s 50 Greatest Super Villains in Comic Book History](https://bamsmackpow.com/2015/02/11/50-greatest-super-villains-comic-book-history/)
6. [CollegeHumor’s The 25 Greatest Comic Book Villains of All-Time](http://www.collegehumor.com/post/6872391/the-25-greatest-comic-book-villains-of-all-time)

Comparing these lists isn’t terribly easy in that they are of differing lengths. In addition, there are several questions that can be posed, such as: 1) which villain ranks first, 2) which franchise has the best enemies, 3) which publishing house has the most memorable bad guys, and so on. There is no fair way to slice and dice these data and, in some sense, it doesn’t matter since the rankings are clearly subjective in the truest fanboy kind of way. What I offer is a slightly subjective cut, guided but not ruled by statistical methods, through what the lists above.

The first step in analyzed the lists was to dump the results into an Excel spreadsheet with four columns for each list: 1) Ranking, 2) Character Name, 3) Publisher, and 4) Franchise. The first three are provided by the list maker’s themselves and requires no additional comment. The franchise categorization required a bit more thought. Lumping bad-guys like the Joker under Batman or Venom under Spider-Man were straightforward, but what to do with overlap characters that tend to go from single books to team ones? Was Doomsday a Superman enemy or Justice League? In the end, I decided that the best way was to keep as much specificity and to use some judgement based on my own understanding of the genre. Under this approach, Doomsday was a Superman baddie plain and simple.

The next step was to decide how to compare the different-length lists. Also of concern was the question as to the exact ordering in any amalgamated list. For example, IGN ranks Magneto first and the Joker second while WhatCulture has the Joker first and Magneto in third place. Clearly there is very little that separates the top 10 from each other and so on down the chain. Numerical ranking was provided for each ‘tier’ of 5 villains. The top 5 were provided with a ranking of ‘20’, the next five with a ‘19’ and so on down to the bottom five (if provided) who got a ‘1’. In this way, some of the arbitrariness of fanboy glee could be tamed and understood.

The next step was easy, sort the various data and look at the results. The first sorting was on publisher; due to the Vertigo imprint on DC, there might be some debate as to whether to include or exclude these rankings from the statistics – I opted for inclusion. The raw scores are summarized in the table below for the four big publishers: Darkhorse, DC, Image, and Marvel.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Darkhorse*** | ***DC*** | ***Image*** | ***Marvel*** |
| IGN | 4 | 541 | 6 | 475 |
| WhatCulture | 33 | 466 | 21 | 483 |
| Complex | 0 | 217 | 17 | 216 |
| ThoughtCo | 0 | 78 | 0 | 117 |
| FanSided | 0 | 399 | 0 | 376 |
| CollegeHumor | 0 | 196 | 0 | 236 |

Overall, the polls were split between DC and Marvel with IGN, Complex, and Fansided favoring DC and WhatCulture, ThoughtCo, and CollegeHumor favoring Marvel. However, the Complex ranking left the two publishers in nearly a tie and so I think it is fair to give Marvel the edge in this department.

The next munging of the data was to rank franchise. Here some additional latitude was required since certain franchises center around team books but with individual titles in support. For example, should the Justice League be considered separately from Wonder Woman, the Flash, and the Green Lantern? Should Captain America and Iron Man standalone or be grouped with the Avengers? To split the middle, I grouped members with their usual team but left the individual statistics along with the total. The next table summarizes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***IGN*** | ***WhatCulture*** | ***Complex*** | ***ThoughtCo*** | ***FanSided*** | ***CollegeHumor*** |
| **Batman** | **174** | **221** | **73** | **39** | **177** | **143** |
| **Justice League** | **110** | **48** | **55** | **19** | **78** | **17** |
| Flash | 64 | 5 | 16 | 0 | 28 | 0 |
| Green Lantern | 20 | 23 | 19 | 0 | 31 | 0 |
| New Gods | 19 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 19 | 17 |
| Wonder Woman | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Superman** | **134** | **99** | **37** | **20** | **93** | **36** |
| **Avengers** | **103** | **97** | **51** | **0** | **126** | **51** |
| Avengers Group | 24 | 24 | 16 | 0 | 49 | 0 |
| Captain America | 32 | 20 | 17 | 0 | 31 | 33 |
| Hulk | 24 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| Iron Man | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| Thor | 19 | 19 | 18 | 0 | 20 | 18 |
| **Fantastic Four** | **42** | **42** | **39** | **40** | **38** | **39** |
| **Spider-Man** | **111** | **160** | **54** | **38** | **107** | **73** |
| **X-Men** | **175** | **146** | **55** | **39** | **105** | **73** |

These results are far more interesting than the breakdown by publisher. Clearly, the Batman has the best villains with the only competition being from the X-Men franchise in the IGN pole which nudged ahead by one point. Overall, the Avengers seem to be in essentially a tie with the Justice League for favorite team book. The Spider-Man and X-Men franchises are startlingly similar in numbers, despite the different lengths of the rankings, indicating that both franchises have villains that ranked in the top 10 and 20. The most interesting scores were for Thor and the Fantastic Four in that their scores were nearly the same over all rankings (the only exception was the blank that Thor received in the ThoughtCo top 10). This was due to the fact that Loki scored consistently in or near the top 10 for Thor and the same for Doctor Doom and Galactus for the FF. Superman fell somewhere near Spider-Man and the X-Men.

Finally, the single most important ranking is the top villain. Without a doubt, the Joker claims the first spot achieving this coveted ranking in 4 of the 6 lists. Other notable bad guys were Magneto and Lex Luthor, showing that it is more important to have one prominent enemy or a handful of mediocre ones.